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A HISTORY OF THE IGBO SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA, 1970 – 2015

BY

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DEDICATION

To the people of Nigeria, a diverse and resilient nation whose history is marked by both triumphs and trials. Their journey, from pre-colonial times to the present day, is a testament to their enduring spirit and unwavering belief in their collective destiny. The experiences of the Igbo people, including the Biafran War and separatist movement, are just one facet of Nigeria's rich and complex history. This work is dedicated to all Nigerians, in the hope that it contributes to a deeper understanding of the nation's past and future.

To my beloved family, whose unconditional love and support have been my guiding light throughout this academic endeavor. To my wife, whose unwavering faith and constant encouragement have made this journey possible. To my two boys, whose innocent laughter has been a source of joy and inspiration. To my parents, whose sacrifices and wisdom have shaped me into the person I am today. And to my uncle, whose unwavering support from afar has been a constant source of strength. This work is dedicated to all of you, with gratitude and love.

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Declaration

I now declare that, except for the references to other people's work that have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is a result of my research work, done under supervision, and has neither in part nor in whole been presented elsewhere for another degree.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the evolution of Igbo self-determination movements from the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) to the resurgence of separatist groups in the 21st century. It critically examines the political, social, and economic factors that contributed to the Igbo quest for autonomy, focusing on the post-war period (1970-1990) and the emergence of movements such as the Ohaneze Ndi'gbo, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

This study closes a significant knowledge gap by challenging the prevailing notion that the Igbo separatist movement was monolithic, with uniform practices, goals, and organization. Instead, this research offers a thorough examination of the transformation in Igbo separatist ideology, from peaceful advocacy to more radical and militant approaches, highlighting the shifts and changes within the movement. The study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on archival sources, newsprint surveys, and digital media content to trace the historical trajectory of Igbo separatism. Oral interviews supplement the archival data by providing firsthand accounts of the internal dynamics within Igbo communities and the Nigerian government's response to separatist demands. The analysis reveals that the post-war marginalization of the Igbo, coupled with economic disenfranchisement and political underrepresentation, set the stage for the revival of separatist movements. The findings highlight the contrast between Ohaneze Ndi'gbo's diplomatic approach, MASSOB's nonviolent approach and IPOB's more confrontational tactics, especially in the digital age where social media played a crucial role in amplifying IPOB's message globally. This thesis concludes that despite varying methods, these movements struggled to achieve tangible political gains, largely due to internal divisions, governmental repression, and the complex realities of Nigerian federalism.

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Sincerely,

Oge Samuel Okonkwo

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Biafra - A region in southeastern Nigeria that attempted to secede and establish itself as the Republic of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970).

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Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) - Also known as the Biafran War, this conflict was fought between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra. It resulted in over one million deaths, mostly from starvation.

Fourth Republic (1999-present) - The period marking Nigeria's return to civilian rule after several years of military dictatorship. It provided new political opportunities for the Igbo community within the framework of a democratic Nigeria.

MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) - A pro-Biafra organization founded in 1999 by Ralph Uwazuruike. It advocates for the independence of Biafra through non-violent means.

IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) - A separatist organization founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu. Unlike MASSOB, IPOB is more militant and has used confrontational tactics to push for the establishment of an independent Biafran state.

MASSOB vs. IPOB - While both advocate for Biafra's independence, MASSOB has promoted a peaceful, incremental approach, whereas IPOB has employed more militant and direct actions, including confrontations with Nigerian authorities.

Ojukwu, Lieutenant Colonel Emeka - The leader of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War who declared the region's independence in May 1967. His leadership was central to the Biafran secessionist cause.

Yakubu Gowon - A Nigerian military leader who led the country during the Nigerian Civil War and orchestrated the government's efforts to maintain national unity and suppress Biafra's secession.

Post-Civil War Era (1970-1990) - The period after the Biafran War marked by efforts toward reintegration, rebuilding, and reconstruction in Nigeria, especially within the Igbo-dominated southeastern region.

Digital Age and Igbo Separatism (2000-2015) - The period marked by the rise of online separatist platforms and the use of social media by groups like IPOB to mobilize support and spread their message globally.

Nigerian Federalism - A system of government in Nigeria where power is shared between the central government and the country's states. Federalism plays a key role in addressing issues of regional autonomy and ethnic tensions, especially among groups like the Igbo.

Decolonization and Nigerian Independence (1960) - The process by which Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule. The Igbo played a significant role in nationalist movements leading to independence.

Pan-Africanism - A political and social movement advocating for the solidarity of African nations and peoples, with figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe contributing to its spread in Nigeria.

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NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) - A political party led by Nnamdi Azikiwe that played a major role in Nigeria's independence and was strongly supported by the Igbo.

NPC (Northern People's Congress) - A political party in Nigeria that dominated the Northern Region and was seen as a rival to the NCNC. It played a crucial role in post-independence politics.

Action Group (AG) - A political party led by Obafemi Awolowo, representing primarily Yoruba interests in the Western Region of Nigeria.

Warrant Chiefs - Traditional leaders appointed by British colonial authorities in Nigeria to govern indirectly, particularly in decentralized societies like the Igbo. Their role was controversial and often resisted by local populations.

Northernization Policy - A policy implemented after independence to increase the representation of Northern Nigerians in key government positions, often to the detriment of other regions like the Igbo-dominated East.

Principle of Derivation - A principle in Nigeria's revenue allocation system that allocates federal resources based on the origin of natural resources, relevant in discussions on the Niger Delta and Igbo economic grievances.

Ethnic Nationalism - A form of nationalism where the primary focus is on ethnic identity, often seen in separatist movements like that of the Igbo, which seek to promote the interests of a specific ethnic group.

Theory of Ethnicity - A theoretical framework that explores the formation, maintenance, and significance of ethnic identity. It plays a central role in understanding the Igbo separatist movement.

Constructionist Perspective (Ethnicity) - A viewpoint in ethnic studies that suggests ethnic identity is socially constructed and dynamic, influenced by historical processes and political agendas, in contrast to objectivist views that see ethnic identity as fixed.

Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson): A concept in nationalism studies that suggests nations are socially constructed communities, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of a group. It has been applied to understand Igbo nationalism.

Niger Delta - The oil-rich region in Nigeria, significant in discussions on economic marginalization, resource control, and the political struggles of various ethnic groups, including the Igbo.

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Ohanaeze Ndigbo - An Igbo socio-political organization advocating for the interests of the Igbo people within the Nigerian federation, often contrasting with separatist movements like IPOB.



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Chapter 1

General Introduction

The Igbo, a prominent ethnic group in Nigeria, have historically pursued self-determination, shaping the nation's socio-political landscape. Pre-colonial Igbo society thrived autonomously, contributing diverse cultural expressions to Nigeria's fabric. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) marked a pivotal moment, intensifying Igbo separatist sentiments and post-war challenges from 1970 to 1990. Nigeria's transition to the Fourth Republic (1990-2000) influenced Igbo political advocacy, while the digital age (2000-2015) revolutionized separatist movements. Understanding Igbo agitation is crucial for Nigeria and global contexts, highlighting universal struggles for autonomy and identity.[1]

In May 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, who served as the military administrator of the Eastern Region, proclaimed the autonomous Republic of Biafra. Nigeria rejected Biafra's secession, leading to a thirty-month civil war. Hostilities commenced in July 1967 as Nigerian troops advanced into Biafra. Biafra suffered severe food shortages due to a Nigerian blockade. The war witnessed immense human suffering and starvation on both sides. In January 1970, Biafra surrendered to Nigeria, lacking resources and international support. Over one million people perished during the war. The reintegration of Biafra into Nigeria followed the cessation of hostilities.[2]

The aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War exacted a devastating toll on the Igbo community. Mortality estimates for the conflict range from one million to three million people, with scholars like Toyin Falola placing the figure at approximately one million, while subsequent demographic

[1] Godwin Onuoha, "Cultural interfaces of self-determination and the rise of the neo-Biafran movement in Nigeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 137 (2013): 434-35.
[2] Toyin Falola and Matthew M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 102.

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analyses by Onuoha and others suggest the toll was considerably higher when famine-related deaths are included. [3] The International Committee of the Red Cross documented mass displacement of between four and five million civilians during the conflict. Economically, the Nigerian government's post-war policy of awarding all former Biafran account holders a flat sum of only twenty pounds, regardless of pre-war savings, effectively wiped out Igbo personal wealth overnight.[4] These quantifiable losses, extending across human life, personal assets, and regional infrastructure, left the southeastern economy structurally crippled well into the 1970s. Despite the cessation of hostilities and the reintegration of the secessionist region into Nigeria, the war's impact on the Igbo identity and their place within the Nigerian state remained a critical aspect of post-civil war Nigerian politics.[5] During the specified period from 1970 to 2015, the Igbo community experienced waves of political developments and policies that influenced their separatist agitations. In the immediate post-civil war era, the Nigerian government implemented various policies to facilitate the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-affected areas. However, the Igbo people perceived some of these policies as insufficient and unequal, leading to feelings of marginalization and exclusion.[6] In the 1980s and 1990s, Nigeria witnessed periods of military rule and democratization. During these times, Igbo voices for self-determination found different platforms for expression. Various socio-political organizations emerged, advocating for recognizing the Igbo cultural identity and protecting their rights within the Nigerian Federation.

[3] Godwin Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (2013): 20-24.
[4] Chinua Achebe, *There was a country: A memoir* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2012), 223.
[5] Tekena N Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 4 (1970): 563-84.
[6] Chinua Achebe, *There was a country: A memoir* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2012), 223.

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The struggle for equitable representation and resource control became central themes in Igbo agitation for sovereignty during this period.[7]

Furthermore, Nigeria's political landscape experienced significant shifts with the return of civilian rule in 1999. The transition to democracy gave the Igbo community new opportunities to participate in governance and articulate their aspirations within the framework of a multiethnic democracy. These developments, coupled with the impact of globalization and evolving regional dynamics, contributed to the changing phases of Igbo separatist agitation throughout the specified period.[8] To fully comprehend the changing dynamics of the Igbo separatist movement from 1970 to 2015, it is essential to consider Nigeria's historical backdrop, the consequences of the Nigerian Civil War, and the cultural importance of the Igbo ethnic group. The challenges and opportunities faced by the Igbo during this period shaped their aspirations, demands, and strategies in their quest for recognition and self-determination within the Nigerian state.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the evolution of Igbo separatist agitation carries significant academic and practical implications. Historically, the Igbo's quest for self-determination is integral to understanding Nigeria's post-civil war era. Their role in shaping the nation's socio-political landscape underscores the complexity of ethnic relations and nation-building. This research provides a nuanced analysis of Igbo separatist aspirations, tracing their evolving strategies and challenges. Examining historical records and narratives offers insights not adequately addressed in existing historiography. Moreover, this study enhances comprehension of Nigeria's political landscape,

[7] Chris C Ojukwu, "Igbo nation, modern statecraft and the geopolitics of national survival in a multiethnic Nigeria," *African journal of political science and international relations* 3, no. 5 (2009): 6-7.
[8] Godwin Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (2013): 20-24.

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illustrating how post-war policies and initiatives affected Igbo separatist aspirations. Understanding these dynamics contributes to broader insights into Nigeria's inter-ethnic relations and power dynamics. Furthermore, this research informs policymaking and governance by illuminating the historical context of Igbo separatist agitation. Insights gained can guide efforts toward promoting ethnic inclusion and national unity, which is crucial for Nigeria's socio-political stability. Ultimately, delving into Igbo separatist agitation enriches our understanding of Nigerian history, politics, and ethnic dynamics, facilitating informed decision-making for a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Statement of the Research Problem

Existing literature portrays the Igbo quest for autonomy in post-colonial Nigeria as a uniform, consistent agitation, obscuring the reality that between 1970 and 2015, this separatist struggle underwent distinct phases and transformations. The agitation's goals, strategies, and manifestations evolved across different historical junctures within this period. Contrary to scholarly assumptions of a uniform, uninterrupted Igbo separatist movement, this research contends that from 1970 to 2015, the agitation experienced periods of dormancy punctuated by resurgences. These were driven not only by changing socio-political contexts but also by the diverse perspectives within the Igbo community itself. The objectives, motivations, and modes of expression shifted, reflecting the dynamic nature of the struggle and the complex interplay of factors shaping Igbo collective consciousness and aspirations. This study aims to challenge the existing historiography by deconstructing the notion of a uniform Igbo separatist agenda between 1970 and 2015. It seeks to illuminate the distinct phases and nuances that characterized the Igbo agitation for sovereignty during this post-colonial period, contributing a nuanced understanding of this intricate sociopolitical phenomenon. The research captures the fluidity and contextual

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specificities that shaped the trajectory of the agitation between 1970 and 2015. The investigation will examine the varying intensities of the Igbo separatist agitation, the underlying catalysts that ignited or tempered movements, and the diverse perspectives within the Igbo community that influenced the evolving goals and strategies from 1970 to 2015. It will also explore periods of apparent dormancy, examining factors leading to the temporary waning of separatist sentiments and how these intersected with Nigeria's broader socio-political landscape. This study argues that between 1970 and 2015, the Igbo separatist movement was not a continuous secessionist campaign but a cyclical political phenomenon, whose intensity was determined by Nigeria's shifting federal policies, democratic transitions, and generational changes in Igbo political leadership. The movement's phases, including dormancy in the 1970s and 1980s and resurgence under MASSOB (1999) and IPOB (2012), were responses to specific structural conditions, not evidence of an unchanging ethnic drive for statehood.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study examines the evolving phases and manifestations of Igbo agitation for autonomy in Nigeria between 1970 and 2015. The Igbo quest for self-determination transformed in the aftermath of the Biafra War (1967-1970) and the failure to establish a sovereign Biafran state. The post-war years witnessed the emergence of distinct autonomist tendencies within the Igbo community. One central tendency comprised those who believed in the Nigerian federal dream and sought autonomy through active participation in the country's political processes, such as gubernatorial and presidential elections. However, the persistent feeling of marginalization also fueled an extremist tendency that clamored for outright secession and the creation of an independent Biafran state. This study seeks to unravel the changing phases and diverse trajectories that characterized Igbo autonomist aspirations during the post-colonial period from 1970 to 2015.

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It will investigate the various autonomist and secessionist tendencies that coexisted within the Igbo community, shedding light on the nuanced goals, strategies, and modes of expression adopted by different factions. By examining the complex interplay between autonomist and secessionist impulses and the factors that influenced the ebbs and flows of these agitations, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of Igbo agitation for self-determination in the post-colonial era. To achieve this goal, the following specific objectives have been outlined:

1. Assess the construction and implementation of Igbo Identity from 1970 to 1979.
2. Investigate the development of Igbo separatist movement from 1980 to the 1990s.
3. Explore the digital age and the resurgence of Igbo separatism, 2000 -2015.
4. Examine the achievements of the Igbo separatist movement from 1970 – 2015.
5. Explain the persistence of Igbo separatist movement by 2015.

This dissertation aims to deepen comprehension of Nigerian politics, regional dynamics, and identity-driven movements by focusing on 1970 to 2015. It scrutinizes the development of Igbo sovereignty agitation during this era, considering historical, political, and social factors. The study investigates the rise of socio-political groups advocating for Igbo cultural rights and fair representation within Nigeria. It evaluates how significant political events, like the transition to democracy in 1999, influence Igbo agitation tactics, such as protests and political involvement. Moreover, the research examines the interplay between internal Igbo dynamics and their interactions with the Nigerian state. It reveals how socioeconomic circumstances and regional changes influenced Igbo separatist aspirations during this timeframe.

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Research Questions

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the changing phases of Igbo agitation for sovereignty in Nigeria from 1970 to 2015. To achieve this, the study will explore the following research questions:

1. How has Igbo identity been reconstructed after the Civil War?
2. How did Igbo separatist movement evolve during the 1980s and 1990s?
3. How has the digital age influenced the resurgence of the Igbo separatist movement?
4. What were the achievements and challenges of the Igbo separatist movement, 1970-2015?
5. Why has the Igbo separatist movement persisted as of 2015?

Theoretical Considerations

The Theory of Ethnicity and Ethnic-Nationalism

When examining the Igbo separatist movement in Nigeria, scholars diligently drew upon diverse theoretical perspectives on ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. These frameworks, a testament to their intellectual rigor, offered crucial insights into the underlying factors driving such movements.

Eric Hobsbawm,[9] in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), offered one of the most consequential critiques of nationalist ideology. For Hobsbawm, nationalism was not a natural expression of pre-existing ethnic identity but a modern political construction, invented and promoted by elites to serve specific economic and political ends. His concept of the "invention of tradition" (developed further with Terence Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1983) directly challenges primordialist

[9] Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge university press, 1992.

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readings of Igbo separatism. Applied to the post-1970 Igbo political context, Hobsbawm's framework helps explain how MASSOB and IPOB did not simply revive an organic Biafran consciousness but actively constructed and amplified a particular version of Igbo victimhood and historical memory to recruit followers and justify political demands. His work sits productively in tension with Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolism and Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities," enriching the theoretical scaffolding of this study.

Objectivist viewpoints, championed by scholars like Anthony D. Smith, emphasized the tangible reality of ethnic groups. They argued that nations possessed deep historical roots predating modern nation-states. Shared elements like language, customs, myths, memories, and a common history defined ethnic groups. These shared traits fostered a sense of communal belonging and solidarity among group members.[10]

Contrastingly, constructionist perspectives, advocated by thinkers like Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner, challenged the notion of inherent or fixed ethnic identities. They viewed ethnicity as a fluid and dynamic concept shaped by social interactions, historical processes, and political agendas. Anderson's idea of "imagined communities" posited that nations were not based on tangible shared characteristics but on imagined connections fostered through cultural symbols, narratives, and representations.[11] Offering a nuanced and balanced approach, dialectical perspectives sought to reconcile objectivist and constructionist viewpoints. Scholars like Claude

[10] Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism.* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 137.
[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* (London: Verso, 1991).

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Ake[12] and Thomas Scheff, [10] with their insightful research, acknowledged the socially constructed nature of ethnic identities while recognizing the tangible sense of solidarity and shared consciousness among ethnic group members. They highlighted the significance of emotional and psychological factors, such as pride, belonging, and resentment, in shaping ethnic identity and nationalist movements. The integrated theoretical approach applied to the study of the Igbo separatist movement offers a comprehensive understanding of its complexities. It combines objectivist, constructionist, and dialectical perspectives, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of ethnic identities and their political manifestations.

The advantages of this approach include a nuanced analysis that considers the historical, cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of ethnic identities. By blending subjective and objective aspects, it captures the tangible sense of solidarity among ethnic groups and offers insights into the emotional drivers behind separatist movements. Insights from dialectical perspectives deepen our understanding of the psychological motivations underlying ethnic conflicts, revealing feelings of pride, resentment, and alienation. Moreover, this approach goes beyond simplistic views of nations as imagined constructs, illuminating the intricate interplay of historical, cultural, and political factors shaping ethnic identities. However, these theoretical perspectives have limitations. They may oversimplify the complexities of identity dynamics within society, overlooking the influence of class, religion, and regional variations. Additionally, quantifying the psychological aspects of ethnic identity poses challenges in empirical measurement.

[12] Claude Ake, *Democracy and development in Africa* (Brookings institution press, Washington DC, 2001), 94. [10] Thomas J Scheff, "Emotions and Identity: A Theory of Ethnic Nationalism," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford: Blackwell: 1994), 278.

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While these frameworks provide valuable tools for understanding the Igbo separatist movement, they should not be viewed as the sole determinants of its emergence and persistence. A comprehensive analysis must also consider economic, political, and historical factors contributing to ethnic tensions and separatist aspirations within Nigeria. Relevance to the study of the Igbo separatist movement lies in these theoretical perspectives' ability to dissect the intricate interplay between ethnicity, national identity, and secessionist motivations. They offer insights into the movement's historical roots and enduring presence, shedding light on the cultural, historical, and social elements shaping Igbo ethnic identity and nationalism. By incorporating insights from dialectical perspectives, we gain deeper insights into the emotional drivers of the separatist movement. Understanding subjective experiences and motivations is crucial for comprehending the movement's dynamics. Moreover, these theoretical frameworks allow a nuanced examination of separatist groups like MASSOB and IPOB, analyzing their historical context, cultural narratives, and sense of alienation. In sum, the integrated theoretical approach provides a rich framework for understanding the Igbo separatist movement's motivations, aspirations, and enduring presence within Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

Historiography

The historiography of Igbo political movements in post-civil war Nigeria reveals a complex and evolving narrative that resists reduction to a singular separatist struggle. This study critically examines the scholarly literature on Igbo political engagement from 1970 to 2015, tracing distinct phases marked by shifting strategies, goals, and contexts. Early post-war scholarship, represented by works such as those by Chikodiri et al. and Uwaifo, tended to interpret Igbo agitation as inherently separatist, emphasizing continuity with the Biafran cause. However, this perspective overlooked significant efforts at reintegration into Nigerian society, as scholars like Paul Obi-Ani and Toyin Falola highlighted.

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The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by a dominant separatist narrative in academic discourse, with scholars like Godwin Onuoha and Alalade & Oluranti framing Igbo political movements as extensions of the Biafran struggle. This interpretation, while influential, often ignored the internal debates and complexities within the Igbo community regarding the appropriate response to the post-war Nigerian state. In the early 2000s, a shift occurred with the emergence of counter-narratives challenging this oversimplified separatist perspective. Scholars such as Chris Ojukwu, Felix Nwaorgu, and Moses Duruji emphasized the cyclical nature of Igbo political strategies, highlighting periods of dormancy and reintegration. This nuanced understanding underscored the diverse goals and evolving approaches of the Igbo in response to changing political landscapes.

The resurgence of separatist sentiments in the late 1990s and 2000s, epitomized by movements like MASSOB and IPOB, marked a distinct phase in Igbo political experience. Scholars such as Chinedu Udeh and Daniel Tuki analyzed these movements, noting their appeal among Igbo youth while acknowledging divisions within the broader community. This historiographical analysis identifies significant gaps in previous studies, particularly in recognizing the distinct phases of the Igbo separatist movement. By critically examining the evolution of scholarly perspectives, this study aims to offer a deeper understanding of the complexities of Igbo political movements in post-civil war Nigeria. It assesses varying interpretations, highlights the limitations of earlier works, and proposes new frameworks to understand the multifaceted nature of Igbo separatism better. By exploring the discontinuities and shifts in Igbo political strategies, this analysis contributes to a more nuanced discourse, moving beyond the simplistic binary of separatism versus integration.

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Early Post-War Scholarship

In the years immediately following the Nigerian Civil War, a significant body of scholarly work emerged that sought to analyze the conflict's causes, course, and consequences, focusing on the Biafran War and its impact on the Igbo community. These early studies influenced the immediate post-war period, characterized by severe societal wounds, political uncertainty, and precarious peace. Scholars in this era focused on the war's profound impact on the Nigerian state and its ethnic groups, with particular attention to the Igbo, who had spearheaded the separatist movement that led to the war.

A dominant theme in this early post-war scholarship was the interpretation of Igbo political agitation as a continuous and unified separatist movement. Scholars often portrayed the Biafran War as the culmination of a deep-seated and persistent desire among the Igbo to establish an independent state. The catastrophic nature of the war, which resulted in extensive destruction, fatalities, and Biafra's almost complete isolation from the international community, supported this narrative. The catastrophic nature of the war lends empirical weight to the narrative of separatist suppression rather than extinction. Between one million and three million people died, the majority from starvation caused by the federal government's naval blockade of Biafra.[13] Biafra received formal diplomatic recognition from only five states, namely Ivory Coast, Gabon, Haiti, Tanzania, and Zambia, leaving it largely isolated in a hostile international arena.[14] The war produced an estimated four to five million internally displaced persons and left the southeastern region's infrastructure, roads, hospitals, schools, largely in ruins. These data points help explain why early post-war scholarship framed residual Igbo political grievances not as a spent force but as

[13] Jorre, John de St. *The brothers' war: Biafra and Nigeria*. Faber & Faber, 2012. p.408.
[14] Stremlau, John J. *The international politics of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970*. Princeton University Press, 2015. p.89.

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temporarily suppressed energy. The portrayal of Igbo aspirations as fundamentally separatist became a common thread in the literature, with scholars like Chikodiri et al,[15] Uwaifo[16] as well as Godwin[17] arguing that the end of the war did not signify the end of these aspirations but rather their temporary suppression. The broader political and ethnic tensions that had sparked the war supported this interpretation of Igbo agitation as being inherently separatist. Many scholars drew direct connections between the pre-war grievances of the Igbo—such as marginalization, economic disenfranchisement, and ethnic violence—and the post-war political activities within the Igbo community. The literature often emphasized the continuity of these grievances, suggesting that the Igbo remained committed to the ideals of Biafra even as they were forcibly reintegrated into the Nigerian state as argued by Emmanuel,[18] Paul,[19] and Toyin.[20]

The early post-war scholarship also tended to view the Biafran experience through a binary lens, framing the conflict as a clear-cut struggle between the Nigerian state and a unified Igbo nation. This perspective reinforced the notion of a monolithic Igbo identity, singularly focused on separatists as the primary response to the challenges posed by post-colonial Nigeria. Such

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[15] Chikodiri Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 119, no. 477 (2020): 13.
[16] Uwaifo Samuel Osaretin, "Biafra agitation and politics of imbalance in Nigeria," *Journal of Civil & Legal Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2019): 3.
[17] Godwin Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," *Princeton University, June* (2018): 23.
[18] Emmanuel O Ojo, "Federalism and the search for national integration in Nigeria," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, no. 9 (2009): 386.
[19] Paul Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983* (Nsukka, Nigeria: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd, 2009), 78.
[20] Toyin Falola and Charles G Thomas, *Secession and separatist conflicts in postcolonial Africa* (University of Calgary Press, 2020), 294.

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interpretations left little room for exploring the internal diversity and evolving political strategies within the Igbo community after the war as examined by Gilbert & Kelechi,[21] and Toyin.[22]

While the early post-war scholarship laid a foundation for understanding the Biafran War and its aftermath, it also exhibited notable limitations in its analysis of Igbo political movements in the post-war period. One of the key critiques of this body of work is its tendency to overemphasize the continuity of Igbo separatism, often at the expense of recognizing the complexities and nuances of Igbo political behavior after the war as explored by scholars like John,[23] Isa[20] and Yunusa.[24] The portrayal of the Igbo as a community uniformly committed to separatism fails to account for the significant shifts in political strategy and objectives that occurred within the Igbo community in the years following the conflict. For instance, the Igbo significantly reintegrated into Nigerian political life during the immediate post-war period, characterized by active participation in national elections and a renewed engagement with the Nigerian state. However, early scholars often downplayed or ignored these developments, perpetuating the narrative of an unbroken separatist drive as exemplified by Basil,[25] Emmanuel,[26] and Samuel.[27] Furthermore, the early post-war literature often overlooked the impact of broader socio-political changes in Nigeria on Igbo political movements. The military regimes that dominated Nigeria in the decades following

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[21] Gilbert Chukwu Aro and Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," *Journal of African Union Studies* 6, no. 2-3 (2017): 50.
[22] Falola and Thomas, *Secession and separatist conflicts in postcolonial Africa*, 295.
[23] John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the brink* (Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 89. [20] Isa Ishaq Ojibara, "Biafra: Why Igbo want to secede," *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* 4, no. 1 (2016): 55.
[24] Yunusa Kehinde Salami, "Ethnic pluralism and national identity in Nigeria," in *Race and ethnicity*, ed. Rodney D. Coates (Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands, 2004), 108.
[25] Basil Ugorji, "Nigeria-Biafra War and the Politics of Oblivion: Implications of Revealing the Hidden Narratives through Transformative Learning" (PhD Thesis. Nova Southeastern University, 2022), 35.
[26] Emmanuel Sunday Nwofe, "Pro-Biafran Activists and the call for a Referendum," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017): 72.
[27] Samuel Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 9, no. 1 (2019): 15.

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the civil war played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape, influencing the behaviour of various ethnic groups, including the Igbo. However, the assumption that Igbo separatism persisted unchanged neglected to consider how military rule, economic pressures, and regional dynamics affected the ebb and flow of separatist sentiments within the Igbo community as analyzed by Godwin,[28] Chikodiri etal[29] and Chris & Felix.[30] Another limitation of these early works is their failure to adequately explore the internal debates and divisions within the Igbo community regarding the appropriate response to the post-war Nigerian state. The Igbo were not a homogenous group with a single political agenda; rather, there were varying opinions on whether to pursue reintegration, political participation, or continued resistance as argued by Nnnaemeka,[31] and Godwin.[32] Early scholarship, with its focus on a continuous separatist narrative, often missed these internal complexities, leading to a reductive understanding of Igbo political identity. While the early post-war scholarship on the Biafran War provided essential insights into the immediate consequences of the conflict, it also imposed a somewhat simplistic narrative of ongoing Igbo separatists that did not fully capture the diversity and evolution of Igbo political movements in the post-war period. A more nuanced understanding of this history requires a critical reassessment of these early works, acknowledging both their contributions and their limitations in portraying the complexities of the post-war Igbo experience.

[28] Godwin Onuoha, "The presence of the past: youth, memory making and the politics of self-determination in southeastern Nigeria," *Ethnic and racial studies* 36, no. 12 (2013): 2186.
[29] Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," 18.
[30] Chris C Ojukwu and Felix George O Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," *Canadian Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2013): 110.
[31] Nnaemeka Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " in *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice*, ed. Ifi Amadiume and Abdullah An-Na'im (London: Zed Books, 2000), 75.
[32] Godwin Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 18, no. 1 (2014): 13.

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1980s–1990s: Rise of Separatist Narratives

During the 1980s and 1990s, a significant shift occurred in the historiography of the Igbo separatist movement, with an increasing number of scholars framing Igbo agitation as inherently separatist. This period marked the dominance of the separatist perspective, where academic discourse primarily centered on the idea that Igbo political activities were driven by a persistent desire to establish an independent state. The traumatic legacy of the Biafran War, which continued to influence both academic analysis and public perceptions of the Igbo community, had a significant impact on this viewpoint.

Several critical scholars contributed to reinforcing this separatist narrative. Their writings frequently drew parallels between the circumstances leading up to the Biafran War and the Igbo people's political behaviour in the years following the war, arguing that the war's defeat had only temporarily quenched the separatist aspirations of the late 1960s rather than putting them out of existence. For example, scholars such as Godwin,[33] Samuel[34] emphasized the continuity of Igbo separatist sentiments, with some scholars like Okechukwu etal[35] arguing that the war's legacy continued to influence Igbo politics well into the late 21st century.

Another influential work from this period was by Godwin[36], who argued that the resurgence of Igbo political activism in the 1980s was a direct reflection of unresolved grievances from the Biafran War. This scholar posited that the Igbo community's experiences during the war, including the loss of life, displacement, and economic devastation, created a lasting sense of victimhood that

[33] Godwin Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 411.
[34] Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," 13.
[35] Okechukwu Ibeanu, Nwachukwu Orji, and CK Iwuamadi, "Biafra separatism: Causes, consequences and remedies," *Enugu: Institute for Innovations in Development* (2016): 42.
[36] Godwin Okaneme, "Marginalization of some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria: The Igbo Experience," *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2014): 45.

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fueled ongoing separatist sentiments. This view was further supported by analyses of Daniel & Uchenna[37] and Lawrence etal[38] who explored the various political and social movements within the Igbo community during this period, which were often interpreted as manifestations of a latent desire for separatism.

The focus on separatism was also reinforced by the broader political context of Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s. The country was largely under military rule during this time, a factor that scholars frequently linked to the suppression of separatist movements. According to Tola,[39] Ezeakukwu,[40] Alexander & Samuel,[41] the military's centralization of power and its repressive tactics were seen as further inflaming Igbo separatist aspirations, as these actions were perceived as a continuation of the marginalization that had sparked the Biafran War in the first place.

Moreover, the rise of ethnic and regional tensions in Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the perception that the Igbo were perpetually on the brink of seeking separatism once more. Scholars like Ikenna etal,[42] Ignatius & Ikemjika,[43] and Nnaemeka[44] noted that the structural inequalities within the Nigerian state, particularly in terms of resource allocation and political representation, disproportionately affected the Igbo. This sense of ongoing injustice was

[37] Daniel Olisa Iweze and Uchenna Anyanwu, "Post-Nigerian Civil War Community Reconstruction Strategies In (Anioma) Western Igboland, 1970-1991," *Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 5, no. 10 (2020): 219.
[38] Lawrence Okwuosa, Chinyere T Nwaoga, and Favour Uroko, "The post-war era in Nigeria and the resilience of Igbo communal system," *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 13, no. 1 (2021): 5.
[39] Tola Odubajo, "Post-transitional Justice in Nigeria and the Igbo Nationalism Question," *Africa Insight* 51, no. 1 (2021): 61.
[40] Ezeakukwu Emmanuel Nsoedo, "The Marginalization of the Igbo People in Nigeria's Political and Economic Sectors: What Is the Way Forward?," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 7 (2019): 431.
[41] Alexander Nnaemeka Agbaenyi and Samuel NC Nwagbo, "The Igbo nation in Nigerian democratization: The need for collective political bargaining," *PREORC Journal of Arts and Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2018): 71.
[42] Ikenna Mike Alumona, Stephen Nnaemeka Azam, and Emeka Charles Iloh, "The Nigerian state and the resurgence of separatist agitations: The case of Biafra," (2017): 99.
[43] Ignatius Nnaemeka Onwuatuegwu and Nkemjika Bernardine Nwagu, "The crux of agitations in Nigeria a striking danger to economic development: A philosophical purview," *Technium Soc. Sci. J.* 28 (2022): 772.
[44] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 79.

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often cited as evidence that the Igbo had never fully abandoned their separatist goals, even if they were not actively pursuing them at the time.

The works produced during this period tended to view Igbo political activities through a narrow lens, focusing primarily on separatism as the driving force behind these movements. This approach often overlooked other factors as argued by Moses,[45] Johnpaul etal,[46] and Godwin[47] that may have influenced Igbo agitation, such as economic grievances, ethnic identity, and the desire for greater political autonomy within a unified Nigeria. As a result, the historiography of the 1980s and 1990s largely portrayed the Igbo as a community singularly focused on separatism, a narrative that would have significant implications for later scholarship.

The separatist narrative that dominated the 1980s and 1990s had a profound impact on subsequent scholarship, creating a persistent but oversimplified understanding of Igbo political movements in the post-war period. The portrayal of the Igbo as inherently separatist influenced a generation of scholars who built upon this perspective, further entrenching the idea that Igbo agitation was synonymous with a desire for independence. One of the key ways this narrative shaped later scholarship was by narrowing the scope of analysis. Scholars like Moses,[48] Ifeanyichukwu etal,[49] and Daniel[50] who followed in the footsteps of their 1980s and 1990s predecessors often focused exclusively on separatist movements like MASSOB and, later, IPOB,

[45] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Resurgent ethno-nationalism and the renewed demand for Biafra in south-east Nigeria," *National Identities* 14, no. 4 (2012): 12.
[46] Johnpaul Onyebuchi Nduba, Moses Nnamdi, and Ofodu Hyginus Chukwuebuka, "The crisis of nationalism and ethnic agitations in Nigeria: An analysis of the Indigenous People of Biafra," *Crisis* 4, no. 4 (2020): 8.
[47] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 418.
[48] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2012): 538.
[49] Ifeanyichukwu Michael Abada, Paul Hezekiah Omeh, and Ikechukwu Remigius Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," *Journal of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (2020): 11.
[50] Daniel Tuki, "Undead Past: What Drives Support for the Secessionist Goal of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nigeria?," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 9, no. 1 (2024): 8.

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interpreting them as the natural continuation of the Biafran struggle. This focus on separatism often led to the neglect of other forms of Igbo political engagement, such as participation in national politics or efforts to address local grievances within the framework of the Nigerian state.

Additionally, the separatist perspective contributed to a somewhat deterministic view of Igbo political history, where every act of agitation was seen as a step toward eventual separatism. This approach by scholars like Gideon,[51] and Moses[52] tended to minimize the complexities of Igbo political thought and the internal debates within the Igbo community about the best path forward. As a result, the diversity of opinions and strategies within the Igbo political sphere was often underrepresented in the literature.

Furthermore, the focus on separatism in the 1980s and 1990s also had the effect of reinforcing certain stereotypes about the Igbo community, both within Nigeria and in the broader academic discourse. The idea that the Igbo were perpetually separatist as argued by Gilbert & Kelechi,[53] and Falola[54] contributed to a perception of the community as being in constant opposition to the Nigerian state, a narrative that could obscure the significant contributions of the Igbo to national development and politics.

The rise of separatist narratives in the 1980s and 1990s represented a critical phase in the historiography of Igbo separatism. While these narratives provided essential insights into the lingering effects of the Biafran War, they also imposed a somewhat simplistic framework for studying Igbo political movements. This framework, in turn, influenced subsequent scholarship,

[51] Gideon Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," *The Journal of Society and Media* 6, no. 2 (2022): 350.
[52] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 540.
[53] Aro and Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," 50.
[54] Falola and Thomas, *Secession and separatist conflicts in postcolonial Africa*, 295.

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leading to a persistent emphasis on separatism at the expense of a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of Igbo political life in the post-war era.

In the early 2000s, a growing body of scholarship challenged the long-standing narrative that framed Igbo political movements as inherently separatist. These emerging counter-narratives introduced more nuanced interpretations, highlighting that Igbo political strategies did not always aim for separatism but instead underwent phases and shifts due to various factors, such as shifting political, social, and economic conditions.

Several scholars played a key role in developing these counter-narratives. For example, Godwin,[55] Chris & Felix[56] argued that the focus on separatism had overshadowed other significant aspects of Igbo political life, particularly the community's efforts to reintegrate into the Nigerian state after the civil war. These scholars emphasized that the period following the war saw the Igbo engaging in a range of political activities that were not aimed at separatism but rather at securing a more favourable position within Nigeria.

These counter-narratives also received support from scholars who examined the broader sociopolitical context in Nigeria during the post-war period. Peter & John,[57] Paul & Onu[58] argued that the Igbo's political strategies were influenced by the broader dynamics of Nigerian politics, particularly the centralization of power under military rule. They contended that the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s played a significant role in suppressing separatist tendencies, thereby encouraging the Igbo to seek alternative means of political engagement. One of the key

[55] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 13.
[56] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 111.
[57] Peter Ottuh and John Onimhawo, "A moral evaluation of past military coups and present corruption in Nigeria," *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2023): 190.
[58] Paul Obi-Ani and Ambrose Onu, "Military Factor in Nigerian History Since 1960," *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities* 30, no. 2 (2022): 28.

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concepts introduced by these emerging counter-narratives was the idea of a "dormancy period" in Igbo separatist tendencies. This period, which roughly spanned the two decades following the end of the civil war, was characterized by a marked decline in overt separatist activities. Instead of pursuing secession, many Igbo individuals and groups focused on reintegrating into Nigerian society and participating in the country's political processes.

During this dormancy period, the Igbo were notably active in Nigerian politics, with several prominent Igbo politicians holding significant positions in the government. The appointment of Alex Ekwueme as Vice President during the Second Republic (1979-1983) is often cited as a key example of the Igbo's re-engagement with the Nigerian state.[59] Ekwueme's political career symbolized the broader trend of Igbo integration into the national political arena, which stood in contrast to the earlier separatist fervour.

In addition to political participation, the Igbo also demonstrated their commitment to Nigeria through extensive migration and economic activities. During the dormancy period, Gregory & Evaristus,[60] Olanrewaju,[58] Adebukola etal[61] maintain that Igbo entrepreneurs and traders expanded their businesses across the country, including in regions that had been hostile to them during the civil war. This widespread migration and economic integration further underscored the Igbo's acceptance of Nigeria as their homeland, challenging the notion that they were primarily driven by separatist ambitions. The dormancy period also coincided with the era of military rule in

[59] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 82.
[60] Gregory Emeka Chinweuba and Evaristus Chukwudi Ezeugwu, "The ontological foundation of Igbo entrepreneurship: An analytical investigation," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 33, no. 2017 (2017): 19. [58] Olanrewaju Akinpelu Olutayo, "The Igbo entrepreneur in the political economy of Nigeria," *African study monographs* 20, no. 3 (1999): 158.
[61] Adebukola E. Oyewunmi, Olabode A. Oyewunmi, and Chinonye L. Moses, ": Historical Transitions of the Igbo Apprenticeship Model," in *Indigenous African Enterprise*, ed. Ogechi Adeola, Advanced Series in Management (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 15.

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Nigeria, which imposed a centralized and authoritarian system of governance. As Eghosa,[62] Ernest & Okechukwu[63] suggests, under military rule, the Nigerian state exerted considerable control over political activities, making it difficult for any group, including the Igbo, to pursue separatist agendas openly. As a result, the Igbo adapted their political strategies to the prevailing conditions, focusing on survival and integration rather than separatism.

The emerging counter-narratives and the concept of the dormancy period provide a foundation for reinterpreting Igbo political history more nuancedly. This reinterpretation challenges the idea that Igbo agitation has always been about separatism and instead suggests that different phases in Igbo political history were characterized by varying goals and strategies. In this context, it is crucial to understand how a complex interplay of factors—including the legacy of the civil war, the dynamics of Nigerian politics, and the shifting socioeconomic conditions of the Igbo community—shaped Igbo political movements. For instance, according to Paul,[64] Daniel & Anyanwu,[65] during the dormancy period, the Igbo's primary objective was not to separate but to rebuild their lives and regain their place within the Nigerian state. This goal was pursued through active participation in politics, economic integration, and efforts to address the grievances that had contributed to the civil war in the first place.

However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that the dormancy period was not permanent. As the political landscape in Nigeria evolved, so too did the strategies of Igbo political movements. The reintroduction of multi-party democracy in the late 1990s, for example, provided new

[62] Eghosa E Osaghae, "The long shadow of Nigeria's military epochs, 1966–79 and 1983–99," *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics* (2018): 175.
[63] Ernest Toochi Aniche and Okechukwu Richard Oji, "Ethno-political Organisations as Political Pressure Groups in Nigeria," in *Anonymous Power: Parties, Interest Groups and Politics of Decision Making in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Essays in Honour of Elochukwu Amucheazi)* (Springer, 2022), 82.
[64] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 89.
[65] Iweze and Anyanwu, "Post-Nigerian Civil War Community Reconstruction Strategies In (Anioma) Western Igboland, 1970-1991," 228.

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opportunities for political expression, leading to the resurgence of separatist sentiments in some quarters. According to Celestina etal,[66] this resurgence, as seen in the rise of movements like MASSOB and IPOB, reflected a shift in the Igbo's approach to addressing their grievances, but it was not indicative of a continuous separatist agenda. Rather, it was part of a broader pattern of cyclical political engagement, where separatist and integrationist strategies alternated depending on the prevailing circumstances.

The challenges to the separatist narrative that emerged in the 2000s have significantly enriched the historiography of Igbo political movements. These counter-narratives offer a more complex and accurate understanding of the Igbo's political history by introducing the concepts of phases and dormancy. They demonstrate that Igbo agitation is not a monolithic or unchanging phenomenon but a dynamic process influenced by various factors, including the broader context of Nigerian politics and society. This reinterpretation underscores the need to move beyond simplistic narratives and engage with the full complexity of Igbo political life in the post-war period.

Global Analogies to Igbo Separatist Sentiments

The Igbo separatist movement, particularly in the post-civil war period, shares several similarities with other global separatist movements while exhibiting unique characteristics that distinguish it from these other struggles. A juxtaposition of movements such as Catalonia in Spain, South Sudan, the Kurdish struggle, Ambazonia in Cameroon, the Ewe in Ghana and Togo, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) reveals both shared and divergent elements.

Catalonia offers a parallel to Igbo separatism in its pursuit of autonomy within a larger state structure. However, while Catalonian nationalism has been driven primarily by economic

[66] Celestina Ekene Chukwudi et al., "IPOB agitations for self-determination and the response of the Federal Government of Nigeria: Implications for political stability," *Academic journal of interdisciplinary studies* 8, no. 3 (2019): 182.

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concerns, specifically, the perception that Catalonia contributes disproportionately to Spain's economy relative to what it receives, Igbo separatism has been more deeply rooted in historical grievances and ethnic identity. Scholars like Vicent[67] have examined how Catalonia's wealth-based motivations differ from the Igbo's trauma and post-war marginalization.

In contrast, South Sudan's journey to independence shares more in common with the Igbo experience, particularly regarding the long-term impact of civil war. Both movements arose from a sense of political exclusion and economic marginalization, with South Sudan ultimately achieving independence through negotiation and international support. Scholars like Kevin[68] and Randolph[69] have drawn comparisons between the South Sudanese experience and the Igbo struggle, noting that while South Sudan succeeded in seceding, the Igbo movement did not gain the same level of international backing or achieve its goals.

The Kurdish struggle across multiple nations (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran) parallels the Igbo movement in its persistence despite significant repression. Both movements have faced severe military opposition and have been driven by a strong sense of ethnic identity and the desire to control resource-rich territories. However, the Kurdish struggle's multinational dimension, as analyzed by scholars such as Michiel[70], distinguishes it from the more localized Igbo context, where the focus has been solely within the Nigerian state.

Ambazonia in Cameroon presents another instructive comparison. Like the Igbo, the Ambazonians have faced political exclusion and economic marginalization within a post-colonial

[67] Vicent Partal, "Catalan Independence," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 23 (2023): 58-71.
[68] Kevin K Kariuki, "Secessions, majimboism and the federalist debate in Africa: a comparative study of south Sudan, Kenya and Nigeria" (PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2014).
[69] Randolph Martin, "Sudan's perfect war," *Foreign Affairs* (2002): 111-27.
[70] Michiel Leezenberg, "Politics, economy, and ideology in Iraqi Kurdistan since 2003: Enduring trends and novel challenges," *The Arab Studies Journal* 23, no. 1 (2015): 154-83.

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state. The Ambazonian struggle, which escalated into an armed conflict in recent years, shares with the Igbo experience a history of colonial-era grievances and a sense of betrayal by the central government. Scholars such as Piet & Francis[71] and Emmanuel[72] have highlighted the parallels between these movements, though Ambazonia's bid for independence is more recent and ongoing, whereas Igbo separatism has fluctuated over several decades.

The Ewe people of Ghana and Togo provide a cross-border example of separatist sentiments that, like the Igbo, are rooted in ethnic and cultural identity. The Ewe, however, face the additional complexity of their population being divided by colonial borders, a factor that has both hindered and shaped their separatist ambitions. Scholars like Naomi[73] have explored these dynamics, noting that while the Ewe and Igbo movements share cultural preservation goals, the Ewe struggle is complicated by its transnational nature.

Finally, the Irish Resistance Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland offers a case where historical grievances, particularly related to colonialism, economic inequality, and political exclusion, have driven a long-standing separatist movement. The IRA's violent and non-violent strategies, as well as its deep roots in historical conflicts, bear some resemblance to the Igbo experience. However, as scholars like Henry[74] and Francis[75] have noted, the religious dimension of the Irish conflict adds

[71] Piet Konings and Francis Beng Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone identity: A study of the politics of recognition and representation in Cameroon*, vol. 1 (Brill, 2003).
[72] Emmanuel Anyefru, "The refusal to belong: Limits of the discourse on Anglophone nationalism in Cameroon," *Journal of Third World Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 277-306.
[73] Naomi Chazan, "Ethnicity and politics in Ghana," *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (1982): 461-85. [75] Saadia Touval, "Africa's frontiers: Reactions to a colonial legacy," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 42, no. 4 (1966): 641-54.
[74] Henry Patterson, "Ireland: A New Phase in the Conflict between Nationalism and Unionism," *Science & Society* (1989): 192-218.
[75] Francis Costello, "Labour, Irish Republicanism, and the Social Order during the Anglo-Irish War," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 1-22.

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a layer of complexity that is less prominent in the Igbo context, where ethnic identity plays a more central role.

Across these global separatist movements, several common themes emerge. Historical grievances often form the bedrock of these struggles, as seen in Catalonia, the IRA, and the Kurdish movements. These grievances typically stem from perceived injustices and marginalization by a central government or dominant ethnic group. Economic marginalization is another recurring theme, with regions like South Sudan and Kurdistan seeking control over their resources to escape exploitative central governance. Political exclusion is a further commonality, as seen in Ambazonia and the IRA, where groups have been systematically denied representation or autonomy within their national governments.

Cultural preservation also drives many separatist movements. This is evident in the Ewe and Kurdish struggles, where the desire to maintain and promote a distinct cultural identity has fueled calls for independence or greater autonomy. In each case, preserving language, customs, and traditions becomes a rallying point for the separatist cause. While the Igbo separatist movement shares these commonalities, it is also characterized by several unique aspects. One of the most significant is the post-civil war trauma that continues to influence Igbo identity and political behavior. The Biafran War left deep scars on the Igbo population, shaping their collective memory and informing their interactions with the Nigerian state. Even during periods of dormancy, this trauma and ongoing feelings of marginalization have kept the idea of separatism alive.

Another unique characteristic of Igbo separatism is its use of dual strategies. Unlike some movements that pursue either exclusively violent or non-violent methods, the Igbo separatist cause has alternated between these approaches. Groups like MASSOB have generally advocated for peaceful resistance, while IPOB has taken a more militant stance. This duality reflects the internal

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divisions within the Igbo community and the varying perspectives on how best to achieve their goals.

The influence of the Igbo diaspora is another distinguishing feature. The Igbo community, both within Nigeria and abroad, has used media—particularly social media—to maintain and spread separatist sentiments. This global network has helped sustain the movement by raising awareness, mobilizing support, and exerting pressure on the Nigerian government from outside its borders. Last but not least, there are pronounced internal divisions and factionalism within the Igbo separatist movement. Unlike some more unified separatist movements, the Igbo cause has been fragmented, with different groups pursuing different strategies and goals. This lack of unity has often hindered the movement's effectiveness and has led to debates within the community about the best path forward. These internal divisions reflect the broader complexities of Igbo identity and politics, shaped by social, economic, and historical factors. While Igbo separatism shares considerable themes with other global separatist movements, it also stands out because of traits that reflect Nigeria's historical and sociopolitical context. Understanding these global analogies and unique aspects is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of the Igbo separatist movement and its place in the broader landscape of global separatist struggles.

Resurgence of Igbo Separatism in the Late 1990s and 2000s

In 1999, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) emerged as a critical player in the renewed separatist movement among the Igbo people of Nigeria. MASSOB was founded by Ralph Uwazuruike, who sought to reignite the separatist sentiments that had fuelled the Biafran War of 1967–1970. Uwazuruike and his supporters believed that the Igbo people had been marginalized and oppressed within the Nigerian state and that the only solution was to establish an independent Biafran nation. The formation of MASSOB was seen as a significant development, as it reflected the persistent grievances and aspirations of the Igbo

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people, who had long felt that their interests were not adequately represented within the Nigerian political system.

According to scholars such as Sunday[76] MASSOB's emergence was a direct response to the perceived failure of successive Nigerian governments to address the socioeconomic and political concerns of the Igbo community. However, while MASSOB's goal of an independent Biafran state resonated with some Igbos, it was not representative of the entire Igbo community. As Dada[77] has noted, the Igbo community remained divided in its response to the separatist movement, with some embracing MASSOB's agenda and others advocating for a more pragmatic approach within the Nigerian political system.

The resurgence of Igbo separatism in the late 1990s and 2000s led to a split in the Igbo community's response. According to Saliu,[78] some Igbos, particularly those who had experienced the trauma and devastation of the Biafran War, embraced the separatist agenda of MASSOB, believing that political participation within the Nigerian state had failed to address their long-standing grievances. These Igbos saw establishing an independent Biafran state as the only way to ensure their community's security, autonomy, and economic prosperity. Others, like the Ohenaaze Ndigbo, advocated for a more pragmatic approach, arguing that pursuing political power and representation within the Nigerian system was a more viable path to addressing Igbo concerns. These Igbos believed that by engaging in the political process and advocating for reforms within the existing system, they could secure greater autonomy, resource control, and equitable treatment

[76] Tunde Agara, "Federalism, political accommodation and the emergence of ethnic militias in Nigeria," *The Indian Journal of Political Science* (2011): 879.
[77] Dada Owoeye, "Problem of Secession cum Separatism in Nigeria: The Pre-Democracy and Democratic Marginalization of the Igbos," *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* 10 (2022): 68.
[78] Saliu Akeem Idowu, "Between Self-determination and Secession: An Assessment of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Agitations for the Independence of Southeast Nigeria" (PhD Thesis, UiT Norges arktiske universitet, 2023).

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for their community. As scholars such as Saliu[79] have observed, this group saw MASSOB's secessionist agenda as a risky and potentially counterproductive approach that could further marginalize the Igbo people within the Nigerian context.

In 2012, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was founded by Nnamdi Kanu. Unlike MASSOB, which had a more gradual and incremental approach, IPOB quickly gained traction among Igbo youth through the effective use of social media and the establishment of Radio Biafra, a platform that allowed Kanu to reach a wider audience and amplify the separatist message.

Scholars such as Emmanuel[80] and Chinedu[81] have highlighted how IPOB's use of social media and digital platforms was a key factor in its rapid growth and popularity, particularly among the younger generation of Igbos. By leveraging these tools, IPOB could disseminate its message, mobilize support, and engage in a more assertive and confrontational approach to pursuing Biafran independence. IPOB's approach was more militant compared to MASSOB, with the organization engaging in protests and clashes with security forces. The arrest of Nnamdi Kanu in 2015 further intensified the movement, leading to widespread demonstrations and a crackdown by the Nigerian government. As Dada etal,[89] Ikechukwu & Francis[82] have noted that this more confrontational approach, while garnering significant support among Igbo youth, also raised concerns about the potential for violence and the broader implications for the region.

[79] Akeem Idowu, "Between Self-determination and Secession: An Assessment of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Agitations for the Independence of Southeast Nigeria."
[80] Emmanuel S Nwofe, "The Internet and Activists' Digital Media Practices: A case of the Indigenous People of Biafra Movement in Nigeria," *IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication & Film* 6, no. 1 (2019): 34.
[81] Chinedu Valentine Ofoma, "Unpacking the Nexus Between Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Sit-at-Home Order and Socio-economic Development in South-East Nigeria," *Cross-Cultural Communication* 19, no. 1 (2023): 86. [89] Dada Isaac Owoeye, Vincent Emeka Ezeanya, and Nnaemeka Gabriel Obiegbunam, "Separatists' strategy: appraising the effects of IPOB monday sit-at-home order on political economy (socio-political and economic activities) of the south-east region of Nigeria," *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research* 8, no. 1 (2022): 98.
[82] Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu and Francis Iwuh, "The Indigenous People of Biafra: A Historico-hermeneutic study," *Nigerian Journal of African Studies (NJAS)* 5, no. 1 (2023): 7.

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The government's response to IPOB's activities, which included the designation of the group as a terrorist organization and the use of force to suppress its activities, further heightened tensions and fueled a cycle of conflict. Scholars such as Gideon[83] have argued that this heavy-handed approach by the Nigerian authorities only served to deepen the sense of grievance and marginalization among the Igbo community, and further entrenched the secessionist sentiments that IPOB sought to promote.

Despite its popularity, particularly among Igbo youth, IPOB did not represent the views of all Igbos. The Igbo community remained divided in its response to the separatist movement, with some embracing IPOB's agenda and others advocating for a more gradual approach to addressing their grievances within the Nigerian political system. As Samuel[84] observed, this ongoing division within the Igbo community reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of the issue. While some Igbos saw IPOB's militant approach as a necessary and justified response to their marginalization, others believed that a more pragmatic and conciliatory strategy was more likely to yield tangible results in terms of addressing their concerns and securing a more equitable position within the Nigerian federation.

The emergence of MASSOB and IPOB, both of which sought to rekindle the separatist sentiments that had sparked the Biafran War, marked the resurgence of Igbo separatism in the late 1990s and early 2000s. While these movements gained significant support, particularly among Igbo youth, they did not represent the entire Igbo community, which remained divided in response to the separatist agenda. The complex and multifaceted nature of this issue highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the historical, political, and social factors that have shaped the Igbo

[83] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 355.
[84] Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," 15.

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experience within the Nigerian state and the challenges in finding a consensus-based solution that addresses the legitimate grievances of the Igbo people while preserving the unity and stability of the Nigerian federation.

Overall, this study's historical analysis shows how Igbo political movements in Nigeria have changed over time. It shows a complicated and non-linear story that goes against the standard view of a continuous and unified secessionist struggle. Examining scholarly literature has identified distinct phases in the Igbo political experience, each marked by unique contexts, strategies, and motivations. Early scholarship interpreted Igbo agitation as inherently secessionist in the immediate aftermath of the Biafran War, emphasizing the continuity of the cause and the Igbo's persistent desire for independence. However, this viewpoint could not consider the significant reintegration of the Igbo into Nigerian society during the post-war period, characterized by active political participation and economic integration. Scholars during this time often overlooked the Igbo community's efforts to rebuild their lives and regain a place within the Nigerian state, instead portraying their actions as a mere suppression of separatist aspirations.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the dominance of separatist narratives, as scholars framed Igbo political movements as the natural continuation of the Biafran struggle. This interpretation reinforced the notion of a monolithic Igbo identity singularly focused on secession, downplaying the internal complexities and debates within the community regarding the appropriate response to the post-war Nigerian state. The portrayal of the Igbo as perpetually secessionist contributed to the perpetuation of certain stereotypes and a reductive understanding of Igbo political life. In the early 2000s, a new wave of counter-narratives emerged, challenging the oversimplified secessionist perspective.

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These scholars emphasized the cyclical nature of Igbo political strategies, highlighting the "dormancy period" in the decades immediately following the civil war, where the Igbo community primarily focused on reintegration and political participation within the Nigerian system. This more nuanced understanding underscored the diverse goals and evolving approaches of the Igbo in response to the changing political landscape, moving beyond the binary of separatism versus integration. The resurgence of separatist sentiments in the late 1990s and 2000s, exemplified by the rise of movements like MASSOB and IPOB, represented a distinct phase in the Igbo political experience. While these groups sought to reignite the Biafran cause, they were not representative of the entire Igbo community, which remained divided in its response to the separatist agenda. This division within the Igbo community reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of the issue, where some embraced the militant approach of IPOB while others advocated for a more gradual and conciliatory strategy within the Nigerian political system.

This study's examination of the historiography of Igbo political movements serves as a necessary continuation and expansion of the evolving understanding of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. This research contributes to a more nuanced and balanced discourse on the Igbo experience in the post-war era by critically analyzing the dominant narratives and introducing new conceptual frameworks. The recognition of distinct phases, marked by periods of separatist resurgence and integrationist tendencies, is crucial for contextualizing the current and future trajectories of Igbo political identity within Nigeria. This approach challenges the simplistic binary of separatism versus integration, encouraging a deeper engagement with the underlying factors that have shaped the Igbo community's responses to the post-colonial Nigerian state.

Moreover, this historiographical analysis highlights the importance of acknowledging the discontinuities and internal divisions within the Igbo political sphere. By moving beyond the portrayal of a monolithic separatism movement, this study sheds light on the diverse strategies,

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goals, and perspectives that have characterized the Igbo experience, enriching our understanding of the complex interplay between ethnic identity, political aspirations, and the dynamics of the Nigerian state. Examining global analogies to the Igbo separatist movement further reinforces the need for a more nuanced approach. While the Igbo struggle shares commonalities with other separatist movements, such as the influence of historical grievances, economic marginalization, and cultural preservation, it also exhibits unique characteristics shaped by Nigeria's specific historical and socio-political context. This comparative analysis underscores the importance of situating the Igbo experience within the broader landscape of global separatist struggles while recognizing the distinctive features that define its trajectory.

Ultimately, this research serves as a critical foundation for future scholarship, providing a nuanced framework for examining the evolving nature of Igbo political movements and their implications for the broader socio-political landscape of Nigeria. By embracing the complexities and discontinuities inherent in the Igbo political experience, this study paves the way for a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of this pivotal aspect of Nigerian history. The insights gleaned from this historiographical analysis can inform policy discussions, promote more inclusive dialogue, and contribute to the ongoing efforts to address the legitimate grievances of the Igbo community within the Nigerian federation.

Methodology

Historians generally subscribe to the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a methodological approach that focuses on exploring and understanding meanings, concepts, characteristics, and descriptions of phenomena rather than quantifying them. The social sciences, humanities, and arts commonly use this approach to gather in-depth insights into behaviours, experiences, and interactions. It involves methods such as interviews, focus groups, document

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analysis, and observation, aiming to provide a rich understanding of the subject under study.[85] The adoption of qualitative research in this study was beneficial for several reasons. It allowed for an in-depth exploration of the complex sociopolitical dynamics, cultural nuances, and historical contexts of the Igbo separatist movement. It enabled an understanding of the perspectives, motivations, and experiences of those involved in or affected by the movement. This adaptable method evolved as the study progressed, allowing for exploring new themes and ideas. Studies involving specific cultural contexts find it particularly useful, as it respects and acknowledges the unique aspects of the culture under study.

Authorities and historians who discuss the significance of qualitative research include Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* Authorities,[86] Robert K. Yin in *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* Robert K. Yin in *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*,[87] and John W. Creswell in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* These scholars underscore the importance of qualitative research methodologies in providing contextually rich insights into complex phenomena, making it suitable for studying the Igbo separatist movement. Thus, the research design for this thesis adopted a qualitative approach.

Data Collection

The study used newspaper sources, archival materials, and oral interviews. Newspapers offered contemporary accounts and public opinions, providing a chronological narrative of the Igbo agitation movement. Despite potential biases, they effectively captured evolving public sentiment

[85] John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (California, USA: Sage publications, 2016), 1-488.
[86] Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (California, USA: Sage, 2011), 375-443.
[87] Robert K Yin, *Qualitative research from start to finish* (New York: Guilford publications, 2015), 1-417.

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and media coverage surrounding the movement. Archival sources, including historical documents and government records, provided insights into the roots of grievances fuelling the movement. Furthermore, research on Nigeria's political and economic landscape during the agitation period illuminated the broader context. Studies on Igbo social structures, political systems, and cultural values offered a deeper understanding of the movement's motivations. Academic works analyzing social movements in Nigeria or Africa provided comparative perspectives. Incorporating these

academic works alongside historical documents ensured a comprehensive understanding of the context. Oral interviews with key informants, experts, and Igbo community activists provided firsthand insights. However, they were subjective and susceptible to recall bias. Accessing archival materials posed challenges due to location, digitization costs, or language barriers. Each data source had advantages and limitations, necessitating a multifaceted approach to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Igbo separatist movement's historical and political context.

Historians like John Tosh in *The Pursuit of History*,[88] Lynn Abrams in *Oral History Theory*,[89] highlight the importance of diverse sources in historical research, emphasizing the value of oral testimonies, archival materials, and various references in achieving a comprehensive understanding of complex historical subjects like the Igbo separatist agitation. For this research, various sources were tapped into to capture the movement's evolution. Newspapers such as *The Daily Sun* and *Vanguard* served as repositories of contemporary accounts and public discourse, offering insights into how the media framed the movement over time. Archives, including those at

[88] John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of history* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1-324.
[89] Lynn Abrams, *Oral history theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1-252.

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the Lagos State Archives and Records Bureau and the Nigerian Archives, provided historical context and government responses to the agitation. Primary sources authored by key actors like Yakubu Gowon, Olusegun Obasanjo, Adewale Ademoyegha, David Ejoor, and Ralph Uwechue offered direct perspectives on the movement's goals. Oral interviews with key informants and community members brought the movement to life, offering firsthand insights into personal experiences and motivations. These interviews helped uncover the emotional and cultural dimensions of the movement, enriching the analysis and shedding light on aspects potentially overlooked in written sources. While each source type offered unique insights, they also presented limitations. Newspapers introduced biases, archival materials needed to be completed, and oral interviews were subjective. A rigorous approach was adopted to address these limitations, critically evaluating information from multiple sources and collaborating with local experts and community members. By integrating diverse sources, this research provided a comprehensive understanding of the Igbo separatist movement, navigating its complexities with evidence and objectivity.

Furthermore, ethical considerations included ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and participant confidentiality. Objectivity, transparency, and peer review addressed limitations such as data availability and biases. Employing a qualitative approach, the study combined historical research methods with content analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis. These methods ensured rigorous data collection and analysis, avoiding bias and enhancing the research's credibility—semi-structured interviews with key informants allowed for a flexible yet focused discussion. Tape recording, pilot interviews, and supervisor validation ensured accuracy and relevance. Snowball sampling was used to access broader perspectives within the Igbo community. Interviews with non-Igbo communities provided diverse viewpoints, enriching the analysis and informing policy recommendations. Overall, the strategic combination of diverse sources, rigorous

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methodologies, and ethical considerations contributed to a thorough and unbiased investigation into the changing phases of the Igbo separatist movement in Nigeria.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One introduces the thesis topic, emphasizing its significance in Nigeria's history and politics. It outlines the purpose and objectives of the study, provides a brief historical context on Nigeria and the Igbo ethnic group, and presents research questions, methodology, and data sources. The chapter highlights the study's significance in comprehending Nigerian history, politics, and ethnic relations, and it culminates with a summary of future chapters, fostering excitement for the exploration of further insights.

Chapter Two provides the study's background. The chapter delves into the explosive phase leading to the birth of Biafra. It also examines the challenges faced by Nigeria after gaining independence and the events leading up to the Biafran declaration of secession. These discussions are necessary for contextualizing the Igbo separatist movement. The chapter provides a comprehensive backdrop for analyzing the Igbo separatist sentiment and its evolution by understanding Nigeria's socio-political landscape and the catalysts behind the Biafran declaration.

Chapter Three provides an examination of the dormant phase after the Igbo defeat in the Nigerian Civil War. It also delves into the Igbo predicament after the war, 1970–1990. It explores the challenges faced by the Igbo community during the post-war rebuilding process, including reintegration, socioeconomic struggles, and political representation. The chapter also examines the revival of Igbo culture and identity, ongoing grievances and separatist agitations, and the progress made by the Igbo people. It concludes with reflections on the significance of this period for the Igbo separatist movement.

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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Chapter Four examines the re-introduction of the multi-party system and birth of MASSOB, thereby exploring the relationship between Nigeria's Fourth Republic and the rise of Igbo separatist movements in the late 90s. It examines the transition to democratic governance, factors contributing to separatist sentiments, political representation, socioeconomic challenges, government response, and international involvement. The chapter reflects on the persistence of the Igbo separatist movement during that period. **Chapter Five** examines the impact of digitization on Igbo separatist movements from 2000 to 2015. It explores the digital revolution in Nigeria, the emergence of online separatist platforms, the role of social media in activism, and their impact on the activities of IPOB.

Chapter Six concludes the study by summarising its overarching goal: to analyse the dynamic evolution of Igbo separatist agitation from 1970 to 2015. It achieves this by addressing specific objectives and questions concerning the construction of Igbo identity, the development of agitation forms, the impact of digitization, the achievements of separatist movements, and their persistence over time. In terms of their objectives, the chapter synthesizes the accomplishments of the Igbo separatist movements in the various phases. The chapter then briefly analyzes the implications of these findings for Nigerian politics and interethnic relations, emphasizing the study's significance and potential for future research.

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

Anticipated Problem and Corresponding Remedy:

1. One potential challenge relates to the availability and accessibility of historical records, especially for the earlier periods of the study. Some documents or sources were scarce, lost, or not digitized.

Remedy:

Interviews with key informants, activists, and witnesses provided valuable insights into the earlier phases of Igbo agitation.

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2. Some historical records and accounts were biased or subject to subjectivity, which had the potential to affect the research objectivity and accuracy.

Remedies:

I critically evaluated and cross-referenced multiple sources to identify potential biases and discrepancies. Combining various sources and methodologies helped verify information and ensure a more balanced perspective.

3. The subject matter involved politically sensitive issues related to separatism and national unity, which required careful handling to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation.
4. Security concerns restricted access to some areas of Nigeria, making fieldwork and interviews challenging.

Remedy:

In cases where direct access was limited, I collaborated with archivists, local scholars, NGOs, or civil society organisations to gather relevant information.

I navigated these challenges by addressing these anticipated problems through careful methodology, interdisciplinary approaches, and a critical perspective. I contributed valuable insights into the changing phases of the Igbo separatist movement in Nigeria from 1970 to 2015. In conclusion, this study promises to be an enlightening and thought-provoking exploration of the Igbo community's aspirations and struggles for self-determination within the Nigerian context. The insights gleaned from this thesis have the potential to enrich our understanding of Nigerian history and politics while shedding light on the complexities of ethnic relations in the country.

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Chapter 2

Igbo Identity and Background to the Igbo Agitation, 1960-1970: The Explosive Phase This chapter examines Igbo identity formation and the crucial 1960–1970 period, contextualizing the Igbo sovereignty movement amidst Nigeria's independence transition. Despite Igbo accomplishments, post-independence political challenges emerged, driven by perceived marginalization. The Eastern Region prospered economically under Azikiwe and Okpara's leadership, but tensions with other regions increased. Colonel Ojukwu's 1967 declaration of the Republic of Biafra sparked the Nigerian Civil War, ending in 1970 with substantial Igbo losses.

Igbo Identity in the Pre-colonial Era

African communities, including the Igbo people in the fertile lands east of the lower Niger River, favoured decentralized governance, eschewing formal states or monarchies. Within Igbo society, individuals took on self-governance roles within a communal framework, promoting peace, defence, and prosperity without centralized rulers. This decentralized system proved highly successful and comparable to centralized state models, showcasing the efficacy of alternative governance in Africa.[90]

During the pre-colonial period, Igbo society had a republican socio-political structure, lacking centralized rulers. Village-level leadership was prominent, promoting autonomy and decentralized decision-making. Age grades and councils of elders played crucial roles in governance and

[90] Basil Davidson, Francis Kwamina Buah, and Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi, *A history of West Africa 1000-1800*, Longman Group Limited, London, United Kingdom, (1977), 112-15.

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consensus-building. Despite lacking a central authority, this model persisted into the pre-independence era, underscoring the lasting impact of village leadership and community-based decision-making mechanisms. Igbo society exemplified collective agency and self-governance through its decentralized governance model.[91]

While conflicts between Igbo villages occasionally occurred over land boundaries or resource access, they were infrequent and typically resolved through negotiation or elder mediation rather than prolonged warfare. In farmland disputes, neighbouring villages engaged respected elders to delineate boundaries and usage rights peacefully. Moreover, Igbo communities pragmatically formed multifaceted alliances not just for defence but also to strengthen trade networks and economic prosperity, as seen in partnerships between coastal and inland villages.[92]

Economic activities centrally shaped Igbo society's social fabric. Agriculture provided subsistence through staple crops, while local and long-distance trade facilitated cultural exchanges, contributing to idea diffusion across regions. Craft specialization further enriched economic landscapes, with artisans producing goods meeting local needs and regional trade networks.[93]

Within Igbo communities like Nri Awka, social stratification existed to some extent, with structures like titled elders and age grades delineating village hierarchies. However, the emphasis on communal values and shared identity overshadowed rigid social distinctions. Lineage and village affiliation were paramount to social organization and identity. This communal ethos

[91] Davidson, Buah, and Ajayi, *A history of West Africa 1000-1800*.
[92] Chima J Korieh, "African ethnicity as mirage? Historicizing the essence of the Igbo in Africa and the Atlantic diaspora," *Dialectical Anthropology* 30 (2006): 104.
[93] Gloria Chuku, "Gender Relations in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Igbo Society," in *Igbo in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijoke Njoku (USA: Indianna University Press, 2016), 46-68.

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fostered cooperation, mutual support, and a sense of belonging among community members, reinforcing the cohesive fabric of Igbo society.[94]

The Colonial Era (1884 - 1960)

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked the onset of British colonial rule in Nigeria's territories, initiated by the 1884–85 Berlin Conference's partition of Africa and establishing protectorates through treaties with indigenous leaders and military campaigns against resistant groups. The Igbo, among affected ethnic groups, resisted foreign imposition through diplomatic negotiations, armed conflicts, and the preservation of indigenous customs. Despite challenges under colonial domination, the Igbo and other ethnic groups actively opposed British rule, contributing to Nigeria's eventual independence emergence in 1960.[95]

In response to British colonialism's disruption of Igbo autonomy and traditional social-political frameworks, resistance movements emerged. The decentralized Igbo society challenged indirect rule's effectiveness, leading to imposed administrative mechanisms like Warrant Chiefs lacking traditional legitimacy. In 1914, economic motives merged the Northern and Southern Protectorates into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, combining the affluent South with the poorer North to address financial inequalities and streamline governance under one Governor - a pivotal shift toward centralizing colonial administration across Nigeria.[96]

[94] Hannah Chukwu, "The Kingless People: The Speech Act as Shield and Sword," in *Igbo in the Atlantic World: African Origins and Diasporic Destinations*, ed. Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijoke Njoku (USA: Indianna University Press, 2016), 17-27.
[95] Adiele. E Afigbo, "Patterns of Resistance of British Conquest," in *Conquest and Resistance to Colonialism in Africa*, ed. Gregory Maddox (London: Routledge, 1973), 14.
[96] Toyin Falola, *History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16.

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The 1914 amalgamation laid the foundations for a unified Nigerian nation-state by uniting various ethnic groups, fostering shared national identity and emergent nationalism. Regionalism's introduction, notably the Eastern Region encompassing Igboland, significantly shaped Igbo identity formation. Shared governance structures and administrative systems within the Eastern Region promoted solidarity and collective decision-making among Igbo communities, cultivating a sense of belonging and ownership over regional development efforts. This process facilitated the growth of a cohesive Igbo identity within the broader Nigerian context.[97]

This commonality played a crucial role in reinforcing a sense of unity and belonging among the diverse communities within the Eastern Region. They provided tangible manifestations of Igbo identity and aspirations as rallying points for collective action and cultural expression. As a result, the introduction of regionalism left a lasting imprint on Igbo identity, fostering a sense of cohesion and shared purpose among the Igbo people within the Eastern Region.[98] The legacy of regionalism continues to influence perceptions of identity and belonging among the Igbo people, reflecting a nuanced relationship between historical structures of governance and contemporary dynamics of identity formation and political participation.

Igbo People and Nigerian Nationalism

Decades post-WWI, Nigerian opposition to British rule grew over unfair taxes and imposed local chiefs. Western education fueled a yearning for self-governance, sparking nationalism challenging British dominance.[99] Colonial Nigeria's focus on cash crops and novel taxation disrupted

[97] Ken WJ Post, "Is there a case for Biafra?," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)* 44, no. 1 (1968): 28.
[98] Ezeakukwu Emmanuel Nsoedo, "The Marginalization of the Igbo People in Nigeria's Political and Economic Sectors: What Is the Way Forward?," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* (7), no. (7) (2019): 427-37.
[99] Tekena N Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 4 (1970): 570.

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traditional economic practices, triggering social shifts. Missionary education and the resulting nationalist fervour among educated Igbo elites sowed the seeds of future Nigerian nationalist movements.[100]

World Wars I and II stoked Nigerian nationalism. British wartime policies, heavy taxes and forced labour, fostered resentment. Global movements like Pan-Africanism fueled aspirations for self-rule, challenging colonial dominance.[101] World War II, spanning 1939 to 1945, significantly impacted Nigeria, intensifying political awareness and fuelling demands for independence. This era marked the growth of nationalist movements and the establishment of new political parties.[102]

The global context of World War II exposed Nigerians to ideas of freedom and self-determination. As stated in the Atlantic Charter, these ideas mainly influenced those who served in the British army during the war.[103] Educated Nigerians, inspired by global anti-colonial movements, intensified opposition to colonial rule. Figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, educated in the West, advocated loudly for independence. Media, particularly newspapers, facilitated the spread of nationalist sentiments and criticism of colonial policies.[104]

During this period, critical political parties were formed. Azikiwe, an Igbo who founded the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944, led it to prominence as a

[100] CN Ubah, "Changing Patterns of leadership among the Igbo, 1900-1960," *Civilisations* (1987): 141-46.
[101] Stephen Yohanna, "Imperial Citizens or Economic Nationalists? An Analysis of Colonially Restructured Northern Nigerian Economy in the 1940s," *The Political Economy of Colonialism and Nation-Building in Nigeria* (2022): 45-61.
[102] Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," 578.
[103] Yohanna, "Imperial Citizens or Economic Nationalists? An Analysis of Colonially Restructured Northern Nigerian Economy in the 1940s," 48.
[104] Suleiman Ari Maisule, Joseph Bamidele, and Samson Olayemi Sennuga, "A Critical Review of Historical Analysis of Social Change in Nigeria from the Pre-Colonial to the Post-Colonial Period," *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2023): 73-83.

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significant political force supporting Nigerian independence. The Action Group (AG), established in 1951 by Awolowo, focused on self-government and regional autonomy, primarily in the Western Region.[105] These political parties gained support through rallies, protests, and activism, advocating for Nigerian desires and challenging colonialism. They participated in constitutional meetings, urging political reforms and independence. Trade unions, student groups, and regional organizations also contributed to the nationalist movement, aligning with major parties for independence.[106]

Prominent political figures emerged, aligning parties regionally and ethnically: NPC in the North led by Bello and Balewa, AG in the West for Yoruba interests, and NCNC in the East led by Azikiwe.[107] These parties formed to represent regional and ethnic interests and negotiate power in future Nigeria. Constitutional conferences in London led to reforms granting more self-governance and regional autonomy.[108] In 1954, Nigeria adopted a federal structure, allowing significant autonomy to its regions, each with its legislature and executive.[109]

Independence in 1960 marked a transition to a federal system, reflecting the shift from colonial rule to Nigerian leadership. The Igbo community played a pivotal role in political activism and negotiations, contributing to Nigeria's independence.[121] The NCNC, led by Igbo Azikiwe, championed Nigerian independence, advocating for the end of colonial domination and

[105] Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," 568.
[106] Maisule, Bamidele, and Sennuga, "A Critical Review of Historical Analysis of Social Change in Nigeria from the Pre-Colonial to the Post-Colonial Period," 73-83.
[107] Jacob Oluwole Odeyemi, "A political history of Nigeria and the crisis of ethnicity in nation-building," *International Journal of Developing Societies* 3, no. 1 (2014): 1-12.
[108] Basil Ugorji, "Ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria: Analysis and resolution," *Journal of Living Together* 4, no. 5 (2017): 179.
[109] Odeyemi, "A political history of Nigeria and the crisis of ethnicity in nation-building," 1-12. [121]
Falola, *History of Nigeria*, 102.

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establishing a united, independent nation. His unwavering commitment to the nationalist movement inspired many Nigerians, transcending ethnic and regional boundaries.[110]

Azikiwe was a staunch advocate of Pan-Africanism, emphasizing the importance of African solidarity and cooperation. He collaborated with other African leaders and participated in international conferences to promote African unity and emancipation. Zik's vision extended beyond Nigeria's borders, envisioning a united and progressive Africa.[111] Beyond his political endeavours, Azikiwe made significant contributions to education and journalism in Nigeria. He founded and edited several newspapers, using the power of the press to disseminate nationalist ideas and promote informed public discourse. His contributions to education included establishing educational institutions that nurtured a new generation of leaders.[112] Besides Nnamdi Azikiwe, other notable Igbo figures included Michael Okpara and Akanu Ibiam. These leaders were instrumental in articulating the aspirations of Nigerians for self-governance and were actively involved in political parties and movements that pushed for independence.[113]

Culturally, the Igbo people contributed through their rich traditions of democracy and communal organization, which influenced the broader national discourse on governance and self-determination. The Igbo Union played a role in mobilizing support and fostering a sense of national identity among Nigerians.[114] The 1936 founding of the Igbo Federal Union (IFU) marked a turning point for Igbo nationalism. In 1948, the IFU transformed into the Igbo State Union in Aba. This shift aimed to unify the Igbo people politically and align them with the National Council of Nigeria

[110] Gilbert Chukwu Aro and Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," *Journal of African Union Studies* 6, no. 2-3 (2017). 47-77

[111] Gilbert Chukwu Aro and Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," *Journal of African Union Studies* 6, no. 2-3 (2017): 45.

[112] Anthony A Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Safari Books Ltd., 2014), 21.

[113] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 25.

[114] Aro and Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," 49.

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and the Cameroons (NCNC) call for independence.[115] Though the Igbo State Union did not advocate for a separate Igbo state, it acted as an extension of the NCNC, promoting Igbo rights and interests within Nigeria.

As Nigerian nationalism splintered into regional factions in the 1940s, the Igbo community used the Igbo State Union as a platform to advocate for their interests. Historians like Aro and Ani suggest that the Union actively lobbied the NCNC to prioritize Igbo advancement and well-being at the local level.[116] The Igbo people played a crucial role in Nigeria's independence through their democratic practices, such as the "Oha-na-eze" village assembly, and their participation in nationalist movements like the NNDP and NCNC, which emphasized communal unity and identity and played a pivotal role in advocating for self-rule.[117]

The Igbo, a prominent intellectual group in Nigeria, utilized their education and literary skills to advocate for independence. They wrote articles, books, and pamphlets criticizing colonial rule and proposing visions for an independent Nigeria. Igbo figures like Kenneth Dike, Christopher Okigbo, and Chinua Achebe shaped public opinion and the intellectual discourse surrounding independence and post-colonial identity in Nigeria.[118] The Igbo people's strong emphasis on education translated into a higher literacy rate within their community.

Their commitment to education enriched the Igbo population and contributed to Nigeria's overall human capital development. Many Igbo individuals excelled academically and pursued

[115] James S Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 47-48.
[116] Aro and Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," 47-77.
[117] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 42.
[118] Gloria Chuku, "Olaudah Equiano and the foundation of Igbo intellectual tradition," in *The Igbo intellectual tradition: Creative conflict in African and African diasporic thought* (New York, USA: Palgrave, Macmilan, 2013), 43.

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higher education, becoming leaders and professionals across various fields.[119] The Igbo people's participation in trade unions and significant presence in the civil service also contributed to the independence movement. Their involvement in these sectors provided platforms for expressing nationalist sentiments and for organizing protests and strikes that challenged colonial policies.[120]

The Igbo people's entrepreneurial skills and extensive networks facilitated economic growth and cultural exchange, making their legacy a significant aspect of Nigerian history.[121] Igbo medical professionals played a vital role in the healthcare sector, providing essential medical services to the population. Many Igbo doctors and nurses were at the forefront of delivering healthcare services and medical advancements, contributing to improving the overall health and well-being of the Nigerian people.[122]

Igbo individuals were known for their philanthropic efforts and community development initiatives. Many successful Igbo entrepreneurs and professionals invested in their communities, supporting social development projects, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities.[123] Igbo contributions in commerce, industry, academia, and culture were vital for Nigeria's progress. Their enterprising spirit and focus on education shape the nation's growth. Igbo innovation and cultural expression enrich Nigeria's diverse heritage.[124]

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[119] Barth Chukwuezi, "Through thick and thin: Igbo rural-urban circularity, identity, and investment," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 19, no. 1 (2001). 55-66

[120] Godwin Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," *African studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 35.

[121] Olanrewaju Akinpelu Olutayo, "The Igbo entrepreneur in the political economy of Nigeria," *African Study Monographs* 20, no. 3 (1999):147-174.

[122] Gregory Emeka Chinweuba and Evaristus Chukwudi Ezeugwu, "The ontological foundation of Igbo entrepreneurship: An analytical investigation," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture, and Religion* 33, no. 2017 (2017): 17-24.

[123] Barth Chukwuezi, "Through thick and thin: Igbo rural-urban circularity, identity and investment," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 19, no. 1 (2001): 45.

[124] Chukwuemeka Onwubu, "Ethnic identity, political integration, and national development: the Igbo diaspora in Nigeria," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (1975): 408.

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Post-Independence Challenges, 1960 - 1963

Nigeria faced challenges post-independence due to ethnic and regional tensions rooted in colonial legacy. Despite initial optimism, strains on cohesion emerged.[125] Nigeria's post-colonial transition involved intricate power dynamics and the establishment of a federal structure with three autonomous regions: the Northern Region, the Western Region, and the Eastern Region.[126] Each of the three significant regions had distinct cultural, religious, and economic characteristics, contributing to a sense of identity and pride among their ethnic groups. However, these differences also led to competition for political power and resources, creating an atmosphere of mistrust and rivalry.[127]

Development projects favoured the Northern Region, leading to feelings of neglect and marginalization in the Eastern and Western Regions.[128] The Northern Region's political dominance, due to its larger population, led to perceived inequities and tensions, complicating Nigeria's nation-building process.[129] Northern Nigeria disproportionately benefited from educational policies, with the central government allocating more resources to schools and teacher training colleges. This bias was rooted in historical injustices, political expediency, economic considerations, and regional complexities.[130]

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[125] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 43.
[126] Ugorji, "Ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria: Analysis and resolution," 177-78.
[127] Oluwafemi A Fawole and ML Bello, "The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian federalism," *International NGO Journal* 6, no. 10 (2011): 215.
[128] Toyin Falola and Matthew M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 166.
[129] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 166.
[130] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 166.

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The Yoruba ethnic group, characterized by economic prosperity and active participation in nationalist movements, holds significant political and economic influence in the Western Region.[131] The Yoruba region, known for trade and education, was influential in Nigeria's early nationalist movements, with educated elites like Obafemi Awolowo advocating for selfgovernment.[132] The federal system empowered regional autonomy. The Western Region utilized various strategies like securing autonomy and forming alliances to assert its independence.[133] As mentioned earlier, the Eastern Region, predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group, was recognized for its enterprising spirit and emphasis on education and entrepreneurship.[134] The Biafran secessionist movement serves as an example of how some Igbo people sought dominance. Igbo leaders initiated the Biafran secession movement for autonomy in the late 1960s, which led to the declaration of Biafra in 1967. Following this, regional tensions sparked the Nigerian Civil War.[135]

The political and economic imbalances within Nigeria's regions sparked heated debates and disagreements, notably in the allocation of resources, such as revenue and infrastructure development.[136] For instance, Nigeria's revenue allocation formula, based on the "principle of derivation," allocates a sizable portion of federal revenue according to the location of natural resources.[149] The Niger Delta, a region rich in resources, was to receive a larger share of Nigeria's

[131] Aderemi Suleiman Ajala, "Yoruba nationalist movements, ethnic politics and violence: A creation from historical consciousness and socio-political space in South-western Nigeria," *The Working Papers* (2009): 21.
[132] Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, *Yoruba identity and power politics* (New York: University of Rochester Press Rochester, 2006), 273.
[133] Falola and Genova, *Yoruba identity and power politics*, 275.
[134] Chukwuezi, "Through thick and thin: Igbo rural-urban circularity, identity and investment," 5-7.
[135] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 159.
[136] Asadu Ikechukwu and Nwofia Johnson Emeka, "Fiscal federalism and imbalance in revenue allocation in Nigeria: Implications for socioeconomic development," *International and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2018): 39-47. [149] Adetunji Ojo Ogunyemi, "Revenue Allocation in Post-Colonial Nigeria: Its Laws, Dynamics and Challenges since 1960," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 16 (2014): 4.

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revenue, a result of the principle of derivation, which ensured fair distribution of federal income among states, addressing historical inequalities.[137] However, the Northern Region in Nigeria received a larger share of federal revenue despite limited resources, leading to economic disparities and contentious debates. This was mainly due to its demographic advantage, which resulted in a substantial share of the revenue.[138] Historical political influence and power dynamics favoured the Northern Region in revenue allocation, alongside demographic factors, enhancing its share over the Southern regions.

Corruption, nepotism, and favouritism were significant issues in Nigeria's political landscape, leading to regional mistrust and disenchantment with the democratic process.[152] Examples of these challenges include Political elites engaged in widespread corruption, diverting public funds intended for infrastructure, healthcare, and education for personal gain.[139] Essential services like licences, permits, or healthcare often involved bribery and extortion. Government leaders appointing family and close associates to critical positions undermined meritocracy, fostering favouritism perceptions.[140] Leaders directed resources to their regions, disadvantaging others. Government contracts were often awarded based on political connections, bypassing competitive bidding. Such practices fueled regional distrust and disillusionment with the democratic process.[141] The perception that the political system favoured a select few over the broader population contributed to political instability and challenges in achieving national unity.[142]

[137] Ogunyemi, "Revenue Allocation in Post-Colonial Nigeria: Its Laws, Dynamics and Challenges since 1960," 9.
[138] Ogunyemi, "Revenue Allocation in Post-Colonial Nigeria: Its Laws, Dynamics and Challenges since 1960," 5. [152] Odeyemi, "A political history of Nigeria and the crisis of ethnicity in nation-building," 10-11.
[139] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 159.
[140] Odeyemi, "A political history of Nigeria and the crisis of ethnicity in nation-building," 10.
[141] Odeyemi, "A political history of Nigeria and the crisis of ethnicity in nation-building," 11.
[142] Dewale Adewale Yagboyaju, "Ethnic politics, political corruption, and poverty: perspectives on contending issues and Nigeria's democratization process," *Ethnic Studies Review* 32, no. 1 (2009): 131-151.

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1964 Federal Elections

The 1964 federal elections were highly anticipated but turned out to be deeply flawed, shattering hopes for a fair and transparent process.[143] Before the 1964 federal elections, political parties like the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the East campaigned vigorously. The Obafemi Awolowo-led Action Group (AG) was well-known in the Western Region.[144]

The electoral malpractices and irregularities that would mar the 1964 elections in Nigeria were indeed evident from the beginning, and several factors contributed to these issues.[145] Before the 1964 elections, Nigeria experienced heightened political tensions as rival parties and ethnic groups competed for power. This competition led to allegations of voter intimidation and violence as some parties resorted to unscrupulous tactics to secure victory.[160]

The 1964 elections were crucial, with candidates vying for significant regional and federal power. Some resorted to electoral misconduct like bribery and ballot tampering due to inadequate oversight. This exposed challenges in Nigeria's young democracy, rooted in colonial legacies and nation-building complexities. Political tensions and ethnic dynamics drove the fraud, which

[143] Michael M. Ogbeidi, "A culture of failed elections: Revisiting democratic elections in Nigeria, 1959–2003," *Historia Actual Online*, no. 21 (2010): 43-56.

[144] Richard Joseph, "Political parties and ideology in Nigeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 5, no. 13 (1978): 78-90.

[145] Eziho Promise Ogele, "Battle on the Ballot: Trends of Electoral Violence and Human Security in Nigeria, 19642019," *The Asian Institute of Research Journal of Social and Political Sciences* (2020): 883-97. [160] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 159.

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diminished the process's credibility.[146] Following the elections, doubts and accusations of manipulation arose. Many Nigerians, particularly in the Eastern Region, felt disillusioned, suspecting rigging to favour specific parties. These intensified feelings of marginalization, especially among the Igbo community.[147]

The contested election results in Nigeria in the aftermath of the 1964 elections indeed triggered widespread protests and demonstrations throughout the country.[148] Protests exposed deep-seated ethnic tensions, particularly between the Northern and Eastern regions, where each felt marginalized by the other's perceived advantages. Varying perceptions of Igbo privileges further complicated the situation.[149] Factors contributing to perceptions of Igbo advantage included the following:

The Igbo ethnic group was known for its emphasis on education and entrepreneurship. As a result, many Igbo individuals had achieved educational and economic success, leading to the perception among some that the Igbo were privileged in terms of access to education and economic opportunities.[150] Igbo individuals held key leadership roles in Nigeria's government, including Nnamdi Azikiwe as Governor-General and President. Due to its industry and trade, the Igbodominated Eastern Region had significant political and economic influence.[151] Perceived Igbo advantages in education, economics, and politics shaped the backdrop of the 1964 elections,

[146] Ogbeidi, "A culture of failed elections: Revisiting democratic elections in Nigeria, 1959–2003."
[147] Michael M Ogbeidi, "A culture of failed elections: Revisiting democratic elections in Nigeria, 1959-2003," *Historia Actual Online*, no. 21 (2010): 43-56.
[148] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 171.
[149] Ogbeidi, "A culture of failed elections: Revisiting democratic elections in Nigeria, 1959-2003," 48.
[150] CN Ubah, "Western Education in Africa: The Igbo Experience, 1900-1960," *Comparative Education Review* 24, no. 3 (1980): 14-15.
[151] Raphael Chijoke Njoku, *African cultural values: Igbo political leadership in colonial Nigeria, 1900–1996* (London: Routledge, 2013), 59.

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fostering tensions. Accusations of election manipulation, particularly against parties with Igbo influence, deepened resentment and distrust towards the Igbo.[152]

The biased outcome of the elections, favouring a joint government of the NCNC and NPC, intensified ethnic tensions significantly in the Western Region, paving the path to the Nigerian Civil War. While Igbo achievements were not inherently divisive, their perceived success and political influence fuelled tensions. Authorities' failure to address grievances and investigate electoral fraud deepened public distrust in the democratic process, questioning its fairness and inclusivity.[153]

Politicians exploited Nigeria's divisions during the 1960s electoral crisis, deepening regional mistrust and polarizing discourse. Michael Okpara, a prominent leader in the Eastern Region, accused the North of manipulating the electoral process to its advantage and engaging in practices that undermined democracy.[154] Such accusations added to the inflammatory rhetoric. Consequently, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's Prime Minister at the time, defended the interests of the Northern Region and dismissed allegations of electoral malpractice.[155] These actions deepened regional hostilities and heightened mistrust and animosity between communities. Obafemi Awolowo's Western Region played a significant role in Nigerian politics. In the region, grievances over electoral malpractice in the 1964 elections heightened distrust and regional

[152] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 179.
[153] Richard Harris, "Nigeria: Crisis and Compromise," *Africa Report* 10, no. 3 (1965): 25.
[154] Douglas G Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," *International Journal* 20, no. 2 (1965): 181.
[155] Erima Comfort Ugbem, Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, and Olanrewaju Olutayo Akinpelu, "Racial Politics and Hausa-Fulani Dominant Identity in Colonial and Post-colonial Northern Nigeria," *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2019): 87-102.

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tensions, setting the stage for further conflicts.[156] Regional tensions and ethnic divisions, aggravated by unfair representation and electoral manipulation, fueled resentment across Nigeria. Politicians' exploitation of these divisions and the emergence of secessionist movements like Biafra escalated polarization. Inflammatory rhetoric worsened mistrust, posing a grave threat to national unity.[157]

The flawed 1964 elections heightened ethnic and regional tensions, undermining political stability. The lack of credibility in the electoral process eroded trust in government, paving the way for future crises and military interventions.[158] The flawed 1964 elections hindered Nigeria's democracy, deepening regional divides and causing future political turmoil. It highlighted the necessity for reforms to fortify democratic institutions, ensure accountability, and promote national unity.[174]

Northern political dominance sparked resentment in the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region, as many felt sidelined in resource allocation. This perceived favouritism deepened Igbo discontent and fueled resentment towards Northern elites.[159] Northern political dominance was reflected in resource allocation, with critics highlighting disproportionate funding favouring the North. Development projects, like railways and roads, were heavily concentrated in the North during colonial and early post-independence eras, fueling perceptions of preferential treatment.[160] Northern dominance extended to educational institutions and employment opportunities, with federal universities and schools disproportionately favouring the North. Revenue allocation from

[156] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 63.
[157] Ehinmore Omolere Monday and Ehiabhi Odion Simon, "Electoral violence and the crisis of democratic experiment in post-colonial Nigeria," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 5 (2013): 46-51.
[158] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 179-80. [174]
Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 180.
[159] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 181-82.
[160] Ajala, "Yoruba nationalist movements, ethnic politics and violence: A creation from historical consciousness and socio-political space in South-western Nigeria," 9.

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the oil industry also raised concerns, as some perceived the North was receiving more. With its larger population, the North had significant influence, leading to accusations of preferential treatment and fueling tensions among regions.

The Igbo and Northernization Policy

The Northernization policy, pursued during the colonial and post-independence periods, aimed to increase the representation of Northern Nigerians in key government positions. This policy was implemented to ensure that the North had a prominent role in the administration of the country.[161] The Northernization policy favoured Northerners for government roles, prioritizing them over equally qualified candidates from other regions. It aimed to reduce Southern and expatriate presence in the Northern civil service, ensuring greater control by Northerners over regional affairs.[162] The Northernization policy aimed to ensure Northerners dominated the public service to counter perceived Southern influence and prevent "southern infiltration" of the Northern government, ensuring regional affairs were managed by Northerners.[163]

Top federal government positions were often held by Northerners, despite the Igbo community's intellectual achievements. Key ministerial roles did not always reflect Igbo contributions, with influential ministries led by individuals from other regions.[164] Despite their education and political involvement, the Igbo were underrepresented in top government positions, fueling feelings of exclusion and reinforcing Northern dominance.[165]

[161] Douglas Anthony, "'Resourceful and Progressive Blackmen': Modernity and Race in Biafra, 1967–70," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 48.
[162] E Wayne Nagziger, "The political economy of disintegration in Nigeria," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11, no. 4 (1973): 526.
[163] Nagziger, "The political economy of disintegration in Nigeria," 527.
[164] Ambrose Ihekwoaba Egwim, "Marginalization: The Problem of Representation," *The Dynamics of Federalism in Nigeria* (2020): 85-93.
[165] Egwim, "Marginalization: The Problem of Representation," 85-93.

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The Northernization policy aggravated regional disparities, worsening Nigeria's unity. It led to a power and resource gap between regions, significantly affecting the Igbo. Despite their contributions, the Igbo were marginalized in government, deepening regional tensions and hindering national unity.[166] Perceived marginalization in the federal government led to demands for increased autonomy in the Eastern Region. Advocates, including Michael Okpara, proposed restructuring Nigeria's federal system for better governance and resource distribution.[167]

The Coups D'états of 1966

The First Republic of Nigeria was marked by political turbulence, including frequent changes in government and power struggles between political parties.[168] Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's inaugural Prime Minister, led a coalition government formed by the NPC and the NCNC, marking the beginning of the democratic journey in the country. The turbulent phase of Nigeria's First Republic from 1960 to 1966 was marked by governmental changes, leadership transitions, and various political alliances.[169] Moreover, by 1962, internal strife within the coalition prompted the NCNC's withdrawal, reshaping the political landscape. A subsequent alliance between the NPC and the Action Group (AG) party, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, ensued, ushering in a new phase of political dynamics.[170]

The 1964 elections faced allegations of fraud and violence, leading to a constitutional crisis and worsening national tensions.[171] On 15 January 1966, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led a coup, assassinating Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and other leaders, but failed to establish

[166] Nagziger, "The political economy of disintegration in Nigeria," 527.
[167] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 183.
[168] Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," 574.
[169] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 42.
[170] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 43-44.
[171] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 60.

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stability.[172] General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi became the first military Head of State after the coup, aiming to introduce a unitary governance system. However, his plans faced resistance, especially from the Northern Region, fearing domination by the Southern regions.[189]

A counter-coup orchestrated by Northern officers, including Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon, amid growing dissent, ensued in July 1966. This coup culminated in the assassination of General AguiyiIronsi and the ascension of Gowon to the helm of leadership.[173] The coups and political turmoil in Nigeria's First Republic revealed the vulnerability of its democratic institutions and exposed deepseated ethnic and regional tensions, threatening national unity.[174] The First Republic saw power struggles between political parties, particularly the NPC and NCNC, resulting in shifts in government and policy direction at both federal and regional levels.[175] The NPC and NCNC alliance dominate the Western Region, with the Action Group (AG) emerging as a significant political force. Despite its prominence, governing coalitions and decision-makers consistently sidelined the AG.[176]

The NPC and NCNC, representing the interests of the Northern and Eastern regions, respectively, were excluded from the initial coalition government after Nigeria's independence due to their entrenched positions in the Western Region, potentially disrupting the delicate balance of power and posing a perceived threat.[177] The AG and ruling coalition faced ideological disparities,

[172] EC Ejiogu, "Colonial army recruitment patterns and post-colonial Military Coups D'etat in Africa: The case of Nigeria, 1966-1993," *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 35, no. 1 (2007): 113. [189] Ejiogu, "Colonial army recruitment patterns and post-colonial Military Coups D'etat in Africa: The case of Nigeria, 1966-1993," 114.
[173] Post, "Is there a case for Biafra?," 29.
[174] Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," 574.
[175] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 47.
[176] Akinola, *Party coalitions in Nigeria: History, trends and prospects*, 52.
[177] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 174-76.

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with the AG advocating for a centralized, unitary governance system, while the NPC favoured a robust federal structure, causing tensions and hindering collaborative efforts.[178]

The AG's exclusion from the ruling coalition instilled a profound sense of disenfranchisement and marginalization within the Western Region. Allegations of electoral fraud during the 1964 general elections exacerbated this sentiment, fuelling long-simmering grievances and increasing regional tensions.[179] Furthermore, power struggles and political instability in Nigeria's First Republic intensified tensions related to northern dominance, creating uncertainty and mistrust in the federal government. This made regions wary of each other's intentions, complicating efforts to maintain national unity.[180] Anti-Igbo pogroms in the North escalated tensions, leading to a series of events that ultimately led to the declaration of Biafra's secession in 1967, preventing a lasting resolution and putting the nation on the brink of disintegration.[181]

The coup of 15 January 1966 in Nigeria, led by junior military officers, notably of Igbo origin, aimed to address grievances against the existing leadership, corruption, and the need for more inclusive governance.[182] The coup was not a political coup aimed at promoting Igbo interests but rather aimed to restore public trust in the government by intervening militarily.[183] However, some of the key figures involved in the coup were of Igbo ethnicity, and they held influential positions within the military hierarchy.[184] Although the North perceived the coup as being ethnically

[178] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 173-74.
[179] Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria: The federal elections of 1964–65," 178.
[180] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 159.
[181] Paul Anber, "Modernization and political disintegration: Nigeria and the Ibos," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (1967): 163-179.
[182] Adewale Ademoyega, "Why We Strike: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup" (1981).
[183] Falola and Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 172.
[184] Ejiogu, "Colonial army recruitment patterns and post-colonial Military Coups D'etat in Africa: The case of Nigeria, 1966-1993," 113-14.

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motivated, Major Nzeogwu's radio broadcast during the coup showed that the plotters' main goals were to address corruption and governance issues.[185]

Nonetheless, Northern politicians and senior military figures were victims of violence during the coup, while Igbo politicians largely escaped.[186] The violence against Northern politicians and military officers, despite claims of targeting corrupt or obstructive individuals, fuelled perceptions of ethnic bias, highlighting the complex interplay between power dynamics and ethnic sensitivities in Nigeria's political landscape.[187]

Despite the perception that the January 1966 coup was "Igbo-led" due to the involvement of some Igbo officers within the military hierarchy, concerns about governance and political corruption were the primary motivators.[188] In his book, he (Nzeogwu) admitted that the revolutionary officers had agreed on a programme of action to be implemented if they had successfully taken the reins of power. The program encompassed various aspects, including politics, economy, education, social, and foreign affairs, with significant repercussions for the Igbo post-coup.[206] Nevertheless, the aftermath of the coup intensified ethnic tensions and anti-Igbo sentiments, especially in the Northern Region. While the coup's instigators included Igbo officers, the belief that it was ethnically motivated lacked substantial evidence yet fueled regional tensions.[189]

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[185] David Akpode Ejoor, *Reminiscences* (Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse Press, 1989), 20-22.
[186] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 22-26.
[187] S Elizabeth Bird and Fraser M Ottanelli, *The Asaba massacre: trauma, memory, and the Nigerian civil war* (England: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.
[188] Adewale Ademoyega, *Why we struck: The story of the first Nigerian coup* (Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 1981), 44. [206] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2012): 536.
[189] Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe, "Igbo genocide and its aftermath–The tragedy of Africa's unlearned lesson," *Pambazuka: Pan-African Voices for Freedom and Justice*, no. 571 (2012). 1-11.

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The notion of an "Igbo-led" coup instilled widespread fear and insecurity among the Igbo populace. Reports surfaced of threats, violence, and forced displacement targeting Igbo civilians, prompting many to seek refuge elsewhere or return to the Eastern Region.[190] However, it is crucial to explore the contrasting responses of some Igbo leaders and intellectuals to the coup, their efforts to promote unity, and their challenges in mitigating the damage to inter-ethnic relations. Some Igbo leaders and intellectuals, like Ojukwu, publicly condemned the 15 January 1966 coup and the violence that followed.[191] They emphasized that a small group of military officers orchestrated the coup and did not reflect the broader views and intentions of the entire Igbo community.

The coup and its aftermath unveiled Nigeria's entrenched political and social divides, highlighting longstanding ethnic and regional tensions. The portrayal of an "Igbo-led coup" exacerbated the rift between regions, fostering an atmosphere of distrust, apprehension, and animosity.[192] Following the January 1966 coup, discontent within the military, particularly among Northern officers, escalated, culminating in a counter-coup on 29 July 1966. This event specifically targeted Igbo military members and perceived coup sympathizers, resulting in the assassination of numerous Igbo officers and widespread violence against the Igbo community in the Northern Region.[193]

The term "anti-Igbo pogroms" refers to the violent and coordinated attacks against the Igbo population in Northern Nigeria. These attacks involved massacres, looting, and the displacement

[190] Daniel Tuki, "Undead Past: What Drives Support for the Secessionist Goal of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nigeria?," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 9, no. 1 (2024): 26-54.
[191] Paul Obi-Ani and Ngozi Obi-Ani, "The January 15 1966 Coup Détat Reconsidered," *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities* Vol. 24, No. 2 (2016): 20.
[192] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 537.
[193] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 45-47.

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of Igbo people from their homes and businesses.[194] The pogroms or coordinated attacks caused the deaths of thousands of innocent Igbo civilians, prompting many to flee to the Eastern Region. Testimonies and reports reveal the widespread violence and atrocities committed during this period, documenting the mass displacement of Igbo civilians and their harrowing journeys to safety.[195] The fallout from the counter-coup and the pogroms significantly contributed to the escalation of ethnic tensions and violence in Nigeria, ultimately leading to the Nigerian Civil War.[196] The aftermath of the January 1966 coup, along with the July 1966 counter-coup and anti-Igbo violence, intensified ethnic tensions, leading to the tragic loss of life and, ultimately, the Nigerian Civil War.[197] The fallout from the 1966 coup intensified tensions, culminating in Biafra's secession in 1967.

The Igbo separatist movement adopted a more aggressive stance during the Civil War. Igbo political leaders, empowered by the Igbo Political Consultative Assembly (IPCA), advocated for Biafra's secession as Ojukwu spearheaded the fight for an independent Biafra.[198] The Igbo people's nationalist aspirations drove the three-year war against Nigeria because of their desire for self-determination. However, their struggle for sovereignty ended in defeat in 1970. Despite this setback, Igbo demands for open and veiled self-rule have continued since the war's conclusion. The ongoing struggle for self-determination draws attention to enduring narratives, such as those Ejoor[199] supports, which assert that as long as certain individuals remain in key decision-making

[194] "Interview, Kingsley Ejiofor, a Biafran Veteran,Washington, US, 25 May, 2022.
Interview was carried out by the researcher personally via a video call (Zoom)"
[195] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 47-48.
[196] Interview, Kingsley Ejiofor, a Biafran Veteran,Washington, US, 25 May, 2022.
[197] Raph Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), 139. [216] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 87-90.
[198] Aro and Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," 47-77.
[199] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 47-48.

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positions, Nigeria's unity will remain non-negotiable due to their commitment to the country's unification. These perspectives underscore the complexities and challenges of achieving national cohesion in a diverse and multifaceted society.

Nigerian leaders convened at the Aburi Conference in Ghana from 4 to 5 January 1967 to address rising tensions. General Joseph Ankrah was in charge of the conference, which aimed to reform Nigeria's federal system and resolve its crisis. However, despite initial agreement, the implementation of the Aburi Accord fell short, failing to calm the unrest.[200] Perham observed Colonel Ojukwu's dominant role in both argumentation and determination during the recorded discussions.[201] The Aburi meeting yielded joint condemnation of violence by Nigerian leaders. The leaders committed to unity and refugee resettlement, but specifics of regional autonomy remained unclear.[202] Consequently, discrepancies arose between Gowon and Ojukwu regarding the constitutional implications and practical applications of these principles following the Aburi discussions.[203]

The Aburi Accord collapsed due to disagreement over Nigeria's structure: strong federation or loose confederation. Biafra sought independence but desired economic and social ties with Nigeria, along with self-determination for border regions.[204] During a Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University lecture on 25 March 2015, General Yakubu Gowon discussed why the Aburi Accord failed to prevent conflict. He analyzed the reasons behind its inability to avert war:

> One of the critically misunderstood and misjudged part of our story as a nation pertains to the place of the Aburi Accord and its failure to stop the Civil War. For the avoidance of doubt, the Aburi Accord was meant to enable the principal parties break the ice and to get back together as officers and gentlemen: discuss and solve our

[200] Basil Ugorji, "Nigeria-Biafra War and the Politics of Oblivion: Implications of Revealing the Hidden Narratives through Transformative Learning" (PhD Thesis. Nova Southeastern University, 2022), 112.
[201] Margery Perham, "Reflections on the Nigerian civil war," *Royal Institute of International Affairs* (1970): 234.
[202] Zubeida Mustafa, "The Nigerian Dilemma," *Pakistan Horizon* 22, no. 2 (1969): 140.
[203] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 90-94.
[204] Stanley Diamond, "Who Killed Biafra?," *Dialectical Anthropology* 31 (2007): 350-51.

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> problems in our homeland, at home, in our land. The spirit of 'The True Aburi Accord' was ultimately encapsulated in Decree No. 8 of 1967. The only addition outside the spirit of the Accord was my insistence that a clause bars any part of Nigeria from seceding. This perhaps was what made Ojukwu to reject the Decree, otherwise what we agreed to in Aburi was enshrined in that Decree and we were to implement them to the letter, having given Ojukwu almost all that he wanted. We did that in order to achieve peace and return normalcy to Nigeria. Unfortunately, Ojukwu was the one to renege on our agreement. In fact he did not attend our meeting at NIFOR in Benin City.[205]

Gowon countered Ojukwu's assertion that the Aburi Accord established a confederation. He stated that Ojukwu's claim led him and his advisors to endorse the accord swiftly but with a crucial condition. Decree No. 8, issued alongside the accord's endorsement, prohibited any region from seceding and granted the federal government unilateral authority to declare a state of emergency in secession attempts. This revealed a disparity in their understanding of the accord:

> Before we left Ghana, we had agreed that on return to Nigeria, l, as Nigeria's Head of State should make the first broadcast after which the other Regional Governors
>
> would make theirs. Unfortunately, I was down with serious malaria that I could not make my broadcast but Ojukwu went on air as soon as he got back and claimed that we agreed to a Confederation to which I had always strongly objected. That and other actions taken by him and his government made us to carefully review the Aburi Agreement. I got the Secretary to the Government and some Nigerian Senior Civil Servants to review it. They did and pointed out some serious ramifications of it. Those points were carefully considered and taken into account in drafting the Decree No 8 mentioned earlier. Whoever said that the Aburi Accord failed as a result of pressure mounted on the Federal side (i.e. me and the Federal Government team) to repudiate it was absolutely mistaken.[206]

Nafziger contended that Gowon's shift in perspective regarding confederation and his opposition to secession stemmed from British influence. According to him:

> British foreign policy throughout the Nigerian crises was consistent with support for an economically integrated area that would leave the Federation open to international trade and investment… After the July I966 coup, British and (in some

[205] Yakubu Gowon, *No victor no vanquished: Healing the Nigerian nation*, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (formerly Anambra State University) (Igbariam Campus, 2015), 4, https://www.coou.edu.ng/downloads/no-victory-no-vanquished.pdf.
[206] Gowon, *No victor no vanquished: Healing the Nigerian nation*, 4.

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> cases) American diplomats were influential in dissuading Gowon from announcing the disintegration of the Federation, and in discouraging those who attended the September constitutional conference and the January 1967 Aburi conference from agreeing on confederation.[207]

The Aburi Accord dispute caused a breakdown in communication between the federal government and Eastern Nigeria. Tensions rose as the Eastern governor withdrew from the Supreme Military Council. Following a counter-coup, anti-Igbo sentiments sparked violence in the Northern Region, resulting in tragic deaths, injuries, and displacement.[208] The counter-coup and ensuing coordinated anti-Igbo violence sparked fear among the Igbo, prompting mass displacement to the Eastern Region. This violence exacerbated regional divides, fostering a stronger desire for Igbo autonomy.[209] The mass displacement of the Igbo population created a refugee crisis, with thousands seeking refuge in the Eastern Region, where the majority of the Igbo community resided.[210]

The Eastern Region became a refuge for displaced Igbo but faced resource strain and humanitarian crises due to the influx. Leadership struggled to provide shelter, food, and medical aid to the displaced masses.[211] The coordinated anti-Igbo violence and Igbo displacement intensified regional divisions and strengthened the call for Biafran independence. The atrocities inflicted on the Igbo fueled grievances and a strong push for self-rule.[212]

The violence also exacerbated the perception of the Nigerian government's failure to protect its citizens, particularly those from marginalized ethnic groups. The inability of the federal

[207] Nagziger, "The political economy of disintegration in Nigeria," 519.
[208] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 25-27.
[209] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 44-46.
[210] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 47.
[211] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 47-48.
[212] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," *African journal of political science and international relations* 3, no. 2 (2009): 56.

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government's failure to halt the violence and hold the perpetrators accountable eroded public trust in the government's ability to maintain law and order.[213] The failure of the Aburi Accord led Ojukwu to declare the Eastern Region's secession, forming Biafra on 30 May 1967. The move aimed to shield the Igbo from violence and marginalization but also sparked the Nigerian Civil War due to concerns over national unity.[214]

The term "Biafra" originated from the Bight of Biafra, a region with cultural and trade importance in West Africa, including parts of Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. The Igbo, residing in Nigeria's Eastern Region, had ancestral connections to this area, adding cultural significance to the name.[215] The selection of "Biafra" aimed to unify the Eastern Region's diverse ethnicities, representing shared heritage beyond colonial borders, fostering belonging and solidarity for collective self-determination.[235]

Ojukwu's choice to secede was not unanimous among the Igbo; opinions varied on whether it safeguarded Igbo interests or if negotiations were preferable.[216] Ultimately, Ojukwu's declaration of secession set the stage for the Nigerian Civil War, a conflict that would have profound and enduring consequences for Nigeria and its people.[217] The Biafran secession in 1967 elicited varied reactions across Nigeria, from outright opposition to sympathetic understanding, reflecting historical grievances and differing views on the country's unity and future.[218] Many Nigerians, spanning various ethnicities, strongly opposed Biafra's secession, viewing it as a peril to Nigeria's

[213] Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," 57.
[214] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 87-95.
[215] Lasse Heerten and A Dirk Moses, "The Nigeria-Biafra war: postcolonial conflict and the question of genocide," in *Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2017), 173. [235] "Interview, Ifeanyi Okeke, a top Biafran official, Rivers, 24 February, 2022."
[216] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 138-39.
[217] Olusegun Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1980), 121.
[218] Steven Jervis, "Nigeria and Biafra," *Africa Today* 14, no. 6 (1967): 16.

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unity and stability. They feared it could set a precedent for fragmentation and diminish political influence and economic opportunities, especially in the North and West.[219]

Across Nigeria, support for national unity surged after Biafra's secession declaration in 1967. However, individuals from diverse backgrounds recognized Igbo grievances and advocated for inclusivity. Figures like Wole Soyinka engaged in peace efforts, organizing dialogues and rallies for reconciliation.[220] Soyinka engaged globally for peace in Nigeria, analyzing political, governance, and ethnic issues. He advocated through discourse, statements, dialogue appeals, campaigns, and international outreach, enriching peace talks.

The Nigerian Civil War

The Nigerian Civil War erupted in 1967 due to rising ethnic tensions. In response to Ojukwu's secession, Gowon's administration launched a military campaign to regain federal control and stop Nigeria from disintegrating.[221] The conflict quickly escalated into a full-scale war, with both sides employing conventional military tactics and strategies. The Nigerian military had a significant advantage in terms of resources and staffing, leading to a blockade and encirclement of the Biafran region. This blockade severely restricted the flow of food, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid, resulting in a humanitarian crisis.[222]

The Civil War saw critical battles in the Eastern Region, including Nsukka, Abagana, and Owerri. These clashes were fierce, leading to territorial changes and casualties for both sides in the fight for control.[223] General Victor Banjo-led Biafran forces launched Operation Torch in August 1967, quickly capturing cities in the Midwestern Region. Nevertheless, internal discord

[219] "Interview, Adekunle Salami, a Nigerian military officer who fought in the war against Biafra, Oyo, 23 March, 2022."
[220] Lucy K Hayden, " The Man Died, Prison Notes Of Wole Soyinka: A Recorder And Visionary," *CLA Journal* 18, no. 4 (1975): 542-52.
[221] Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914," 579.
[222] Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970*, 85-97.
[223] Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970*, 102.

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and local resistance hindered their advance. Nigerian forces, under Murtala Muhammad and Benjamin Adekunle, counterattacked, capitalizing on Biafra's logistical challenges. The failed invasion marked a turning point, leading to Nigerian successes.[224]

The failed Biafran invasion weakened the separatist movement, losing territory and support. Internal discord grew while Nigeria's unity resolve strengthened. The invasion hastened Biafra's collapse and Nigeria's reunification. Civilians, especially in the East, faced dire consequences, with mass displacement, food shortages, and disease outbreaks.[225] The Nigerian blockade caused a severe famine in Biafra, leading to widespread starvation, particularly among children and vulnerable groups. Images of suffering children sparked global outrage and humanitarian aid efforts.[226] International efforts to aid Biafra faced challenges due to logistical, security, and bureaucratic obstacles, hindering the effective delivery of assistance during the conflict.[227]

Both sides recognized that military victory alone would not end the conflict as the Civil War persisted. With heavy casualties and humanitarian crises, they saw the urgent need for a peaceful resolution to address underlying issues.[228] During the prolonged conflict, diplomatic negotiations involving Nigerian and Biafran representatives, along with international mediators like the OAU, aimed to reach a ceasefire agreement. Despite challenges and setbacks, discussions continued in pursuit of common ground.[229]

In late 1969 and early 1970, Nigerian forces regained most of Biafra's territory, causing immense suffering. Acknowledging the futile situation, Biafran leaders decided to surrender. On 9 January 1970, Major General Phillip Effiong represented Biafra at Dodan Barracks in Lagos,

[224] Ejoor, *Reminiscences*, 109.
[225] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 144.
[226] Heerten and Moses, "The Nigeria-Biafra war: postcolonial conflict and the question of genocide," 174.
[227] Heerten and Moses, "The Nigeria-Biafra war: postcolonial conflict and the question of genocide," 175.
[228] Chinua Achebe, *There was a country: A memoir* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2012), 223.
[229] Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, 143.

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declaring an end to the secession, citing humanitarian reasons. This marked the official end of the Nigerian Civil War.[230] The Nigerian government initiated a policy of reconciliation after the war, emphasizing integration and rebuilding. Terms were set for Biafran reintegration, bringing the Eastern Region back into Nigeria's federal structure. The agreement aimed to resolve political and resource allocation issues peacefully.[231]

The early Igbo organizations, such as the Igbo Federal Union and the Igbo State Union, played a pivotal role in shaping the foundation of Igbo nationalism and the quest for self-determination. While these groups did not explicitly advocate for secession, they united the Igbo people, fostered a sense of collective identity, and articulated their grievances and aspirations within the Nigerian colonial structure. Their efforts contributed to developing Igbo political consciousness and laid the groundwork for future nationalist movements.

The Igbo Political Consultative Assembly (IPCA), formed during the Nigerian Civil War, marked a significant escalation in the Igbo separatist movement. As the governing body of the self-declared Republic of Biafra, the IPCA embodied the culmination of Igbo secessionist aspirations, driven by decades of perceived marginalization and grievances within the Nigerian federation. Despite the ultimate failure of the Biafran secession, the IPCA's declaration of independence and its efforts to establish a sovereign Igbo state left an indelible mark on Igbo collective consciousness, shaping subsequent phases of the agitation for autonomy and self-determination.

The chapter's exploration of the Igbo separatist movement resonates with various theoretical perspectives on ethnicity. The "objectivist" approach highlights the historical and cultural roots that bind the Igbo people together, providing insights into the enduring sense of Igbo identity that

[230] Olu Oguibe, "Lessons from the Killing Fields," *Transition*, no. 77 (1998): 97.

[231] Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970*, 121.

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fuels separatist aspirations. Conversely, "constructionist" theories emphasize the social and political forces that shape ethnic identities, offering a lens to analyze how historical events, cultural narratives, and political marginalization may have contributed to developing a strong Igbo national consciousness and the separatist movement.

Furthermore, a "dialectical" approach acknowledges ethnicity's historical and social construction, shedding light on the emotional and psychological factors that may have fuelled Igbo grievances and the desire for self-determination. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, we gain a multifaceted understanding of the historical, cultural, social, and psychological factors that have shaped the Igbo separatist movement's motivations and aspirations.

As this chapter concludes, it becomes evident that the challenges faced by Nigeria after gaining independence, coupled with the events leading up to the Biafran declaration of secession, laid the groundwork for the subsequent Igbo predicament. The Nigerian Civil War served as a defining moment in Nigerian history, exacerbating existing tensions and grievances within the Igbo community. This historical context is crucial for understanding the socio-political landscape that shaped the evolution of the Igbo separatist movement.

As we transition into the next chapter, which delves into the dormant phase of the Igbo separatist movement after the Nigerian Civil War, from 1970 to 1998, it is essential to examine the challenges faced by the Igbo community in the post-war rebuilding process and their continued struggles for socioeconomic and political integration. This comprehensive analysis will provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to the persistence of Igbo separatist sentiments and the trajectory of the movement in subsequent years.

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Chapter 3

Igbo Predicament after Civil War, 1970–1998 – The Dormant Phase

This chapter delves into the challenges faced by the Igbo community from 1970 to 1998 after the Nigerian Civil War by highlighting the socio-economic struggles, political marginalization, and efforts to rebuild and preserve Igbo identity during this dormant phase of the separatist movement. The war left the Igbo in a vulnerable position, with loss of life, displacement, and infrastructure damage. Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian rule during this period, presenting opportunities and obstacles for the Igbo as they rebuilt their lives. Exploring Nigeria's socioeconomic and political changes sheds light on the Igbo experience, shaping their identity and aspirations. This era's struggles laid the groundwork for future Igbo activism, advancing their pursuit of recognition within Nigeria.

Post-War Rebuilding Process

Following the war's end in January 1970, the priority shifted to humanitarian aid and reconstruction due to widespread devastation, displacement, and economic disruption. The focus was on addressing urgent humanitarian needs and rebuilding Igbo communities.[232] The Nigerian Civil War ended in 1970, relieving hostilities but triggering an unparalleled humanitarian crisis. The conflict's epicentre, the Eastern Region, faced devastation, with millions displaced and in dire need of aid. Priority shifted to addressing the urgent needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who suffered immense losses.

The war aftermath led to significant displacement, forcing many in the Eastern Region to seek refuge in makeshift camps or other regions, disrupting families and communities, leaving them

[232] Raph Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), 141.

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vulnerable and uncertain.[233] The war led to family separations and dislocation. Efforts focused on reuniting families and providing emotional aid to those grieving, becoming central to humanitarian efforts.[234] The war destroyed homes and infrastructure, leaving IDPs without shelter or basic amenities. Immediate action was needed to provide temporary housing and essential services to prevent disease and reduce suffering.[235]

Conflict halted agriculture, causing food shortages and hunger, especially among vulnerable groups. Addressing this, immediate food relief and ensuring food security became essential in the humanitarian response.[236] Strained medical facilities hindered healthcare access, prompting the deployment of immediate medical support and mobile medical teams.[237] Protecting IDPs from risks like violence and exploitation required focused efforts. Initiatives like establishing safe zones were crucial for shielding civilians from harm, undertaken by humanitarian organizations and peacekeeping forces. [238] Strategically placed aid distribution centres ensured the prompt distribution of relief materials, emphasizing the urgency and importance of the assistance for affected populations.[259]

The conflict severely disrupted formal education, leaving many children without formal education. Efforts focused on providing education and safe learning environments while also preventing children from being recruited into armed groups.[239] The psychological scars of war ran deep, compelling the provision of trauma counselling and psychosocial support services to aid

[233] Chinedu, interview.
[234] "Interview, Austin Ifeajuna, a Biafran veteran, Imo, 25 February, 2022."
[235] Chinedu, interview
[236] "Interview, Ifeanyi Okeke, a top Biafran official, Rivers, 24 February, 2022."
[237] Chinedu, interview
[238] Chinedu, interview [259]
Ifeajuna, interview.
[239] "Interview, Uche Okolo, a war witness, and Biafran refugee, Imo State, 24 June, 2022."

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individuals in grappling with the harrowing experiences they had endured.[240] Recovery efforts post-Nigerian Civil War were extensive, targeting infrastructure and facilities. Rebuilding roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and entire communities devastated by the conflict was a top priority for the government and humanitarian organizations.[241]

Furthermore, the war devastated the Eastern region's economy, disrupting many businesses, industries, and agricultural activities. The process of economic recovery involved reviving businesses, supporting farmers, and attracting investments to stimulate growth.[242] Post-war recovery necessitated integrating ex-Biafran soldiers back into society. The government aimed to prevent grievances, promote unity, and ensure stability. Reintegration strategies addressed social, economic, and psychological needs, facilitating their transition to civilian life.[243]

Reintegration began with demobilizing and disarming ex-Biafran soldiers, collecting and disposing of their weapons. This shift from military to civilian roles laid the groundwork for their societal reintegration.[244] Reintegrating former Biafran soldiers posed challenges, requiring sustained cooperation among government, civil society, and international partners. Many soldiers were armed and battle-hardened, complicating their transition to civilian life. Disarmament and demobilization programs, supported by incentives, aimed to facilitate their reintegration.[245] Rebuilding trust post-Civil War was complex due to ethnic and regional divisions. Trustbuilding efforts included reconciliation programs, truth commissions, and dialogue initiatives

[240] Chinedu, interview.
[241] Okolo, interview.
[242] Okolo, interview.
[243] "Interview, James Uba, a Biafran Veteran, Imo, 25 July, 2022."
[244] Uba, interview.
[245] "Interview, Abdullahi Adamu, a corporal in the Nigerian army, Kaduna, 12 April, 2023."

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among diverse groups.[246] These efforts aimed to address grievances and foster a sense of forgiveness and understanding.

Many former soldiers faced economic hardships and lacked skills for civilian employment. Social reintegration was also complicated due to stigma and isolation. Various initiatives were put in place to address these challenges. Moreover, the federal government established vocational training programs to equip former soldiers with new skills for civilian jobs.[247] Additionally, the federal government worked to reduce the stigma of being a former soldier and promote social inclusion and acceptance.[248] Many former Biafran soldiers suffered trauma and psychological scars from the war, hindering their reintegration. To address this, the federal government provided mental health and counselling services, establishing support groups and community-based counselling to help them cope.[249]

Reintegration's success relied on collaboration among government, civil society, and international partners, posing logistical challenges. A coordinated approach was embraced, with distinct roles: international entities offered financial and technical aid, while civil society focused on grassroots efforts.[250] The government facilitated policy frameworks and provided resources. Reintegration, a prolonged endeavour, required sustained dedication. General Gowon's "no victor, no vanquished" approach led to the 3Rs initiatives: reconciliation, rehabilitation, and

[246] Kate Meagher, "The informalization of belonging: Igbo informal enterprise and national cohesion from below," *Africa Development* 34, no. 1 (2009): 37.
[247] Jean Herskovits, "One Nigeria," *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 2 (1973): 398.
[248] Interview, Abdullahi Adamu, a corporal in the Nigerian army, Kaduna, 12 April, 2023.
[249] Paul Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983* (Nsukka, Nigeria: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd, 2009), 59.
[250] Chinua Achebe, *There was a country: A memoir* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2012), 139.

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reconstruction. These aimed to guarantee Igbo safety, freedom, and successful reintegration into society.[251] They developed long-term programs and policies to ensure ongoing support for former Biafran soldiers, even beyond the initial reintegration phase, to effect national reconciliation, unity, and progress. Successful reintegration efforts were necessary, and the former Biafran soldiers played a crucial role in rebuilding trust and fostering a sense of unity among the people of Nigeria. It was also necessary to provide them with opportunities to rebuild their lives, contribute positively to their communities, and participate in the nation's collective journey toward peace and progress.[252]

Humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations agencies (e.g., UNICEF, UNHCR), the Red Cross, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played a crucial role in providing humanitarian assistance. They provided food, clean water, shelter, and medical supplies to displaced populations and communities affected by the conflict.[253] Humanitarian organizations also facilitated the delivery of essential services, such as healthcare and education, to those in need. After the Civil War, Nigeria's infrastructure needed significant repair and reconstruction. Nigeria sought aid from foreign governments and received grants and loans. Funds aided in rebuilding roads, bridges, schools, and healthcare facilities damaged in the conflict. Notably, the United States assisted the Foreign Assistance Act.[254] Foreign governments provided financial aid, including grants and loans, to rebuild critical infrastructure and promote economic development. They also

[251] Godwin Onuoha, "The presence of the past: youth, memory making and the politics of self-determination in southeastern Nigeria," *Ethnic and racial studies* 36, no. 12 (2013): 2188.
[252] "Interview, Adekunle Salami, a Nigerian military officer who fought in the war against Biafra, Oyo, 23 March, 2022."
[253] S Elizabeth Bird and Fraser M Ottanelli, *The Asaba massacre: trauma, memory, and the Nigerian civil war* (England: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 391.
[254] Olusegun Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1980), 208.

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offered technical expertise and personnel, sharing knowledge and providing hands-on support in areas like engineering, urban planning, and healthcare management.[255]

The Nigerian government, with international support, demonstrated a resolute commitment to reconstruction and development, particularly in the Eastern Region, which had been significantly affected by the conflict.[256] The government focused on extensive road rehabilitation projects in war-affected areas, repairing significant highways and rural roads to improve connectivity and facilitate the movement of goods and services. The government established resettlement communities to provide housing and support, empowering displaced individuals and families to rebuild their lives..[257] The government's repair and reconstruction of damaged housing, schools, hospitals, and other public buildings in war-affected areas was a testament to its crucial role in ensuring suitable living conditions and the availability of essential services and infrastructure for returning residents and refugees.[258] Nigerian government rebuilt war-torn areas and boosted the economy to unite the country. Local projects revived communities and created jobs. [259] Communities united to restore vital infrastructure like roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, often pooling labour and resources. They also took charge of essential services, setting up makeshift schools and clinics to meet immediate needs.[260] Historical records and accounts from the post-war period in Nigeria highlight how community leaders reconstructed infrastructure and provided essential services. Newspapers and government reports of the time documented these projects.[261] The Igbo people's resilience and determination drove the post-war recovery, with local

[255] Obasanjo, *My Command: an account of the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970*, 212-15.
[256] "Reconstruction Goes Ahead, But The Odds Are Formidable," *Lagos Daily Times*, 15 January 1971.
[257] "Reconstruction Goes Ahead, But The Odds Are Formidable."
[258] "Umueze School To Be Reconstructed ", *Enugu The Renaissance*, 17 February 1974.
[259] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 31.
[260] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 36.
[261] "Ibos to be Encouraged to return," *Morning Post*, 7 June 1968.

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projects addressing immediate needs and jumpstarting economic and social progress. Government, aid organizations, and international support were crucial in facilitating significant advancements after the Civil War.[262]

Reintegration and Reconciliation

1970 to 1990 marked a challenging period for the Igbo community as they reintegrated into postwar Nigeria. The war left deep physical and emotional scars, making the rebuilding of trust and unity a formidable task.[263] A significant hurdle in Igbo community reintegration was the widespread feeling of displacement and detachment caused by the war. Many had been uprooted from their homes and communities, making it crucial to rebuild connections and foster a sense of belonging among the displaced.[264]

Efforts toward reconciliation between the Igbo community and other ethnic groups in Nigeria were essential for healing the wounds of the civil war. The war had not only led to physical destruction but also deepened existing ethnic tensions and suspicions. Rebuilding trust and fostering understanding between different ethnic groups was necessary to promote national cohesion and peaceful coexistence.[265] In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Nigerian government launched various reconciliation programs and efforts to address the grievances of different ethnic communities, including the Igbo. These initiatives aimed to promote national unity and create platforms for dialogue among representatives from different ethnic groups.[266]

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[262] "Interview, Kingsley Ejiofor, a Biafran Veteran,Washington, US, 25 May, 2022."
[263] Godwin Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," *African studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 21-22.
[264] Okolo, interview.
[265] Interview, Abdullahi Adamu, a corporal in the Nigerian army, Kaduna, 12 April, 2023.
[266] "The Dawn of National Reconciliation, Federal Ministry of Information, Press Release No.47 , January 15, 1970, Broadcast to the Nation by the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed

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In 1970, shortly after the war ended, the Nigerian government established a Conciliation Committee, which included prominent individuals from various ethnic groups. The committee's purpose was to foster reconciliation and healing among the different ethnic communities.[267] The federal government established the NYSC program to foster national unity. This program deployed young graduates to serve in states other than their own. This one-year mandatory service exposed graduates to diverse cultures, promoting ethnic and regional harmony.[268] One of its main objectives was to promote national unity by posting young graduates to regions different from their own. The government introduced the NYSC program to bridge the ethnic and regional divide. Nigerian graduates participated in a national service program for one year. This program aimed to unify the country by exposing graduates to diverse cultures and ethnicities.[269]

The Nigerian government introduced the Federal Character Principle, enshrined in the 1979 constitution, which aimed to ensure equitable representation of different ethnic groups in government appointments and civil service positions.[270] The policy aimed to alleviate feelings of marginalization among diverse communities.[271] The Nigerian government promoted national unity by distributing positions and resources, including federal jobs, university admissions, and agency representation, to reflect the country's ethnic diversity.[272]

Forces, Major General Yakubu Gowon, Thursday, January 15, 1970," in *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years, Vol. VI: The Civil War Years* ed. Tekena N. Tamuno and Samson C. Ukpabi (Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann, 1989), 77.

[267] "The Dawn of National Reconciliation, Federal Ministry of Information, Press Release No.47 , January 15, 1970, Broadcast to the Nation by the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Major General Yakubu Gowon, Thursday, January 15, 1970."

[268] Donald J Eberly and Reuven Gal, "From military service to civic service: The evolution of national youth service," in *Civic Service Worldwide* (Routledge, 2016), 17-33.

[269] Eberly and Gal, "From military service to civic service: The evolution of national youth service," 17-33.

[270] Nnaemeka Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " in *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice*, ed. Ifi Amadiume and Abdullah An-Na'im (London: Zed Books, 2000), 97.

[271] Samuel C Ugoh and Wilfred I Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism," *African journal of business management* 6, no. 23 (2012): 6771.

[272] Ugoh and Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism."

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Reconciliation programs aimed to foster dialogue and understanding among Nigeria's diverse populations. While the impact varied, such initiatives laid the foundations for ethnic communities to develop empathy and cooperation, promoting national unity and healing after the Civil War.[273] 1976, Nigeria introduced its National Pledge and National Anthem to promote unity and patriotism after the Civil War. The National Pledge emphasized loyalty to the nation over ethnic groups, instilling unity and national pride, primarily when taught in schools as an expression of commitment.[274] The Nigerian national anthem, "Arise, O Compatriots," introduced alongside the Pledge, celebrated diversity while calling citizens to serve national unity, promoting a shared identity transcending ethnic backgrounds.[275]

After the civil war, Nigeria implemented educational and civic programs to foster national unity and reconciliation. These programs included the promotion of Nigerian history, culture, and values in schools and the media.[276] The goal was to educate citizens about the nation's rich heritage and the importance of unity. To reduce ethnic tensions, the federal government implemented policies ensuring equitable distribution of natural resource revenue across regions, such as the 13% derivation principle allocating oil-producing states a share of oil wealth to address grievances over

[273] Adamu, interview.
[274] Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene, "'A sense of belonging': The Nigerian constitution of 1979 and the promotion of national Loyalty," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 26, no. 2 (1988): 158-72.
[275] Kirk-Greene, "'A sense of belonging': The Nigerian constitution of 1979 and the promotion of national Loyalty," 158-72.
[276] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 35-36.

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environmental impacts and lack of development.[277] This policy aimed to address longstanding grievances in oil-producing regions like the Niger Delta.

These efforts, while not without challenges and setbacks, fostered a sense of national unity and reconciliation in Nigeria since the end of the Civil War. Over the years, Nigeria grappled with ethnic and regional tensions, but the promotion of national symbols and identities that transcend ethnic boundaries remained a fundamental part of the ongoing effort to build a cohesive and united nation.[278]

The Nigerian government established Unity Schools across regions to promote education and interaction among students from various ethnic groups through a national quota system ensuring diverse representation and fostering unity, tolerance, and understanding.[279] National integration programs by successive governments encouraged collaboration among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups for shared welfare, cultivating trust and the notion that unity in diversity would propel progress and prosperity.[280]

Nigeria's national anthem, flag, and government-initiated national integration programs have played crucial roles in fostering unity, promoting shared values, and encouraging inter-ethnic interactions. These initiatives aim to build understanding, friendship, and collaboration among diverse ethnic groups, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and harmonious nation.[302] These initiatives fostered unity and reconciliation to some degree, but their effectiveness could

[277] Ugoh and Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism," 6775.
[278] Adamu, interview.
[279] Prisca Abiye Gobo and David Bolaji, "Unity Schools, National Integration and Development in Nigeria: An Appraisal," *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2023): 129-41.
[280] "The Dawn of National Reconciliation, Federal Ministry of Information, Press Release No.47 , January 15, 1970, Broadcast to the Nation by the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Major General Yakubu Gowon, Thursday, January 15, 1970." [302] Amadiume, *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice*.

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have been more consistent, and their impact has fluctuated over time. Nigeria continued to experience ethnic tensions and conflicts despite these initiatives. Political leaders would exploit ethnic divisions for their gain, undermining efforts to foster national unity.[281] Nigeria remains a diverse and complex country with ongoing security, governance, and economic development challenges. Achieving lasting national unity is a continuous process, and progress has been made in some areas while challenges persist in others.

Socioeconomic Struggles

The post-civil war era saw a complex interplay of policies, decrees, and events shaping Nigeria's socioeconomic and political landscape. This included measures aimed at restructuring the civil service but with unintended ethnic ramifications.[282] These policies collectively would have a devastating impact on the Igbo community, including the destruction of the Igbo industry and technological know-how, and encourage Igbo agitation for sovereignty.

The Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree No. 46 of 1970 was a piece of legislation in Nigeria following the Civil War. The stipulations of the decree provided authorities with broad powers to take action against public officers whose conducts were deemed contrary to the public interest.[283] Enacted in post-war efforts to reintegrate Biafran secessionists and restore unity, the Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree No. 46 of 1970, part of General Gowon's broader post-Civil War measures, provided a legal framework to manage public officers perceived as threats to stability through the military government's control.[306]

[281] Okwudiba Nnoli, "Ethnicity as a counter revolutionary force," *African Review* 7, no. 3 (1977): 1-12.
[282] Federal Ministry of Information, Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation Made In the Year 1970 p. A13., (Lagos 1973).
[283] "Armed Forces Men Lose Their Jobs," *Lagos Daily Times* (Lagos), 2 November 1971. [306]
Okeke, interview.

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The Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree No. 46 of 1970 authorized the government to dismiss or retire public officers for conduct deemed contrary to the public interest. This broad discretion lacked a clear definition of "public interest," leaving it to governmental interpretation, particularly impactful for those associated with the 1966 coup or the Biafran state, often resulting in the loss of pension benefits.[284]

The Decree caused financial hardship for affected officers, leaving them with no income and eliminating their expected retirement benefits.[285] The Decree blocked lawsuits, preventing those punished from contesting their dismissals or forced retirement in court.[286] The Decree had lasting repercussions for those affected, notably officials involved in the 15 January 1966 coup. Igbo public officers and individuals associated with the coup or the Biafran movement bore the brunt, often facing dismissals, removals, or forced retirements.[287] Higher authorities abruptly removed public officers who had served diligently and risen through the ranks from their careers. They jeopardized their livelihoods by taking away their source of income and, in many cases, their pension benefits.

Officers' families faced financial hardship and uncertainty when their incomes stopped. The decree also brought social stigma, marginalization, and limited reintegration prospects.[288] Some targeted individuals and their families experienced social isolation and exclusion from community activities. They were often treated as pariahs, creating a sense of alienation and isolation.[312] The decree's consequences left a historical legacy in Nigeria, highlighting challenges in post-war

[284] Information, Short Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation Made In the Year 1970 p. A13.
[285] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 87-88.
[286] Ejiofor, interview.
[287] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 73.
[288] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 22. [312] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*.

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reconciliation processes. Detentions impacted the political landscape and discourse, affecting coup participants, Biafran officers, and sympathizers differently.[289] For the instigators of the 1966 coup, their detention served as a punitive measure aimed at holding them accountable for their failed attempt to overthrow the Nigerian government. The penalties imposed on them signalled to others the high cost of such insurrectionist activities. This group was subjected to not just incarceration but also to public humiliation as they became the symbol of sedition and dissent, as they committed an offence against the State.[290]

Biafran officers actively involved in civil war faced detention, terminating their resistance. Military authorities imprisoned suspected Biafra affiliates under harsh conditions initially, with poor food and lack of outdoor access. Later transfers allowed limited guarded outdoor time. Imprisonment took a physical and psychological toll, manifesting in premature graying and mental illness cases.[291]

In 1973, authorities dispersed the detainees to various prisons nationwide, including Maiduguri, Ilorin, and Ibadan. Interrogators intensely questioned Major Chukwuka, in particular, about the 1966 coup. Officials imposed restrictive visitation policies, permitting wives of married detainees to visit only every three months. They denied unmarried detainees visitors altogether. Husbands' prolonged absences led some wives to believe they were dead, prompting remarriage.[292] The Nigerian government's military tribunal imposed varying punishments on Biafran officers based on perceived offence severity.[317] While seemingly part of post-war reconciliation and security

[289] Information, Short "The Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree 1970, No. 46", in Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation Made In The Year 1970
[290] "Armed Forces Men Lose Their Jobs," *Lagos Daily Times* November 2, 1971.
[291] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 84.
[292] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 85. [317] "Officers Dismissed," *Lagos Daily Times,* November 2, 1971.

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efforts,[293] these detentions often penalized individuals caught in broader political circumstances beyond their control.[319]

The issue of abandoned property became contentious and disproportionately affected the Igbo people.[294] Biafra's defeat in January 1970 marked the end of the war, but Igbo people faced immense challenges in re-establishing their lives. Many struggled to reclaim pre-war homes and assets. Following the war, state governments, particularly those in the non-Eastern regions of Nigeria, played a significant role in exacerbating the issue of abandoned property. They enacted policies that classified Igbo properties as 'abandoned' and therefore subject to confiscation. Notably, the government of Rivers State passed the Abandoned Properties Act, which labelled Igbo-owned properties as abandoned and eligible for seizure.[295] Similarly, the Kano State government in the Northern region introduced the Abandoned Properties Edict, which facilitated the transfer of Igbo-owned assets to non-Igbo individuals or entities.[296]

Legal enactments created obstacles for Igbo people seeking to reclaim their properties. Despite efforts to prove ownership, many faced bureaucratic hurdles and discriminatory practices hindering their ability to regain control of their assets..[297] The social ramifications were damaging. The inability to reclaim property exacerbated ethnic tensions and perpetuated a sense of marginalization among the Igbo community.[298] The return of their abandoned property in Port Harcourt was crucial for the economic recovery of Igbo families traumatized by the civil war. This

[293] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 86. [319] "Officers Dismissed."
[294] ""Two Points of View Over Properties of the Ibo"," *Lagos Daily Times,* January 16, 1971.
[295] Herskovits, "One Nigeria," 399.
[296] "Call For Patience On Abandoned Property," *Lagos Daily Times*, 20 April 1971.
[297] , "Rivers State Edict On Abandoned Properties"," *Lagos Daily Times,* September 15, 1970.
[298] Abaribe, interview

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property would have provided much-needed rental income to aid their rehabilitation. Authorities denied many Igbo people access to their city homes and possessions.[299]

While a few properties were returned[300], a government committee likely sold a significant portion to residents at low prices.[301] This action was justified by some government officials who argued that the state should control its land for the benefit of its own people.[302] The abandoned property issue remains highly controversial in Nigerian political and social discourse. Governments have established various commissions and committees to address this issue..[303]

Despite these efforts, a comprehensive solution to the abandoned property issue remains elusive. While there was a swift normalization of relations between Igbos and people in the southeastern states after the war, this was not universally true.[330] The Igbo-Ibibio borderlands, a region that suffered extensive physical damage during the civil war,[304] despite having a sizable pre-war Igbo population employed in civil service, teaching, and trade, witnessed a rise in antiIgbo sentiment after the war.[305] Over 700,000 Igbos resided in these minority areas before the conflict.[306]

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[299] Godwin Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 407.
[300] Herskovits, "One Nigeria," 400.
[301] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 408.
[302] Herskovits, "One Nigeria," 400.
[303] "The Dawn of National Reconciliation, Federal Ministry of Information, Press Release No.47 , January 15, 1970, Broadcast to the Nation by the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Major General Yakubu Gowon, Thursday, January 15, 1970." [330] Herskovits, "One Nigeria," 401.
[304] Reuben K Udo, "Reconstruction in the war-affected areas of Nigeria," *Area* 2, no. 3 (1970): 8.
[305] Udo, "Reconstruction in the war-affected areas of Nigeria," 9.
[306] Udo, "Reconstruction in the war-affected areas of Nigeria," 10.

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The abandoned property issue transcended economics and legality, impacting social justice, national unity, and reconciliation. Unresolved property seizures deepened Igbo resentment towards the government, reinforcing perceived marginalization. Grievances fueled distrust, hindering reconciliation and reintegration efforts. Solidarity groups leveraged property disputes to advocate against marginalization.[307]

The property dispute galvanized Igbo leaders, fueling demands for autonomy and self-determination through the late 1990s. These demands were not just about property but about the fundamental rights and identity of the Igbo community. It symbolized broader grievances, contributing to the marginalization narrative. The Banking Obligation Decree impacted the Igbo community, contesting economic reconstruction and reconciliation efforts post-war.[308] The Decree regulated banking operations primarily in the Eastern States, the region predominantly inhabited by Igbos and where the Republic of Biafra was declared. It aimed to control and stabilize the financial sector in the aftermath of the war but had adverse repercussions for the Igbo community.[309]

The Decree responded to economic turmoil after the Civil War. It targeted banking operations in Eastern Nigeria, a region heavily populated by the Igbo people.[337] These controls aimed to prevent another financial crisis. The Decree also involved a degree of asset control. The government froze or confiscated assets from individuals or entities perceived as supporting the

[307] Godwin Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 18, no. 1 (2014): 5.

[308] "New Decree Freezes All Bank Deposits In The East-Three Year War Period," *Lagos Daily Times,* January 6, 1971.

[309] "New Decree Freezes All Bank Deposits In The East During The Three-Year War Period." [337] Olly Owen, "Biafran pound notes," *Africa* 79, no. 4 (2009): 576.

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secessionist movement, particularly those associated with the Republic of Biafra.[310] The Decree controlled the region's financial resources, restricting transactions like cash withdrawals, foreign currency exchange, and international transfers to prevent capital flight and ensure monetary stability.[311]

The decree limited the accessibility of financial services and credit facilities for Igbos.[340] The Nigerian federal government's decision to invalidate Biafran currency inflicted severe economic hardship, particularly on the Igbo people.[312] This policy rendered Biafran currency worthless, as shops refused to accept it. The government intensified financial control by freezing bank accounts and confiscating circulating Biafran currency. Regardless of holdings, a flat £20 compensation was offered as a meagre attempt at recompense.[313] This policy did not deliver its promise, with many Igbos receiving no compensation.[314]

Many Igbo business owners faced stringent regulatory hurdles to revive their pre-war enterprises.[315] After the Nigerian Civil War, the Banking Obligation Decree limited Igbo access to financial services and credit. [316] Igbo entrepreneurs faced stricter requirements for documentation, longer approval processes, and increased scrutiny from banking authorities.[317] The decree exacerbated the economic marginalization of the Igbo people.[318] The decree worsened the

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[310] Owen, "Biafran pound notes," 577.
[311] Owen, "Biafran pound notes," 577. [340]
Herskovits, "One Nigeria," 400.
[312] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The “New Biafra” and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 410.
[313] Udo, "Reconstruction in the war-affected areas of Nigeria," 11-12.
[314] Benjamin Maiangwa, "Revisiting the Nigeria-Biafra war: The intangibles of post-war reconciliation," *International Journal on World Peace* 33, no. 4 (2016): 42-47.
[315] Udo, "Reconstruction in the war-affected areas of Nigeria," 12.
[316] Maiangwa, "Revisiting the Nigeria-Biafra war: The intangibles of post-war reconciliation," 45.
[317] "Business Recovery In East Central State Slowed Down By Scarce Capital ", *Lagos Daily Times* January 20, 1971.
[318] "Business Recovery In East Central State Slowed Down By Scarce Capital ".

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post-war economic plight of the Igbo, preventing them from reclaiming lost assets and exacerbating their marginalization.

The decree fueled resentment and calls for self-determination, seen as a continuation of wartime injustices. Denying restitution hindered Igbo reintegration, fostering alienation and mistrust. Unequal economic opportunities widened divisions, reinforcing systemic disadvantage perceptions. The decree strengthened Ohaneze's recess against the separatist movement, impacting economic marginalization and amplifying the marginalization narrative. Overall, the decree fuelled Igbo self-determination and recognition aspirations from 1970 to 1998, perpetuating injustice, hindering reconciliation, deepening divisions, and driving futuristic Igbo separatist movements. Moreover, disproportionately impacting Igbos complicated equitable post-war economic reconstruction efforts.[319]

The 1972 Indigenization Decree marked a turning point in Nigeria's economic landscape, particularly in post-Civil War reconstruction. The decree required Nigerian citizens or entities to hold at least 60 percent of the equity in various economic sectors, effectively limiting foreign ownership and promoting Indigenous participation in essential industries.[320] Additionally, the decree mandated foreign businesses divest at least 40 percent of shares to Nigerian citizens/entities, transferring enterprise ownership from foreign to local. While nationwide, the effects significantly impacted the Igbo community, which was already dealing with the aftermath of the war. The Indigenization Decree aimed to promote Nigerian ownership in vital economic

[319] "Business Recovery In East Central State Slowed Down By Scarce Capital ".
[320] Federal Ministry of Information, Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree 1972 In Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation (Lagos: Printing Division, 1973).

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sectors by reducing foreign control. While economic policy had social-political objectives like fostering national pride and increasing Nigerian business participation. However, implementation complexly impacted communities like Igbos.[321]

The decree impacted Igbos differently than other ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Civil War severely harmed the Igbo community's ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the indigenization policies. Many Igbos had lost their assets during the war, and their economic base was further weakened by policies like the Banking Obligation (Eastern States) Decree 1970.[322] The decree offered significant opportunities for economic empowerment, but many in the Igbo community could not benefit from them. While other communities could seize this chance to acquire businesses and grow their wealth, the Igbos found themselves financially constrained and unable to leverage the new policy for economic advancement.[323]

Beyond its economic implications, the Indigenization Decree also had social and political ramifications for the Igbo community. It heightened the sense of marginalization among Igbos, contributing to the feeling that they were excluded from the nation-building process.[324] Although the Indigenization Decree was not explicitly aimed at the Igbo community, its timing severely hampered its post-war economic recovery efforts. Combined with other policies like the Abandoned Properties Act, the decree significantly complicated the rebuilding process in the southeastern region of Nigeria, where most Igbos reside.[354]

[321] Chinua Achebe, "The Trouble With Nigeria, (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1983) ".
[322] Achebe, "The Trouble With Nigeria, (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1983) ".
[323] Obi-Ani, "Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983."
[324] Obi-Ani, "Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983." [354] Obi-Ani, "Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970–1983," [355] "Man Jailed For Manufacturing Arms," *Lagos Daily Times* November 13, 1974.

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The Nigerian Civil War had devastating consequences for the southeastern region of Nigeria, which was predominantly Igbo. One of the most significant yet often overlooked aspects of this devastation was the near-complete destruction of the region's industrial and technological capabilities.[355]

Before the conflict, the Igbo region emerged as an industrial hub, home to thriving markets, light manufacturing, and even the beginnings of a technological ecosystem. These enterprises ranged from textile mills and palm oil production to a nascent automotive industry.[325]

The war disrupted all these activities, as factories became targets for bombings, and many businesses were abandoned due to the unstable environment. The infrastructure supporting these industries, roads, electricity, and telecommunications, was also severely damaged. By the end of the war, the Igbo industrial base was in ruins.[326]

The displacement of millions and the death of an estimated one to three million people during the war meant a loss of skilled labour and intellectual capital. Many engineers, technicians, and other professionals either died in the war or fled the region, and this resulted in a significant loss of technological know-how.[327]

The long-term effects on the Igbo community were profound. Even decades after the war, the industrial sector has not fully recovered. The loss of a generation of skilled workers and professionals made it difficult for the region to regain its technological and industrial momentum.[328]

[325] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 120.
[326] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 121.
[327] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 122.
[328] Rachel R Reynolds, "An African brain drain: Igbo decisions to immigrate to the US," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 92 (2002): 273-284.

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The destruction of industry also had social and political repercussions. The economic devastation exacerbated feelings of marginalization and led to ongoing issues of unemployment, poverty, and social unrest. It also contributed to the 'brain drain' phenomenon, with many skilled individuals from the Igbo region seeking opportunities elsewhere.[329] The destruction of industry in the Igbo region left deep social and political scars. Despite these challenges, the Igbo community has shown remarkable resilience. While the industrial sector has struggled, there has been a resurgence in small-scale enterprises and tech startups. However, the community faced obstacles, including a lack of access to capital.[330]

The civil war devastated Igbo industry and technological capabilities, destroying the industrial base and causing labour and intellectual capital loss. Unfavourable post-war economic policies combined with these losses made it difficult for Igbos to reclaim their status as an industrial and innovation hub.

Political Representation and Participation

During the 1970s and 1980s, the political landscape in Nigeria was characterized by significant changes and challenges, which also had implications for the level of political representation of the Igbo people in the government. The aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War left the Igbo community grappling with the need for meaningful political engagement and representation to address their concerns and aspirations.[331]

The centralization of political authority fostered discontent and marginalization among regional groups like Igbo. As decision-making operated from the federal capital, local priorities risked

[329] Reynolds, "An African Brain Drain: Igbo Decisions to Immigrate to the US."
[330] Wasiu M. Raheem et al., "Regional imbalances and inequalities in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences, and Remedies," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 18 (2014): 163-174.
[331] Uwaifo Samuel Osaretin, "Biafra agitation and politics of imbalance in Nigeria," *Journal of Civil & Legal Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2019): 1-5.

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overshadowing, fueling disenfranchisement amidst the gulf between local realities and federal decisions.[332]

While the centralization of political authority at the federal level in Nigeria was intended to promote national unity, it inadvertently led to discontent and feelings of marginalization among various ethnic groups, not just the Igbo. Evidence suggests that states and local governments across Nigeria shared similar concerns about the overshadowing of local priorities by decisions made at the federal level.[333] For example, ethnic groups such as the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani, as well as states and local governments in regions like the Niger Delta and the Middle Belt, expressed grievances about their voices being marginalized in federal decision-making processes.[334]

Demands for greater autonomy, resource control, and political representation at state and local levels highlighted concerns. While discourse focused on the Igbo community, other ethnic groups, states, and local governments faced similar challenges of disenfranchisement, unaddressed concerns resulting from centralized political authority.

Vital issues such as infrastructure rehabilitation, economic stimulus, and social welfare languished in the shadows of broader national agendas.[366] Scarce representation within federal institutions exacerbated the perceived marginalization of the Igbo population. Following the creation of new states in 1967, demands for further state divisions went beyond minority ethnicities. Elite factions within the three major ethnic groups (Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba) also

[332] Ugoh and Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism," 89.
[333] Rotimi Suberu, "The Nigerian federal system: Performance, problems and prospects," in *Nigeria at Fifty* (Routledge, 2011), 1-20.
[334] Ugoh and Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism," 8.
[366] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 89.

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began advocating for new states.[335] These powerful groups saw state creation as a way to gain greater access and control of federal resources.

For the Igbo people, elites clamoured to create several new states, including New Anambra, Wawa, and Adada. They argued that the 1976 state creation exercise left them disadvantaged compared to the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba, each receiving five states.[336] Igbo elite believed underrepresentation hindered socio-economic and political opportunities, undermining national harmony. The lack of Igbo voices overlooked community needs in policymaking, alienating them politically. Limited representation reduced access to federal resources and opportunities, hindering the ability to address socio-economic challenges.[337]

Igbo lacked representation in federal institutions, diminishing sway over policies and resources and fueling marginalization and autonomy demands. Limited federal resources hindered post-war economic recovery, heightening frustrations. Ohaneze Ndigbo advocated for Igbo grievances, fair economic policies.[338]

With minimal involvement in policymaking, the Igbo needed a solid platform to voice their concerns. Ohaneze Ndigbo filled this gap, becoming a vocal advocate for Igbo interests and pressing for policies promoting economic growth and social equity. Shared experiences of marginalization united the Igbo community, with Ohaneze Ndigbo serving as a unifying force.[339] The organization provided a platform for expressing grievances and aspirations. Limited

[335] Suberu, "The Nigerian federal system: Performance, problems and prospects," 500.
[336] Suberu, "The Nigerian federal system: Performance, problems and prospects," 501.
[337] Godwin Okaneme, "Marginalization of some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria: The Igbo Experience," *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2014): 43-47.
[338] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 11.
[339] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 12.

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representation and economic challenges led to Igbo discontent, resulting in the emergence of Ohaneze Ndigbo as an advocate for political inclusion and economic fairness.[340]

After the war, Nigeria's Revenue Allocation Formula was introduced to redistribute wealth from the oil-rich regions to other parts of the country. This formula, which divided revenue among federal, state, and local governments, was based on factors such as population, land mass, and development indicators.[341] The Revenue Allocation Formula, including the percentage derivation policy, adversely affected the Igbo ethnic group. The policy allocated a percentage of revenue from natural resources to states where extraction occurred, primarily benefiting states with smaller Igbo populations.[342]

The implementation of the revenue allocation formula adversely impacted Igbo post-war recovery, and economic marginalization hindered rebuilding. Lack of federal investment in the southeast compounded struggles compared to other regions. Structural Adjustment Program adoption intensified power struggles among factions, resource control demands, ethnic divisions.[343]

Ethnonationalist identities became more assertive and confrontational, while the SAP's impact on social and political life influenced ethnic groups' views of themselves and their nation. The government's withdrawal from daily life intensified competition for resources and local autonomy, exacerbated by economic recession and poverty. This perpetuated economic stagnation and reinforced the narrative that the Igbo were still being punished after the war.[344]

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[340] Obi-Ani, "Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983."
[341] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 90-91.
[342] Osaretin, "Biafra agitation and politics of imbalance in Nigeria," 1.
[343] Godwin Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," *Princeton University, June* (2018): 12.
[344] Okaneme, "Marginalization of some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria: The Igbo Experience."

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The social consequences are equally dire, as these policies have contributed to persistent poverty, underdevelopment, and a general feeling of neglect among the Igbo. This has, in turn, fueled resentment and mistrust towards the federal government, exacerbating ethnic tensions and national disunity.[345] Lack of inclusivity in decision-making deepened mistrust between the federal government and the Igbo community, nurturing scepticism that the Igbo perspective was unheard of and undervalued. These factors cultivated a profound Igbo sense of disenfranchisement, casting a pall over aspirations for integration and equal participation in Nigeria's advancement.[346]

Ojukwu's Return

Post-civil war, the Igbo community faced challenges but also pathways toward change. A dual narrative of resilience and hope after the conflict showed determination to reclaim their rightful political place. Despite the marginalization spectre, Ndi Igbo discerned new avenues beckoning active political engagement and societal transformation. [347] The 1970s and 1980s were transformative periods for Nigeria's political landscape, with the Igbo community facing challenges and opportunities for political representation and participation. The legacy of the Civil War and centralized power, with its formidable obstacles to equitable representation, led to feelings of marginalization.[348]

The return of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to Nigeria in 1982 was a watershed moment in the country's history, particularly for the Igbo community and those interested in national

[345] Daniel Jordan Smith, "Corruption complaints, inequality, and ethnic grievances in post-Biafra Nigeria," in *Corruption in the Aftermath of War* (Routledge, 2017): 65-80.

[346] Godwin Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (2013):19-32.

[347] Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," 11.

[348] Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria."

[381] Obi-Ani, "Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983." [382] "Ojukwu's Homecoming," *West Africa Magazine, June* 28, 1982, pp. 1689–1690.

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reconciliation. His return was not merely the homecoming of an individual but a moment loaded with symbolism, hope, and lingering tensions from the past, including unresolved issues from the Biafran secession and the civil war.[381]

Ojukwu's return symbolized a form of reconciliation between the Nigerian state and one of its most contentious figures. He had led the Biafran secession, which led to a bloody civil war with immense suffering, especially for the Igbo people. The federal government's pardon and acceptance of Ojukwu were powerful gestures aimed at fostering unity and reconciliation among Nigeria's diverse ethnic communities.[382]

For the Igbo community, Ojukwu's return was a mixed bag. On one hand, his homecoming was seen as a vindication of the Igbo people, who felt marginalized and persecuted both before and after the war. It gave a sense of closure and opened the possibility for renewed engagement with the Nigerian state. On the other hand, his return also brought back memories of the suffering and losses incurred during the war, serving as a reminder that many of the issues that led to the conflict remained unaddressed.[349]

Ojukwu's entry into Nigerian politics affirmed the Igbo's ability to participate fully in Nigeria's political life without fear of persecution. Although Ojukwu himself was not successful in winning office, his participation energized the political landscape and created opportunities for younger Igbo politicians to emerge.[350]

Ojukwu's return and entry into politics demonstrated that an Igbo person, and by extension former Biafrans, could contribute to the Nigerian project. However, his inability to win significant office reflected both his controversial past and Nigeria's complex ethnic politics.[351] Indeed,

[349] Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd., 1989).
[350] Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved*.
[351] "Ojukwu's Homecoming."

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Ojukwu's return and engagement in politics highlighted the potential for Igbo individuals, including former Biafrans, to participate in Nigeria's political landscape.

However, his struggle to secure significant electoral victories, a struggle that continues to this day, shed light on the enduring challenges and limitations faced by Igbo aspirants, inviting empathy for their plight. Ojukwu's leadership of the Republic of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War influenced perceptions of him among political elites and the electorate. Nigeria's ethnic politics, characterized by divisions and historical grievances, presented obstacles to Ojukwu's electoral ambitions.[352]

One of the most subtle but impactful aspects of Ojukwu's return was how it galvanized discussions among the Igbo about their place in Nigeria.[353] These conversations were critical for a community that had seen enormous suffering and dislocation during the war years and the immediate post-war period. His return and political engagement forced the Igbo to confront uncomfortable questions about past decisions, including the decision to secede and the ensuing war, while also contemplating their collective future within the Nigerian federation.[354] Ojukwu's return to Nigeria sparked vital discussions among the Igbo people. The war had inflicted deep wounds, leaving them grappling with the causes of the conflict, the wisdom of secession, and the immense human cost.

Opinions varied. Some called for forgiveness and national unity, while others harboured resentment and demanded recognition of past wrongs. These discussions permeated everyday life, from casual gatherings to formal meetings.[355] The Igbo community debated the necessity of

[352] "Interview, Madubuonu Okechukwu, Nationalist/Writer, Enugu," 27 August 2022.
[353] Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War: Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*, 123.
[354] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 20.
[355] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 21.

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secession versus a strategic misstep in response to injustice, with Ojukwu's wartime leadership facing critique. The Igbos envisioned their place in Nigeria, debating increased autonomy, power-sharing in the federation, and potential government restructuring.

Continuing Grievances and Agitations

Igbo political participation efforts faced challenges amidst marginalization. Centralized politics led to a disconnect between regional aspirations and federal decisions, with power concentrated at the federal level, neglecting regional needs. Southeast saw minimal leadership representation post-independence, reflecting limited presence in critical institutions and a lack of Southeastern presidents from 1966 to 2018.[356]

This lack of representation is not just a matter of numbers, it's a stark disparity in political power. The Southeast, with the fewest states (5) and Local Government Areas (LGAs) (95) compared to other regions, is at a significant disadvantage. This imbalance is further reflected in the Senate, where the Southeast has the lowest number of seats (15). The historical appointments to the position of Chief of Army Staff also underscore this disparity, highlighting the urgent need for change.[357]

Inequalities within the Southeast, notably among groups like Ohaneze Ndigbo, fueled frustration and resentment, often cited as factors behind renewed separatist sentiments post-civil war. Core issues such as self-determination and autonomy remained unresolved, compounded by the absence of a comprehensive reconciliation process and acknowledgement of historical injustices, perpetuating a sense of grievance. [358] The slow rebuilding pace fostered Igbo

[356] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The “New Biafra” and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 402.
[357] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The “New Biafra” and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 403.
[358] Onuoha, "The Politics of Hope and Despair’: Generational Dimensions of Igbo Nationalism in Post-Civil War Nigeria."

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disappointment, anger at feeling ignored by the federal government, and frustration with the recovery effort. Neglect on education and infrastructure was seen as a deliberate hindrance, fueling self-reliance sentiment as Igbo independently rebuilt communities.[359]

During this time, there were numerous shifts and upheavals in Nigeria's larger political context. Employment prospects, access to education, and equitable resource allocation were areas where perceptions of bias persisted, perpetuating a sense of marginalization.[394] Nigeria experienced

frequent government changes, military coups, and leadership transitions, which significantly impacted the country's political stability. These shifts often occurred abruptly, leading to uncertainty and volatility in the political landscape. Military coups, in particular, destabilized the government and interrupted democratic processes, causing widespread concern and distrust among the populace.[360]

Political upheavals exacerbated Igbo feelings of marginalization and disenfranchisement. Leadership transition uncertainty and lack of stable governance structures intensified alienation from the broader political system. At the same time, military interventions eroded trust in institutions, leaving scepticism about prospects for representation and decision-making participation.[361] The instability created by these political changes also had practical implications for the Igbo community. Economic development initiatives and infrastructure projects in the Eastern Region were often disrupted or neglected amidst the political turmoil, exacerbating existing socio-economic disparities. This neglect reinforced perceptions of unequal treatment and

[359] Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," 9. [394] Chikodiri Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 119, no. 477 (2020): 526-51.
[360] Paul Obi-Ani and Ambrose Onu, "Military Factor in Nigerian History Since 1960," *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities* 30, no. 2 (2022): 3.
[361] POO Ottuh and JA Onimhawo, "A moral evaluation of past military coups and present corruption in Nigeria," *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2023): 8.

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further fueled grievances among the Igbo population.[362] Overall, the changes in government, military coups, and leadership transitions during this period significantly impacted the Igbo community, intensifying their discontent and reinforcing their sense of political marginalization within Nigeria.[363]

From 1970 to 1990, activist groups and organizations championing Igbo rights, interests, and aspirations emerged after the Civil War. These movements shaped the discourse on Igbo identity, political representation and social justice during the period.[364] Among the notable organizations that emerged during this period were the Igbo National Council (INC), founded in 1978,[400] the Eastern Consultative Assembly (ECA), formed in the early 1980s,[365] and the Igbo Youth Movement (IYM), re-established in the late 1970s[366] but was first established in 1936.[403]

Organizations like Igbo National Council, Eastern Consultative Assembly, and Igbo Youth Movement amplified Igbo voices, fostered unity, and advocated for socio-political reforms. They addressed historical injustices, promoted Igbo identity/culture, and sought an equitable future within Nigeria. Representing a profound sociopolitical engagement force, Ohaneze Ndigbo emerged in 1976 as a guiding light promoting Igbo unity, resilience and rights advocacy during this pivotal period.[367]

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[362] Emmanuel Sunday Nwofe, "Pro-Biafran Activists and the call for a Referendum," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017): 65-81.

[363] Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria."

[364] Aro and Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space." [400] Chima J Korieh, "Igbo," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2020).

[365] Samuel Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1-23.

[366] Johnpaul Onyebuchi Nduba, Moses Nnamdi, and Ofodu Hyginus Chukwuebuka, "The crisis of nationalism and ethnic agitations in Nigeria: An analysis of the Indigenous People of Biafra," *Crisis* 4, no. 4 (2020): 4-13. [403] Gilbert Chukwu Aro and Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "A historical review of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian political space," *Journal of African Union Studies* 6, no. 2-3 (2017): 47-77.

[367] Chris C. Ojukwu and Felix George O. Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in Perspective," *Canadian Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2013): 106.

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Ohanaeze Ndigbo emerged as the successor to the banned Igbo State Union, which promoted Igbo interests within the NCNC party until proscription in 1966. Post-Civil War, Igbo elites established Ohanaeze Ndigbo as a centralized organization to address community needs.[368] Ohanaeze, meaning "General Assembly," aimed to represent all Igbo people, as outlined in its constitution. Core objectives included advocating for Igbo interests, preserving Igbo culture and language, and fostering unity among Igbo communities. With a hierarchical structure, Town Unions formed the base, leading up to a National Ohanaeze, complemented by specialized wings for women, youth, and professional groups. Its influence was notable, particularly in the 1991 gubernatorial elections, where Igbo candidates secured victories across all southeastern states, partly attributed to Ohanaeze Ndigbo's leadership.[369]

Ohanaeze Ndigbo experienced seven leadership transitions from 1976 to 1999, led by Dr. Francis Akanu Ibiam, Chief Mathias Ugochukwu, and Professor Ben Nwabueze. Notably, the organization played a pivotal role in the 1991 gubernatorial elections, securing Igbo governors in all four Southeast states, including influential figures like Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo and Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife, who were prominent within Ohanaeze Ndigbo.[370]

Ohaneze Ndigbo amplified the voices of Igbo leaders, intellectuals, and activists through forums on community issues and advocacy platforms. It lobbied authorities for resource allocation towards infrastructure and economic empowerment projects in Igbo regions.[371] Ohaneze Ndigbo lobbied the government for policies benefiting the Igbo people and fostered unity through

[368] Onuoha, "The presence of the past: youth, memory making and the politics of self-determination in southeastern Nigeria," 19-20.
[369] Chris C Ojukwu and Felix George O Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," *Canadian Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2013): 7.
[370] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 8.
[371] Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," 535-37. [409] Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," 436.

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community programs. This empowered the Igbo community to advocate for itself with a stronger voice.[409]

As Nigeria endeavoured to reconcile after the Civil War, Ohaneze Ndigbo spearheaded initiatives that bridged regional divides and historical animosities. One notable example is the organization's advocacy for the Igbo people's inclusion in national decision-making processes.[372] Ohaneze Ndigbo lobbied for Igbo representation in key government institutions to safeguard the community's interests at the national level.

Moreover, Ohaneze Ndigbo was pivotal in promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts across Nigeria. For instance, the organization facilitated dialogue between ethnic groups and communities affected by the war, fostering understanding and cooperation.[373] Through initiatives such as peace conferences and cultural exchanges, Ohaneze Ndigbo sought to build trust and foster harmonious relationships between the Igbo community and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Recognizing the potency of a united front, the organization wove threads of unity, knitting together the aspirations of the Igbo community into a cohesive fabric. Beyond mere rhetoric, Ohaneze Ndigbo became a catalyst for collective healing, a beacon of hope illuminating a path towards renewed identity and shared purpose.[374]

Ohaneze Ndigbo etched its impact through tangible advocacy, crafting a narrative of empowerment reverberating across Nigeria.[375] Ohaneze Ndigbo's impact was palpable through its

[372] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 19.
[373] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 4.
[374] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria."
[375] Okechukwu Ibeanu, Nwachukwu Orji, and CK Iwuamadi, "Biafra separatism: Causes, consequences and remedies," *Enugu: Institute for Innovations in Development* (2016): 17.

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concrete advocacy efforts, which resonated widely across Nigeria. For example, the organization actively lobbied for policies addressing the Igbo community's socioeconomic needs and aspirations.[376] One notable instance was its advocacy for fair resource allocation and the implementation of development projects in Igbo-majority areas. By engaging with government officials and advocating for equitable distribution of resources, Ohaneze Ndigbo sought to ensure that the Igbo population received its fair share of infrastructure and economic development initiatives.

Furthermore, Ohaneze Ndigbo's commitment to preserving Igbo heritage was evident in its support for vibrant cultural festivals, exhibitions, and literary showcases.[377] By promoting cultural heritage and traditions, Ohaneze Ndigbo contributed to fostering a deeper appreciation for Igbo history and customs among Igbo individuals and the broader Nigerian society.[378] Ohaneze Ndigbo fervently lobbied for policies aligning with Igbo aspirations, advocating for equitable resource allocation and development projects. Their activism, echoing in legislative chambers and civic discussions, sought acknowledgement, reparations, and healing for the scars of the Civil War, embodying resilience and paving the way for reconciliation.[379]

During Abacha's military regime (1993-1998), Ohanaeze Ndigbo advocated for civilian rule at a national conference on political structure. In a 1994 memorandum, they called for a "sovereign" conference, with Igbo leader Dr Ekwueme, proposing a six-zone structure for the rotational

[376] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 5.

[377] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 6.

[378] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 37.

[379] Ernest Toochi Aniche and Okechukwu Richard Oji, "Ethno-political Organisations as Political Pressure Groups in Nigeria," in *Anonymous Power: Parties, Interest Groups, and Politics of Decision Making in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Essays in Honour of Elochukwu Amucheazi)* (Springer, 2022): 75-99.

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presidency.[380] Ohanaeze also championed the rights of minority groups within the southern regions.[381] They argued for a federal system where states could control more of their resources. This concept of increased state control over resources likely influenced the Abacha administration's creation of new states in 1996 using a six-zone framework. Ohanaeze participated in the "All Politicians Summit" in 1996, urging a more streamlined transition to democracy. They argued for all elections to occur within a specific timeframe, regardless of the military's planned withdrawal date.[382]

Following Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalam Abubakar took power. He initiated consultations with various groups, including Ohanaeze Ndigbo. Ohanaeze demanded the implementation of agreements reached at the 1995 Constitutional Conference, including power rotation and proportional representation. They also called for the dissolution of the political parties formed under Abacha, arguing they lacked legitimacy.[383]

This chapter analyses the predicament of the Igbo people after the war and the evolving nature, objectives, and achievements of the Igbo socio-cultural organization, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, formed in 1976. This organization emerged after the civil war, reflecting the Igbo people's efforts to foster unity, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development within the Nigerian federation. The chapter outlines how Ohaneze Ndi Igbo aimed to promote the Igbo people's cultural, economic, and social development, articulate their grievances, and advocate for their rights within Nigeria's complex political landscape.

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[380] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 6.

[381] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 12.

[382] Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," 7.

[383] Chikodiri Nwangwu, "Ako-na-Uche versus Nzogbu-nzogbu: Interrogating the rupture between Igbo elite and their lumpen in Igbo nationalism," *Enugu: AfriHeritage Research Working Paper Series* (2018): 6-7.

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The achievements of Ohaneze Ndi Igbo during this period were notable. The organization played a crucial role in the rehabilitation and resettlement of Igbo people displaced by the civil war, advocated for establishing educational institutions and infrastructure projects, and actively raised awareness of issues like marginalization and underrepresentation. Additionally, it was instrumental in preserving Igbo cultural heritage and fostering a strong sense of identity and solidarity among the Igbo people.

This chapter's relevance to the theories of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism is evident through its exploration of the Igbo experience post-civil war. The "objectivist" perspective helps us understand the historical and cultural bonds that strengthened the Igbo collective identity during their reintegration efforts. The "constructionist" view provides insights into how socio-economic struggles and political marginalization shaped the Igbo narrative of continued marginalization within Nigeria, potentially fueling separatist sentiments. The "dialectical" perspective sheds light on the interplay between historical experiences, cultural revival, and the emotional impact of the war, highlighting the Igbo community's efforts to maintain a distinct identity within the Nigerian state.

This chapter enhances our understanding of the complex dynamics that shaped the Igbo predicament after the war by applying these theoretical perspectives. The shared experience of war, reintegration challenges, and cultural revival strengthened the Igbo sense of identity and solidarity while highlighting the persistent grievances and aspirations for greater autonomy. With insights from this chapter as a starting point, the next chapter delves into re-introducing the multi-party system and the birth of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra

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(MASSOB). This chapter explores the relationship between Nigeria's Fourth Republic and the rise of Igbo separatist movements in the late 1990s.

It examines the transition to democratic governance, the factors contributing to renewed separatist sentiments, and the role of political representation and socio-economic challenges in this resurgence. Additionally, the chapter investigates the government's response to these movements and the involvement of international actors.

By reflecting on the persistence of the Igbo separatist movement during this period, Chapter Four provides a deeper understanding of the ongoing struggle for Igbo self-determination and the complex interplay of political, social, and economic factors in Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

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Chapter Four

The Resurgence Phase, 1999 - 2011

In Nigeria's political environment, the emergence of the Fourth Republic marked a pivotal juncture characterized by transitions, aspirations, and, notably, the resurgence of Igbo sovereignty movements. Against the backdrop of a nation grappling with the complexities of democratic governance, the Igbo people's quest for self-determination gained renewed momentum. As I explore Nigeria's Fourth Republic and the resurgence of Igbo separatist movements, it is imperative to contextualize this era within the broader narrative of Nigeria's political evolution. The transition to the Fourth Republic represented both a promise and a challenge as Nigeria navigated the delicate balance between democratic ideals and persistent socio-political fissures.

Amidst this backdrop, Igbo separatist movements, prominently exemplified by the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), emerged as vocal proponents of Igbo aspirations for secession. MASSOB's claims of Igbo marginalization found resonance in grievances encompassing boundary disputes, military underrepresentation, and social ostracism, driving them to advocate for Igbo secession as the ultimate remedy to perceived injustices.

This chapter delves into the intricacies of MASSOB's quest for Igbo secession and independence, examining the objectives and strategies employed, the context of activism within Nigeria's Fourth Republic, and the internal dynamics and challenges faced within the movement. In addition, the chapter explores the external challenge to MASSOB involving the response of the Nigerian government to MASSOB's activities, shedding light on the complexities of state-society relations in the context of separatist movements.

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At its core, this chapter seeks to unravel the nuances of Igbo separatism within the broader framework of Nigeria's democratic experiment, illuminating the tensions, aspirations, and complexities inherent in the pursuit of secession amidst the dynamics of a multiethnic nation. Through a nuanced analysis of historical events and socio-political dynamics, I aim to elucidate the evolving contours of Igbo identity and agency within Nigeria's ever-changing socio-political landscape.

Igbo Secessionist Resurgence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Self-determination emerged as a justification for significant political realignments in recent world history. A resurgence of nationalist sentiments heavily drew upon this principle to assert minority rights within large federations. This period witnessed the disintegration of multi-ethnic states like the USSR and Yugoslavia, accompanied by a global resurgence of previously suppressed nationalist currents. These developments impacted Africa's prolonged state legitimacy and governance crises, leading to the de-legitimization of one-party rule and military regimes. The political landscape opened up to accommodate previously suppressed groups and forces, marked by interstices of democracy that ushered in contending revolutionary and reactionary forces.

Self-determination supported the struggles of the oppressed African racial majority in apartheid South Africa, paving the way for the country's first multi-party elections in 1994. As the Cold War ended and state socialism collapsed in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, the concept of self-determination took on a new meaning. The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) appropriated these global developments and discourses to empower local claims and resistance in Nigeria.[384]

[384] Godwin Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (2013): 22.

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Following the conclusion of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, a period of subdued Igbo nationalism settled across the region. Groups like Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo and Mkpoko Igbo emerged, advocating for reintegration into Nigerian politics through alliances with other ethnicities. This strategy reflected a perception of defeat and a desire to rebuild. However, the turn of the millennium witnessed a resurgence of Igbo self-determination movements. The ghost of Biafra reappeared with the founding of MASSOB in 1999, signalling a shift in tactics. This new wave of activism drew inspiration from broader political changes sweeping across Nigeria and the global stage. The "Igbo Question," once seemingly dormant, had reawakened, demanding a new approach to Igbo identity and political participation within Nigeria.[385]

In the late 1980s, Nigeria grappled with economic woes and political upheaval. Implementing the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) between 1986 and 1993 triggered widespread hardship, fundamentally altering the nation's economic and political landscape.[386] Dwindling resources forced the state to shrink its social safety net, exacerbating existing ethnic and nationalist tensions. These inequalities solidified ethnic divisions and intensified feelings of political and economic marginalization.[387]

For instance, the oil-rich Niger Delta, home to minority ethnicities, suffered environmental damage and economic neglect despite generating significant national revenue. This fuelled resentment, forming groups like the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in the early 1990s.

[385] Godwin Onuoha, "Cultural interfaces of self-determination and the rise of the neo-Biafran movement in Nigeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 137 (2013): 436.
[386] Abubakar Momoh, "The Structural Adjustment Programme and the Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria (19861993)," *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement* (1996): 20.
[387] Kelechi A. Kalu, "Political economy in Nigeria: The military, ethnic politics and development.," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (1996): 235.

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The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), founded in 1990 by Ken Saro-Wiwa, predates MASSOB by nine years and represents the most prominent and internationally visible Niger Delta minority rights movement of the twentieth century. Though Ogoni and not Igbo, MOSOP is directly relevant to this study for three reasons.[388] First, it operated within the same post-civil war Nigerian federal structure that the thesis analyses. Second, it employed a non-violent, international advocacy strategy that MASSOB's leadership explicitly rejected in favour of passive resistance, making the contrast analytically productive.[389] Third, the Nigerian state's response to MOSOP, culminating in the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists on 10 November 1995 under General Sani Abacha, set a clear precedent for how the federal government would treat ethnic minority mobilisation, a precedent with direct implications for understanding the risks MASSOB and IPOB leadership navigated.[390]

Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution triggered international sanctions, strained Nigeria's relationship with the Commonwealth, and demonstrated that minority rights agitation, however peaceful, could be met with lethal state violence.[391] In addition, education disparities widened between northern and southern regions. This unequal access to education and literacy rates solidified socioeconomic divisions along ethnic and regional lines. Furthermore, as the government downsized its workforce, accusations of ethnic bias in layoffs and hiring practices emerged, further straining inter-ethnic relations in the public sector. Besides, land ownership and resource control became flashpoints, particularly in the Middle Belt, leading to clashes between communities of different

[388] Musa, Adam Umar, and Idris Saminu. "The Challenges of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria: From Environmental Movement to Movement for Self-Determination." *IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024): 97-113.
[389] ibid
[390] ibid
[391] Crow, Melissa. *Nigeria: The Ogoni Crisis: A Case-Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria*. Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1995.

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ethnic backgrounds. Again, the uneven distribution of development projects and infrastructure investments across regions exacerbated feelings of neglect among some ethnic groups, particularly in the South-East and parts of the North. Also, debates over the use of Indigenous languages in education and government communication sometimes aligned with ethnic divisions, with minority languages like Ijaw, Isoko, and Jukun feeling particularly marginalized.[392]

On the political front, the convoluted democratic transition orchestrated by General Ibrahim Babangida promised reform but ultimately led to profound instability. The program's structural flaws and the eventual annulment of the 1993 elections exposed the military's lingering desire to retain power. This further underscored the anxieties of ethnic groups, particularly regarding the dominance of the Hausa-Fulani North in national politics. The struggle for democracy became entangled with fears of a shift in the country's "tri-polar" ethnic power structure, raising the spectre of long-term destabilization.[393]

Additionally, the ideals of democracy, fairness and participation promised a platform for resolving ethnic grievances. However, the situation has arguably worsened. The creation of six geopolitical zones intended to promote regional balance seems to have ironically made ethnic mobilization easier.[428] This was because the zones aligned closely with major ethnic groups. This structure provided a ready-made framework for organizing political demands and resource allocation along ethnic lines, inadvertently reinforcing regional identities over national unity.

A prime example of this dynamic is the Igbo people of the Southeast. Owing to historical factors, including the aftermath of the Biafran War, led to perceived ongoing marginalization. For

[392] Kalu, "Political economy in Nigeria: The military, ethnic politics and development.," 236.
[393] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 25. [428] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Resurgent ethno-nationalism and the renewed demand for Biafra in south-east Nigeria," *National Identities* 14, no. 4 (2012): 337.

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this reason, limited representation in top federal positions and perceived underinvestment in the Southeast fuelled feelings of exclusion, leading to the resurgence of separatist movements like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The emergence of MASSOB reflects a deep-seated perception of marginalization and discrimination. This resurgence of Igbo nationalism, following a period of dormancy after the civil war, highlights the enduring challenge of forging a genuinely united Nigeria.[394]

MASSOB: Igbo Marginalization Claims

The formation of MASSOB hinged on a specific interpretation of Nigerian history, particularly the events following the Civil War. This view emphasized the belief that, even after five decades, the Igbo nation had not been fully reintegrated into the Nigerian project. MASSOB argued that a systematic program of marginalization had been employed against the Igbo since the war's end.[395] This arsenal, they claimed, utilized various "peacetime weapons" to stifle Igbo economic, political, and military power. The most prominent weapon, according to MASSOB, was economic strangulation. During his tenure as Minister of Finance from 1967 to 1971, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's policies came under scrutiny as evidence of a deliberate attempt to cripple the Igbo people.[396] Awolowo, a Yoruba leader, was accused of wielding economic tools like the infamous "£20 policy" which limited access to Igbo bank accounts.[397]

[394] Godwin Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," *African studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 35.
[395] Chris C Ojukwu, "Igbo nation, modern statecraft and the geopolitics of national survival in a multiethnic Nigeria," *African journal of political science and international relations* 3, no. 5 (2009): 181.
[396] "Ex-Rebel Currency Depositors To Get £20 Each," *Lagos Daily Times* 29 May, 1970, 1.
[397] Federal Ministry of Information, Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation Made In the Year 1970 p. A13., (Lagos 1973).

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After the Biafran War, the Nigerian government implemented the "£20 policy," severely limiting Igbo access to their pre-war bank accounts. This policy restricted withdrawals to just 20 pounds regardless of the account balance. The old Nigerian pound was replaced with a new currency, but Igbos were only allowed to exchange 20 pounds of the old currency. A tight deadline for this exchange made it difficult for many to access their funds. The situation was further complicated by lost documentation during the war, hindering proof of account ownership. Limited operational banks in the former Biafran territory added another layer of restriction. These measures effectively wiped out a significant portion of the Igbo population's pre-war wealth, crippling their post-war economic recovery.

This, along with the withdrawal of federal troops from Igbo territories and the timing of the Indigenization Decree, were seen as measures designed to exclude the Igbo from participating in the post-war economic recovery.[398] Post-war tensions fueled by lingering distrust between the federal government and the Igbo population motivated a series of policies seen as economically marginalizing. The government likely desired to limit Igbo influence in the national economy and potentially weaken their political resurgence. Troop withdrawal from Igbo territories created a security vacuum, hindering infrastructure reconstruction and economic recovery efforts. Reduced federal oversight also potentially limited resource allocation to the region.

The timing of the Indigenization Decree further disadvantaged the Igbo. Implemented while they were still grappling with war losses, it restricted their access to capital needed to invest in newly available business opportunities. Non-Igbo Nigerians, with more resources at their disposal, had a significant head start in acquiring formerly foreign-owned businesses. Depleted resources

[398] Federal Ministry of Information, Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree 1972 In Annual Volume of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Containing Decrees and Subsidiary Legislation (Lagos: Printing Division, 1973).

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left the Igbo at a disadvantage during this crucial privatization period. These actions effectively delayed Igbo economic recovery and reintegration into the national economy, solidifying perceptions of deliberate marginalization.

Furthermore, MASSOB criticized the shift from revenue allocation based on resource derivation. Before the oil boom, the derivation principle favoured the Yoruba and HausaFulani regions due to their agricultural exports. However, with the discovery of oil in Igbo lands, the system was conveniently abandoned, leaving the Igbo with minimal benefit from their resources.[399] For instance, the discovery of significant oil reserves in Igbo-associated lands, particularly the Niger Delta, coincided with a shift away from the derivation principle for revenue sharing. This principle would have allocated more oil wealth to oil-producing regions. Instead, the federal government centralized oil revenue control, resulting in Igbo dominated areas receiving a disproportionately small share of the wealth generated from their territories.

Despite the oil wealth, minimal infrastructural and economic development occurred in these areas. This situation created a comparative disadvantage. Other regions previously benefiting from derivation now received oil wealth without hosting the resource or bearing the environmental costs. This fueled a perception among Igbos of deliberate exclusion from the benefits of their resources.[400] This perceived inequity in resource allocation contributed to feelings of economic marginalization and further strained their relationship with the federal government.

[399] Samuel Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 9, no. 1 (2019): 15.
[400] Samuel C Ugoh and Wilfred I Ukpere, "Policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism," *African journal of business management* 6, no. 23 (2012): 6771.

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Initially used in Nigeria, the derivation principle allocated revenue to states based on their resource production. Due to their agricultural exports, this system benefitted the Yoruba (West) and Hausa-Fulani (North) regions. Igbo areas, primarily producing palm oil, received less revenue in comparison.[401]

The discovery of significant oil reserves in Igbo-dominated areas, especially the Niger Delta, dramatically changed the economic landscape. However, the West and North, previously advantaged by derivation, sought a change in the system. They advocated for a new population and state equality formula, ensuring all states received a share of oil revenue. This policy aimed to protect non-oil-producing regions, maintain a balance of power and spread the wealth.[402] The consequence was a reduced share for oil-producing areas, mainly Igbo-dominated, and increased allocations to more populous northern states. While all states received some oil revenue, Igbo regions saw diminished economic benefit from their resources, fostering a sense of marginalization and exacerbating existing feelings of exclusion.

This policy shift triggered broader tensions between regions and ethnicities, raising questions about fairness in resource distribution and fueling debates on federalism and resource control. Long-term effects include continued calls for resource control from oil-producing regions, persistent feelings of marginalization among the Igbo, and ongoing challenges in balancing regional interests with national unity.[403] This moment exemplifies the complexities of Nigerian fiscal federalism, where ethnic politics, resource control, and national economic policy

[401] Oluwafemi A Fawole and ML Bello, "The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian federalism," *International NGO Journal* 6, no. 10 (2011): 213.
[402] Emmanuel O Ojo, "Federalism and the search for national integration in Nigeria," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, no. 9 (2009): 384.
[403] Ambrose Ihekwoaba Egwim, "Marginalization: The Problem of Representation," *The Dynamics of Federalism in Nigeria* (2020): 87.

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intertwine. It highlights how economic shifts can lead to significant policy reversals with lasting social and political consequences.

The death knell for derivation came in 1970 with Decree No. 13, which established population and state equality as the primary criteria.[404] A weakened form of derivation was later revived to appease oil-producing areas (now predominantly minority states), signifying a reintroduction of the principle at a reduced rate. In 1999, the Nigerian constitution set the derivation rate at thirteen percent for oil-producing states, a far cry from the pre-oil discovery figure of fifty percent.[405] This revival attempted to address the grievances of oil-producing regions, acknowledging their economic marginalization after the shift away from the original derivation principle. The policy shift, however, had already triggered lasting consequences. Regional economic dynamics shifted, establishing new patterns of resource distribution. Oil-producing areas, particularly Igbo dominated regions, developed a persistent sense of inequity. Additionally, this policy set a precedent for the federal government to exert greater control over resource revenue, a point of contention that continues today.

The policy significantly disadvantaged the Igbo. It reduced their potential economic gain from the oil wealth in their territories. Furthermore, it limited their ability to control and invest those resources directly. This hindered post-civil war economic recovery and development in Igbo dominated areas. Ultimately, the policy reinforced existing perceptions of political and economic marginalization among the Igbo population. The oil-producing minorities of the South, like the Ijaw, Isoko and Ishekiri-speaking people.[406]

[404] Rotimi T Suberu, "The struggle for new states in Nigeria, 1976-1990," *African Affairs* 90, no. 361 (1991): 502.
[405] Egwim, "Marginalization: The Problem of Representation," 88.
[406] Nnaemeka Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " in *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice*, ed. Ifi Amadiume and Abdullah An-Na'im (London: Zed Books, 2000), 90.

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This situation allowed these minorities to assert identities distinct from the Igbo. Initially, these minority groups aligned against the Igbo. However, as time progressed, these same groups confronted challenges similar to those faced by the Igbo, particularly in resource control and economic participation. This turn of events highlighted the shifting nature of political alliances and the unforeseen consequences of earlier policy decisions.

Also, there is an issue of the lack of federal economic presence in Igboland. Firstly, infrastructure in the region suffered from a chronic lack of investment. Federal funds for roads, bridges, communication systems, and public services were scarce since the war's end.[407] Promises of "reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction" essentially amounted to empty rhetoric.[408] While occasional token gestures were made, these paled compared to the substantial federal investments directed towards infrastructure projects in the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani regions.[409] After the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), Igboland experienced a lack of federal investment in infrastructure. The government's promised "3 Rs" policy (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction) remained largely unimplemented. Roads, bridges, communication systems, and public services in Igboland received minimal federal funding, contrasting with investments in the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani regions. Occasional projects were implemented but proved insufficient to address the region's needs, highlighting the lack of federal economic presence.[410]

This situation fueled the period of Igbo marginalisation and grievance accumulation (1990–1999) that directly preceded and enabled MASSOB's founding. Continued neglect bred

[407] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 94.
[408] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 96.
[409] "Interview, Adekunle Salami, a Nigerian military officer who fought in the war against Biafra, Oyo, 23 March, 2022."
[410] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2012): 544.

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resentment among the Igbo population, contributing to the rise of groups like MASSOB. The lack of infrastructure hindered economic recovery and growth in Igboland, becoming a rallying point for MASSOB's claims of marginalization.[411] MASSOB used the lack of federal investment as evidence of exclusion, reinforcing their argument for Biafran independence.

By the 1990s, the effect of decades of neglect was apparent, coinciding with Nigeria's return to democracy and providing a platform for expressing grievances. The development in Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani areas highlighted the disparity, strengthening MASSOB's narrative of marginalization.[412] This economic disparity undermined efforts at national integration and provided the basis for MASSOB's claims that Igbos were treated as second-class citizens.

The situation demonstrated the failure of federal policies aimed at national reconciliation, becoming a critical point in MASSOB's critique of the Nigerian state. The lack of federal economic presence in Igboland from the end of the civil war through the 1990s created ground for MASSOB's agitation. The disparity in infrastructure and economic development between Igboland and other regions served as evidence for their claims of marginalization, fueling separatist sentiments and challenging Nigeria's efforts at national unity during this period.

Secondly, industrial development in Igboland was deliberately thwarted. The region possessed the necessary resources and location for critical industries like iron and steel or petrochemicals. However, these industries were strategically placed elsewhere, denying Igboland the economic benefits and associated growth such projects would bring.[413]

[411] Ikenna Mike Alumona, Stephen Nnaemeka Azam, and Emeka Charles Iloh, "The Nigerian state and the resurgence of separatist agitations: The case of Biafra," (2017): 13.
[412] Malachy Chukwuemeka Eze, "Ethno-religious struggle and human insecurity in the fledging Nigerian democracy since 1999: The political nexus," *Society & Sustainability* 3, no. 2 (2021): 17.
[413] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 98.

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Igboland possessed resources and a location suitable for heavy industries, yet industrial development was suppressed. Examples include establishing Ajaokuta Steel Company in Kogi State (1979) and Eleme Petrochemicals Company in Rivers State (1988) instead of Igboland. This resulted in loss of employment opportunities, reduced business development, and limited regional technology transfer. Post-civil war policies aimed to reduce Igbo economic influence, preferring to locate industries in areas aligned with the federal government.[414]

During the period of MASSOB activity (1999–2010), this lack of industrial development fueled perceptions of marginalization. MASSOB used it as evidence of continued economic punishment post-civil war. High unemployment rates in Igboland provided ground for MASSOB recruitment, with the movement emphasizing how industrial development could have alleviated this issue. MASSOB pointed to the petrochemical industry placement as an example of Igbo resources benefiting other regions, reinforcing calls for autonomy or independence to control local resources.[415]

The contrast between industrial growth in other regions and Igboland's stagnation became a rallying point for MASSOB's separatist narrative. The lack of industrial opportunities led to the migration of skilled Igbo labour, which MASSOB framed as a strategy to weaken the Igbo economic base. The movement drew parallels between this economic strategy and pre-civil war policies, reinforcing the narrative of systemic marginalization.[416] MASSOB argued that only

[414] Uwaifo Samuel Osaretin, "Biafra agitation and politics of imbalance in Nigeria," *Journal of Civil & Legal Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2019): 4.
[415] Godwin Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 413.
[416] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The "New Biafra" and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 415.

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through independence could Igboland achieve its economic potential, presenting the lack of industrial development as evidence of Nigerian federalism's failure.

As Nigeria transitioned to democracy from 1990 to 1999, these issues gained prominence. The economic disparities, visible through the absence of significant industries, provided MASSOB with examples to support their agitation. The new political climate allowed for the open expression of these grievances. MASSOB used the industrial development issue to gather support and justify calls for Biafran independence, presenting it as a step towards Igbo economic emancipation.

Thirdly, the federal government showed a stark difference in addressing environmental concerns. While impressive programs tackled desertification, locust swarms, and floods in the north, the severe issue of soil erosion in Igboland received negligible attention.[417] The federal government's approach to environmental issues in Nigeria exposed a regional disparity, particularly disadvantaging Igboland. In northern states, the government tackled desertification through the Ecological Fund and allocated resources to prevent locust invasions and manage floods via the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin Development Authority.[418]

In contrast, Igboland, especially Anambra, Imo, and Abia, suffered significant soil erosion, causing land loss and property damage. Federal intervention was minimal, leaving the burden on resource-strapped state governments. The massive Agulu-Nanka gully erosion site

exemplified this neglect. [419] This environmental neglect fueled MASSOB's agitation (19901999). They viewed it as evidence of federal bias against Igboland. Unchecked erosion

[417] Interview, Adekunle Salami, a Nigerian military officer who fought in the war against Biafra, Oyo, 23 March, 2022.
[418] Kevin Kimmage and William M Adams, "Wetland agricultural production and river basin development in the Hadejia-Jama'are valley, Nigeria," *Geographical Journal* (1992): 8.
[419] Josephat Okoye, "Social Dimensions of Rural Development in Nigeria: Experience in Anambra State," *Geography* (1991): 225.

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hampered agricultural productivity and infrastructure development, supporting MASSOB's claims of economic suppression. The threat to lives and property further bolstered their argument that the government neglected Igbo welfare.

This pattern of environmental neglect as a catalyst for ethnic minority mobilisation was not exclusive to the Igbo. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), founded in 1990, had already built its central argument around the Nigerian state's indifference to the environmental devastation caused by oil extraction in Ogoniland, despite the Niger Delta generating the bulk of Nigeria's oil revenues. The federal government's selective environmental responsiveness, reactive in oil-producing areas controlled by majority interests, inert in Igboland, gave MASSOB a parallel grievance framework that resonated with communities already primed by the Ogoni precedent.

As global environmental awareness rose from 1990 to 1999, the contrasting federal responses became more glaring. This period coincided with increased political freedom in Nigeria, allowing MASSOB to openly voice their grievances. The movement effectively used the environmental neglect narrative to strengthen its separatist agenda, presenting it as evidence of the need for Igbo self-governance to address local challenges effectively.

Political marginalization was the most fundamental weapon used against the Igbo. This marginalization paved the way for and facilitated all other forms of marginalization. By being excluded from political power at the federal level, the Igbo were left vulnerable and disadvantaged across the board. Before the war, the Igbo held a prominent position within the national political structure. They were part of the "Big Three" ethnicities and had the distinction of providing Nigeria's only pre-war president. However, since the civil war and the flight of

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many Igbo from the central government, the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani systematically relegated the Igbo to a position of minimal power-sharing.[420]

Since 1999, state creation exercises in Nigeria have faced criticism regarding ethnic representation. Currently, the Hausa/Fulani have fifteen states, the Igbo have five, and the Yoruba have six. The distribution of states and LGAs remains a topic of debate, with ongoing discussions about ensuring fair representation for all ethnicities within Nigeria's federal structure. This allocation disadvantaged the Igbo in political representation and resource distribution within Nigeria.[421]

The unequal distribution of states and local government areas (LGAs) highlights the challenges in Nigeria's revenue-sharing arrangements, both vertically and horizontally. The pattern of favouritism towards the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba has created structural barriers for the Igbo, limiting their access to resources and political power. This disparity affects the socio-economic development and political influence of the Igbo people, emphasizing the need for policies that address historical inequalities and ensure fair representation for all ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The unequal distribution of states and Local Government Areas (LGAs) significantly impacted MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) between 1990 and 2010. Notably, this imbalance served as tangible evidence of marginalization, justifying MASSOB's call for secession. Fewer states and LGAs translated to less federal allocation for Igbo regions, hindering development and fueling their economic arguments.

Moreover, the imbalance also meant reduced political representation at the federal level,

[420] JI Dibua, "Ethnic citizenship, federal character and inter-group relations in postcolonial Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (2011): 18.
[421] Ifeanyichukwu Michael Abada, Paul Hezekiah Omeh, and Ikechukwu Remigius Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," *Journal of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (2020): 13.

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supporting MASSOB's claim of Igbo political exclusion. Besides, increased political awareness following Nigeria's democratization in 1999 allowed MASSOB to voice these grievances openly. The disparities served as a rallying point for Igbo support.

Furthermore, MASSOB argued that Nigerian federalism was flawed and could not address Igbo interests. While advocating for secession, they also used these disparities to push for political restructuring as an alternative. Also, a new generation of Igbos emerged during this period, feeling the effects of these inequalities despite not experiencing the civil war. Again, the reduced access to federal resources due to fewer states and LGAs aligned with MASSOB's narrative of deliberate economic suppression of Igboland.

This period of increased political freedom in Nigeria proved crucial for MASSOB. The stark reality of state and LGA disparities provided them with concrete examples to support their claims. This, in turn, made their separatist agenda more appealing to many Igbos who felt disadvantaged by the existing structure.

The exclusion of the Igbo, whether overt or covert, forms part of a larger strategy by the victorious coalition to undermine the Igbo spirit, compelling them to retreat and confine themselves within a cycle of political, economic, military, and social marginalization. Nnaemeka Ikpeze supports the view that post-war military leaders, who had fought against the Biafrans, treated the Igbo as vanquished enemies.[422] During military rule, marginalization was systematically implemented, disempowering the Igbo across various spheres. This narrative has been effectively used by MASSOB leader Raph Uwazurike and other MASSOB activists in their recruitment efforts.

[422] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 98.

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This perspective is not limited to the Igbo; other Nigerians like Wola Adeyemo share this view. Adeyemo, writing for *Tell Magazine*, highlights the federal government's neglect of Igbo land, noting the unchecked erosion in the southeast, the absence of federal industries, and the deliberate exclusion from the country's power structure.[423] Duruji echoed this sentiment, pointing out that before the civil war, the Igbo held top positions in the military and civil service, but after the war, they were conspicuously absent from leadership roles.[424]

The sentiments expressed about Igbo marginalization are not confined to older generations who witnessed the Nigerian civil war but have also resonated with Igbo youth, many of whom are active members of MASSOB.[425] For instance, sentiments about marginalization have resonated with youth, particularly those involved with MASSOB. Youth have organized and participated in protests against perceived marginalization, often displaying flags and symbols. Youth use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share information about discrimination and call for independence.[426] Youth actively participate in and organize events remembering the Civil War, such as Remembrance Day. Some youth have supported boycotts of national events or products to protest marginalization. Young people have helped establish and maintain networks for information sharing and organizing. There have been instances of youth clashing with security forces during protests or raids. These examples illustrate how the narrative of marginalization continues to resonate with and mobilize younger generations despite not having directly experienced the civil war.

[423] Wola Adeyemo, "The Igbo Dilemma," *Tell Magazine*, 2004, 19.
[424] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 541.
[425] Godwin Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," *Princeton University, June* (2018): 10.
[426] Godwin Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 18, no. 1 (2014): 22.

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These points were used to convince recruits that the political power distribution and resource allocation in Nigeria reflect a deliberate strategy to economically strangle, politically emasculate, and militarily neutralize and ostracize the Igbo people. At MASSOB meetings and rallies, discussions often centre on the perceived hatred towards the Igbo, illustrated by policies such as the post-war imposition of a £20 ceiling on bank deposits for each Igbo individual, regardless of their actual bank holdings. This policy was seen as a deliberate attempt to undermine the financial recovery and reintegration of the Igbo into the Nigerian economy.[427]

MASSOB members also expressed frustration with other policies that effectively excluded them from economic and political power. These include token appointments to insignificant positions, minimal presence in administrative ranks, and headships of ministerial and extraministerial departments and parastatals. The distortion of the federal structure to the disadvantage of the Igbo, who have fewer states and local governments compared to other major ethnic groups, further exacerbates their marginalization.[428]

The marginalization of Igbos through political and economic structures can be evidenced in several ways. The Igbo-dominated region has fewer states, which affects federal resource allocation, political representation, and job opportunities.[429] The principle aimed at ensuring representation is not implemented and Igbos are underrepresented in federal appointments and promotions. A study showed that Igbos held only a tiny percentage of top federal positions despite

[427] Ifi Amadiume and Abdullah An-Na'im, *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 38.
[428] Chikodiri Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 119, no. 477 (2020): 533.
[429] Alumona, Azam, and Iloh, "The Nigerian state and the resurgence of separatist agitations: The case of Biafra," 13.

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constituting a significant percentage of the population. The region has consistently received lower federal allocations for infrastructure projects.[430]

For instance, a federal budget allocated only a small percentage of capital projects to the region, compared to higher percentages for other regions. Policies have disproportionately affected Igbo businesses, and the closure of mines and neglect of ports have impacted the region's economy. Igbos have been absent from crucial security positions since the end of the civil war. Between 1990 and 1999, no Igbo held vital positions such as President, Vice President, Senate President, or Chief Justice of Nigeria. Despite being oil-producing states, Anambra and Imo receive lower derivation funds than others due to their classification. These factors contribute to a sense of marginalization among Igbos, fueling movements. The disparities in state structures, appointments, and resource allocation create disadvantages in the region's political representation and economic development.

Additionally, the federal and state government's failure to uphold the constitutionally protected residency and citizenship rights of original Igbo property owners regarding abandoned property highlights their systematic exclusion.[431] These issues were concerns for many Igbo organizations before the return to democratic rule in 1999.

These grievances form the basis of MASSOB's push for the secession of Igbo land from Nigeria. A MASSOB activist articulated this sentiment by stating that since the civil war, the Igbo have struggled to regain their prominent position from the First Republic.[432] They felt politically,

[430] Alumona, Azam, and Iloh, "The Nigerian state and the resurgence of separatist agitations: The case of Biafra," 14.
[431] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The “New Biafra” and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 418.
[432] "Interview, James Uba, a Biafran Veteran, Imo, 25 July, 2022."

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economically, and socially marginalized, with inadequate infrastructure and insufficient representation in federal appointments. The transition to democracy in the Fourth Republic brought hope that these issues would be addressed, encouraging significant Igbo participation in the democratic process. It was anticipated that the openness and freedom of democracy would help rectify the perceived marginalization.

Ralph Uwazurike, the founder of MASSOB, had actively supported Obasanjo's presidential campaign in 1999.[433] He anticipated that the civilian administration would diverge from the policies of previous military regimes. He was dismayed when the new Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) administration did not appoint Igbo individuals to vital ministerial positions or the leadership of security services. Uwazurike viewed the indifferent response of both federal and state authorities to the Sharia riot in Kaduna in 2000 and the Miss World riot in Kano in 2002, where Igbo people were the most affected, as an affront to the Igbo community's psyche.[434] Such alienation and marginalization of the Igbo people in Nigeria laid the foundation for the formation and sustenance of MASSOB.

MASSOB's Quest for Igbo Secession

Many movements emerged in post-civil war Nigeria to advocate for Igbo interests while maintaining allegiance to a unified Nigeria. Among the notable groups are Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Aka Ikenga, Mkpoko Igbo, Eastern Mandate Union (EMU), Odenigbo Forum, South East Movement (SEM), Ndi Igbo Liberation Forum, Igbo Redemption Council (IRC), Igbo National Assembly (INA), Igbo Salvation Front (ISF), Igbo People's Congress (IPC), and the Igbo Question Movement (IQM). Some groups, like the Igbo Youth Council (IYC), Igbo Youth Movement

[433] Onuoha, "Memory, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in post-civil war Southeastern Nigeria," 20.
[434] Onuoha, "Contesting the space: The “New Biafra” and ethno-territorial separatism in South-Eastern Nigeria," 22.

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(IYM), and the Bakassi Boys, occasionally adopted violent methods without challenging the federation's unity. The Bakassi Boys, initially a community police force, sometimes acted like an ethnic militia.[435]

These movements aimed to secure fair treatment for the Igbo in power and resource distribution within the federation. Typical demands included an Igbo presidency, an additional state in the Southeast, and increased public investment in infrastructure in the Southeast.[436] Ensuring the security of Igbo lives and property in other parts of Nigeria was also a priority. Strategies involved political mobilization, legal and political petitions, pressure on public officials, dialogues, and protests.[472] Despite the perception of unfair treatment, most Igbo supported the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the federal level. Chief Ralph Uwazurike, MASSOB's founding leader, supported the PDP initially but later felt disappointed by its perceived sidelining of the Igbo.[473]

Uwazurike attributed Igbo marginalization to a post-civil war conspiracy between the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba.[437] MASSOB's goals included actualizing an independent Biafra, promoting honest dialogue for peaceful separation, and informing the world about Biafra's actualization.[438] These goals aimed at a referendum in the Southeast to decide on secession and, if supported by the referendum, the eventual creation of an independent Biafra.[439] This approach aligned with calls from other ethnic groups for a national conference, albeit with a focus on

[435] Onuoha, "Cultural interfaces of self-determination and the rise of the neo-Biafran movement in Nigeria," 438.
[436] Nwangwu et al., "The political economy of Biafra separatism and post-war Igbo nationalism in Nigeria," 532. [472] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 535. [473] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 12.
[437] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 536.
[438] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 7.
[439] "Nigeria: We Shall Declare Biafra On May 27, 2000," 6 April 2000, accessed 15 March 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200004060204.html.

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creating an independent Biafra. Uwazurike argued that the Igbo's condition in Nigeria justified the country's disintegration along ethnic lines, similar to the Soviet Union's dissolution.[440]

MASSOB's Approaches

The organizational structure of MASSOB was hierarchical, with the leader at the top, then national representatives, coordinators, ambassadors, secretaries, regional administrators, area administrators, provincial officers, district officers, and ordinary members, an estimated 7.5 million people, following them.[441] MASSOB claimed extensive influence in the former Eastern Region, called the "Thirty Regions of Biafra." The movement outlined 25 stages in the struggle for Biafra, each with a distinct strategy as the struggle progressed.[442] MASSOB professed nonviolence as its core philosophy, with Uwazurike stating that non-violent tactics were effective and that using arms was inappropriate in a civilized world.[443]

In May 2000, MASSOB gained local prominence by symbolically hoisting the Biafran flag in Aba, Abia State and officially presenting its "Declaration of Demand for the Sovereign State of Biafra from the People and Government of Nigeria."[444] Since then, the movement engaged in civil disobedience to dismantle Nigerian government infrastructure in the region. MASSOB attempted to hoist the green-red-black Biafran flag in prominent locations in the Eastern states annually on May 30, commemorating Biafra's redeclaration. The Biafran Security Agency was established to

[440] "Nigeria: Government cracks down on Biafra separatist resurgence," 4 September 2006, accessed 7 April 2024, https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-government-cracks-down-biafra-separatist-resurgence.
[441] "Nigeria: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)," 2005, accessed 24 April 2024, https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/12/18/NGA100170.E.pdf.
[442] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 22.
[443] "Why I founded MASSOB — Uwazuruike," 6 January, 2020, accessed 10 May 2024, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/01/why-i-founded-massob-%E2%80%95-uwazuruike/.
[444] Onuoha, "Cultural interfaces of self-determination and the rise of the neo-Biafran movement in Nigeria," 432.

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address broader security issues in major southeastern cities, enforce residence rules, such as sanitation laws and rent regulations, and occasionally regulate petrol prices in Igbo states.[445] The movement engaged in various forms of civil disobedience, such as sit-at-home exercises, the boycott of the National Identity Card Scheme, and the 2006 census in Igbo states, claiming these areas as Biafran territory separate from Nigeria. MASSOB also urged the Igbo in the Southeast, including political aspirants and officeholders, to boycott the 2007 elections, reinforcing its view of the region as distinct from Nigeria.[446] On 1 July 2009, during its 10thanniversary celebration, MASSOB launched the 'Biafran International Passport' at the Freedom House in Okwe, Onuimo Local Government Area of Imo State.[447]

Unlike the 1960s Biafran secession, which relied heavily on propaganda for international support, MASSOB recognized the need for new strategies in a globalized world, utilizing modern information and communications technology to influence political developments. In 2000, the group made headlines by storming the Organization of African Unity Summit in Lome[485] and sending the Biafra Bill of Rights to the United Nations, subsequently gaining recognition as an unrepresented nation by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) under United Nations Resolution 1514 of 1960.[448] In 2001, it opened the 'Biafra House' in Washington, DC, to coordinate international and diaspora activities and established the 'Voice of Biafra

[445] "Nigeria: Provocative Arrest of Massob Members," 9 September, 2011, accessed 9 April 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/201109090666.html.
[446] "Nigeria: Massob, IYM Threaten to Stop Trial Census," 6 August 2005, accessed 12 March 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200508260280.html.
[447] "MASSOB launches "Biafran Int'l Passport" to celebrate 10th anniversary," 1 July, 2009, accessed 4 May 2024, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/07/massob-launches-biafran-intl-passport-to-celebrate-10th-anniversary/. [485] Onuoha, "The politics of 'hope'and 'despair': Generational dimensions to Igbo nationalism in post-civil war Nigeria," 16.
[448] "Biafra: BIM/MASSOB Leader Interviewed On Igbo Rights and Biafra Cause in Nigeria," 28 February, 2022, accessed 13 February 2024, https://unpo.org/article/22197.

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International' radio station and weekly newspaper in the USA.[449] MASSOB International, aligning with the goals and aspirations of the leading group in Europe and the USA, received support from the US-based Biafran Liberation Movement formed in 2003.[488] MASSOB, as a platform for Igbo groups, including the Biafra Foundation, Biafra Actualisation Forum, Igbo USA, Ekwe Nche, and Biafra Nigeria World, played a significant role in influencing homeland politics, tapping into a transnational network.

MASSOB also internationalized its struggle, gaining support from diaspora Igbo and affiliate organizations abroad. It established a cable television program, 'T.V. Biafra,' while maintaining a website to propagate its activities and philosophy. The recognition of Biafra by international bodies, such as the Centre for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS) in 2006,[450] bolstered the movement's legitimacy. Despite lacking open support from sovereign states, MASSOB launched a Biafran international passport.[451] The arrest of Chief Ralph Uwazurike at the 2001 African Union Summit in Cotonou underscored this lack of state support.[452]

Activists used persuasion and education to recruit members, emphasizing non-violence and avoiding mass exodus to prevent a repeat of the 1960's experience. The group's activities included rallies, marches, and demonstrations to raise awareness, notably the flag hoisting ceremony on 22 May 2000 in Aba, which marked a significant clash with security operatives.[453] This reflects the

[449] Nigeria, "Biafra: BIM/MASSOB Leader Interviewed On Igbo Rights and Biafra Cause in Nigeria." [488] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 42.
[450] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 543.
[451] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 543.
[452] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 544.
[453] Kenneth Omeje, "" Enyimba Enyi": The Comeback of Igbo Nationalism in Nigeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 32, no. 106 (2005): 632.

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challenges of maintaining a strictly non-violent approach in the face of opposition and potential government repression.

MASSOB, inspired by the OPC in the West, sought to improve its public image by providing social services in Igbo land. These actions, such as intercepting petroleum tankers headed north and distributing fuel to southeasterners during fuel scarcity in 2004, had a significant impact on the Igbo community.[454] Uwazurike justified these actions as correcting the marginalization of the Igbo area, although they attracted severe reactions from security operatives, including the police. The conflict led to significant casualties, property destruction, and widespread arrests. Protestors targeted police infrastructure and a correctional facility, resulting in a severe breakdown of order. MASSOB's attempts to remove the National Association of Road Transport Organization (NARTO) from Onitsha motor parks led to violent clashes, prompting the Anambra state government to ban both groups and deploy a joint military-police task force with orders to shoot on sight.[455] MASSOB officials claimed the task force's actions resulted in the deaths of around seven hundred members.[456]

Despite professing non-violence, MASSOB's actions during the 2006 census, where activists forcibly stopped National Population Commission officials from working in Igbo land, also demonstrated a propensity for violence.[496] This attracted confrontations with security operatives. As revealed by AlJazeera, in Onitsha, Anambra state, MASSOB members attacked at least seven officials during the census.[457] After attempting to halt the census the day before, the police shot

[454] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 22.
[455] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 544.
[456] "Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022." [496] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 544.
[457] "Violence mars Nigerian census," 23 March 2006, accessed 27 January 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/3/23/violence-mars-nigerian-census.

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and killed six MASSOB activists in Nnewi. According to police and the victims, MASSOB members tried to stop the counting in Enugu by assaulting five census takers and burning a car. Additionally, the group reintroduced former Biafran republic currencies, using them in business transactions. Uwazurike defended this practice, arguing that it was a matter of mutual agreement between parties transacting business, even within the Nigerian legal framework.[458]

Ralph Uwazuruike, MASSOB & Igbo Separatism

Ralph Uwazuruike, the leader of MASSOB, from Okwe in Imo State, Southeast Nigeria had his personal experiences, shared by many Igbo youths, which motivated his involvement in the struggle to revive the Biafran dream. In his autobiography, *The Struggle for Freedom*, Uwazuruike described the impact of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war on his life.[459] At nine years old, he witnessed his five-year-old sister die of kwashiorkor, a consequence of the Federal Military Government's blockade policy that isolated Biafra and prevented relief efforts.[460] Later, Uwazuruike studied political science and law in India, where he drew inspiration from Odumegwu Ojukwu (the former Biafran leader), Mahatma Gandhi, and works about the Nigerian-Biafran war. He also honed his political activism skills while serving as the president of the Nigerian Student Organisation in Bombay.[461]

MASSOB garnered a fervent following among a new generation of Igbo youths born after the civil war, as well as Igbo traders and artisans in various urban centres across Nigeria. The movement taps into a collective sense of Igbo heroism and achievements juxtaposed with contemporary experiences of deprivation, marginalization, and injustice within Nigeria. This

[458] Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022.
[459] Godwin Onuoha, "The presence of the past: youth, memory making and the politics of self-determination in southeastern Nigeria," *Ethnic and racial studies* 36, no. 12 (2013): 2192.
[460] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 25.
[461] "Interview, Madubuonu Okechukwu, Nationalist/Writer, Enugu," 27 August 2022.

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shared Igbo 'memory' of the past, vividly recalled in the present context, fuels the movement's momentum.[462]

The motivations for joining MASSOB are linked to aspirations for emancipation and social advancement, encapsulated in the broader quest for self-determination. However, there are noticeable differences in expectations within the movement. Older members, including those born shortly before or during the Nigeria-Biafran War, view Igbo emancipation as a long-term project.[463] In contrast, younger members, facing relative social and economic disadvantages, push for immediate secession.

MASSOB dealt with generational differences in expectations and approaches through several strategies. The leadership attempted to balance older members' vision with the younger ones' demands. This involved framing their goals in both short-term and long-term contexts to appeal to both groups.[464] MASSOB employed a mix of strategies, from protests to confrontational actions. This included both diplomatic efforts and civil disobedience campaigns. The organization facilitated discussions between older and younger members to bridge understanding. These forums aimed to combine older members' perspectives with the urgency that young people felt.[465] MASSOB created different levels of involvement, allowing members to participate according to their comfort levels and goals. This structure accommodated both those seeking change and those pushing for action. The movement organized educational initiatives to inform younger members

[462] Chukwuma Okoye, "History and nation imagination: Igbo and the videos of nationalism," *Postcolonial text* 3, no. 2 (2007): 65.
[463] "Interview, Kingsley Ejiofor, a Biafran Veteran,Washington, US, 25 May, 2022."
[464] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 27.
[465] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 28.

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about the context of the struggle. Simultaneously, they educated older members about current socio-economic challenges.[466]

MASSOB tailored its recruitment messages to appeal to different age groups. For older members, they emphasized cultural preservation and historical justice. For younger members, they focused on economic opportunities and social change. The organization attempted to include both older and younger members in leadership positions to ensure representation of different perspectives.[507] MASSOB leadership often presented a phased approach to achieving their goals, trying to satisfy both the desire for action and the recognition of a long-term struggle. Despite differences in expectations, MASSOB emphasized shared experiences of marginalization to maintain unity across age groups.[467] Despite the challenges, these strategies helped MASSOB manage the diverse expectations within its membership. Tensions between immediate action and long-term planning remained a challenge, but the movement's resilience was evident in its ability to maintain cohesion and direction. MASSOB promoted a form of Igbo nationalism that often bordered on ethnic chauvinism. Their websites are filled with videos, images, and chants that glorify the Igbo nation, its history, heroes, achievements, and folklore. Some of these websites include:

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

1. www.biafraland.com;
2. www.biafranet.com;
3. http://magazinebiafranigeriaworld.com;

[466] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 29. [507] Onuoha, "The presence of the past: youth, memory making and the politics of self-determination in southeastern Nigeria," 2195.
[467] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 38.

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4. www.umuigbousa.org;

5. www.kwenu.com;
6. http://ekwenche.org;;
7. http://biafraforum.biafranet.com;
8. http://www.bianu.net;
9. http://igboforum.igbonet.com;
10. http://wazobia.biafranigeria.com.[468]

This heroic narrative style is deeply rooted in reconstructing a national history emphasising endurance and triumph. By highlighting the perceived exploitation and persecution of the Igbo by the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba elites, pro-Igbo secessionist groups effectively resonate with the sentiments of the Igbo people.[510]

MASSOB conducted educational lectures to instill in its members the principles of nonviolence, drawing inspiration from figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Drawing parallels with biblical narratives of liberation, such as the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the story of David and Goliath, MASSOB equated these with their struggle for self-determination against a perceived oppressive Nigerian state.[469] Members often combined Christian hymns with Biafran symbols, and the movement occasionally organized prayer and fasting sessions, encouraging churches in the East to participate in their cause.[470]

[468] Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022. [510] "New Year Message to the People and Nation of Biafra," 2004, accessed 17 March 2024, http://www.biafraland.com/new_year_message_2004$$$.htm.
[469] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 39.
[470] Nigeria, "Biafra: BIM/MASSOB Leader Interviewed On Igbo Rights and Biafra Cause in Nigeria."

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Fragmentation within MASSOB

Despite its commitment to non-violence, MASSOB found itself at odds with state security forces during its operations. The Nigerian government officially denounced the group in 2000, branding it as both irresponsible and illegal.[471] The State Security Service (SSS) detained Ralph Uwazuruike, the MASSOB leader, in March 2000 as a result of his advocacy for secession from the Nigerian federation.[472] Following that, the federal government filed treason charges against Uwazuruike and five other people, which resulted in their arrest and arraignment..[473] It was not until late 2007 that they were granted temporary bail.[474]

According to reports from a briefing by a regional administrator of MASSOB, between 22 May 2000 and 22 April 2008, over 2000 registered members of the movement were purportedly killed by state security personnel in various cities across Nigeria.[475] MASSOB asserts that many of its members have suffered gunshot wounds, with over 1000 individuals allegedly remaining in detention within Nigerian prisons. Additionally, the movement published a compendium detailing what it claims to be the massacre of its members across several cities in the South-east.[476]

Confrontations between MASSOB and the State Security Service (SSS) resulted in crackdowns on the movement and its affiliates across the South-east. With both implicit and explicit support from certain governors in the region, federal authorities conducted numerous raids on MASSOB's hideouts, uncovering a range of paraphernalia, including Biafran flags, military uniforms,

[471] "Nigeria: MASSOB Leader Is a Crook - Obasanjo," 11 August 2000, accessed 17 April 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200008110182.html.
[472] "Nigeria: SSS, Massob Clash Over Biafran Money," 11 August 2005, accessed 12 March 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200508110115.html.
[473] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 41.
[474] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 41.
[475] "Nigeria: Massob Beats Security Network, Hoists Biafran Flag In Enugu," 29 May 2000, accessed 14 May 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200005290186.html.
[476] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 27.

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insignias, currencies, and documentation.[477] These actions highlight the ongoing struggle for control and authority over the region. However, violence was not unidirectional, as the violence between MASSOB and the government was reciprocal, creating a cycle of escalating conflict where both sides engaged in aggressive actions and counteractions.

On 17 June 2006, allegations arose that MASSOB members retaliated by setting fire to three police stations in Onitsha, a central commercial hub in the South-east, in response to an earlier assault on their base.[478] The following month, members of the movement attacked the Central Police Station in Nnewi, near Onitsha, resulting in the destruction of police vehicles and buildings, as well as casualties, including the death of a police sergeant and two movement members.[521]

At its core, MASSOB served as a grassroots movement that resonated deeply with discontented Igbo youths, offering them an alternative to the more moderate and less ideologically driven eliteled Igbo groups. When it emerged in 1999, numerous influential Igbo figures, including politicians, lawmakers, and governors from the Southeast, as well as the leading Igbo organization, Ohanaeze Ndi-Igbo, chose to keep their distance from the movement.[479]

While elite Igbo groups like Ohanaeze Ndi-Igbo and Aka Ikenga acknowledged the necessity of confronting the "Igbo Question" and addressing the challenges faced by the Igbo in the aftermath of the civil war, they diverged from MASSOB primarily due to differences in their approaches to advancing a unified Igbo agenda.[480]

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[477] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 41.
[478] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 42. [521] "Nigeria: Onitsha: Obi Calls for Military Intervention," 18 June, 2006, accessed 18 April, https://allafrica.com/stories/200606190224.html.
[479] Rufus T Akinyele, "Ethnic militancy and national stability in Nigeria: a case study of the Oodua People's Congress," *African Affairs* 100, no. 401 (2001): 630.
[480] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 43.

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A historical analysis reveals a deep divide between the aspirations of MASSOB and the actions of Igbo political leaders. While ordinary Igbo citizens often sympathized with MASSOB's goals, established leaders remained sceptical and even opposed the movement for Biafra. This opposition stems from several factors. Unlike their Northern counterparts, who embraced religious movements, Igbo leaders saw secession jeopardizing their economic well-being. Their investments rely on Nigeria's patronage system, which a breakaway state could dismantle.[481]

Additionally, memories of the brutal Civil War made leaders wary of another violent conflict. MASSOB's vision of a peaceful secession through referendum is viewed as unrealistic, and leaders fear a repeat of the large-scale displacement that marked the previous war.[482] Constructive engagement between these opposing views seemed to teeter on the brink of collapse and sometimes resulted in open threats of attack on prominent Igbo elites by members of MASSOB.[483] Despite this opposition, MASSOB found strong resonance among the younger generation of Igbo in the region who had not experienced the civil war firsthand.[484]

While MASSOB appeared organizationally cohesive, cracks occasionally emerged, leading to divisions. The first signs of division became evident after the group gained national visibility in 2000 when Uche Okwukwu, its legal adviser, publicly disagreed with Uwazurike over his style of administration.[485] Splinter groups such as the Coalition of Biafra Liberation Groups (COBLIG) and the Biafra Must Be Society (BIAMUBS) broke away from the organization.[486] The repressive tactics employed by security operatives radicalized a segment of the MASSOB membership who

[481] Onuoha, "Contemporary Igbo nationalism and the crisis of self-determination in Nigeria," 44.
[482] "Interview, Ifeanyi Okeke, a top Biafran official, Rivers, 24 February, 2022."
[483] "Nigeria: MASSOB Bars Iwuanyanwu, Okeke From Igbo Functions," 23 May, 2002, accessed 18 January 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200205230352.html.
[484] Interview, Ifeanyi Okeke, a top Biafran official, Rivers, 24 February, 2022.
[485] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 543.
[486] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 544.

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believed that Chief Uwazurike's non-violent approach needed to be reconsidered. The failure to resolve this debate within MASSOB led to the formation of BIAMUBS.[487]

MASSOB's struggle for Biafra faced challenges beyond ideology and strategy. Disagreements over leadership and resources also fueled divisions within the movement. One source of tension stemmed from accusations against leader Uwazurike. A coalition of breakaway factions (COBLIG) emerged, criticizing his leadership and alleging misuse of funds for personal gain.[488] They accused him of authoritarianism and neglecting the very people he claimed to represent.[489]

Further conflict arose after Uwazurike's imprisonment. A leadership vacuum emerged, fracturing the movement into competing groups. These factions accused Uwazurike of strategic blunders, lack of focus, and disrespect for fallen members.[490] New groups like MASSOB International and the Biafran Liberation Council emerged, challenging Uwazurike's authority.[491] Uwazurike dismissed these factions as driven by personal ambition. However, their rise reflected a loss of faith in his leadership and the movement's direction. This internal conflict significantly weakened MASSOB's influence and contributed to its decline in 2010.[492]

Uwazuruike's claim that ambition, materialism, and greed were the driving forces behind the emergence of these factions sheds light on the underlying causes of factionalism within the movement.[493] This perspective suggests that personal interests and desires for power and control contributed to MASSOB's fragmentation. Moreover, the presence of these factions led to a decline

[487] Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022.
[488] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 545.
[489] Duruji, "Two Nigerian ethnonationalist movements: a comparison of the OPC and MASSOB," 546.
[490] Moses Metumara Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," *African journal of political science and international relations* 3, no. 2 (2009): 63.
[491] Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," 9.
[492] Onuoha, "The fractured multi-ethnic state: contemporary Igbo quest for self-determination in Nigeria," 28.
[493] Vanguard, "Why I founded MASSOB — Uwazuruike."

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in enthusiasm and cohesion within the movement, as differing agendas and internal conflicts weakened its overall effectiveness and unity. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending MASSOB's challenges and its ability to achieve its goals in the face of internal divisions.

Nigeria's Response to MASSOB

Initially, the federal government dismissed MASSOB and its activities, believing they would fade away over time. However, subsequent events compelled the government to reconsider its approach, particularly after the redeclaration of Biafra in Aba on 22 May 2000.[494] Following this, the government shifted its tactics towards curtailing the group and its activities, adopting a more repressive stance through increased arrests, violent crackdowns on protests, raids on hideouts, and criminalization of Biafran symbols, aiming to dismantle the movement's infrastructure and deter its growth forcefully. This change led to numerous casualties during clashes between security forces and activists advocating for the resurgence of Biafra.[495]

Human rights organizations documented many of these casualties. For instance, People Against Right Abuse in Nigeria reported on monthly clashes between MASSOB and security forces from May 2001 to February 2006. According to their findings, around eighty MASSOB activists were killed, sixty-six were arrested, detained, and prosecuted, while one hundred and six were detained and subjected to torture.[539] Additionally, two hundred and seventeen were arrested and humiliated during this period.

[494] Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," 63.
[495] Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," 54. [539] "Casualty Toll on MASSOB Between 2000 and February 2006," 18 April, 2006, accessed 1 May, 2023, http://www.biafraland.com/MASSOB_Casualty_Toll_2000-2006-feb.htm.

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Government crackdowns failed to quell the determination of many MASSOB members. One member's quote from 2006 sums up their unwavering dedication: "To surrender to fear or abandon our fight for independence is to accept perpetual enslavement." We reject that fate. Divided or united, we will persist in our pursuit of Biafra until it is divinely bestowed upon us, mirroring the promise delivered to the Israelites."[496] Despite government crackdowns, MASSOB activists remained deeply committed to their cause.

Participants, particularly young men and elders, felt the brutality used against the non-violent MASSOB contrasted sharply with the tolerance shown towards Yoruba and Hausa ethnic militias who engaged in greater violence. A case in point was when the Yoruba-dominated Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in the southwest had been involved in violent clashes with police and rival groups.[497] In 1999–2000, OPC members were implicated in several incidents of ethnic violence in Lagos and other southwestern cities, resulting in numerous casualties.

Despite these actions, the OPC continued to operate openly, with its leaders rarely facing prolonged detention. Similarly, in northern Nigeria, Hausa-Fulani militias had been involved in communal conflicts, often with religious undertones. The Kaduna riots of 2000 and 2002, which resulted in hundreds of deaths, saw limited prosecution of the perpetrators.[498] This perceived disparity fueled sympathy for MASSOB within Igbo communities. These observations align with Ikpeze's arguments that the government's uneven response to ethnic activism either emboldens separatist movements or demonstrates a lack of strategy.[499] He further suggested that regional solid

[496] Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022.
[497] Tunde Agara, "Federalism, political accommodation and the emergence of ethnic militias in Nigeria," *The Indian Journal of Political Science* (2011): 880.
[498] Jacinta Nwaka, "Faith-Based Actors and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Jos and Kaduna, Nigeria: 2000–15," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 10, no. 1 (2020): 55.
[499] Ikpeze, "Post-Biafran Marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria in The politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice " 95.

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support for such movements stemmed from the federal government's failure to foster a sense of belonging among all Nigerians.

The historical grievances of the Igbo people, deeply rooted in their past, provided fertile ground for organizations like MASSOB. For instance, the delayed implementation of a pardon program for Igbo soldiers who fought for Biafra during the civil war exemplified a perceived lack of concern from the federal government, stirring a sense of empathy in the audience.[500] This inaction created openings for MASSOB to exploit these feelings of neglect and garner support for their separatist goals. The government's tactics towards MASSOB further complicated the issue. While intended to suppress the movement, these crackdowns often had the opposite effect, generating sympathy and even radicalizing some members.

An instance was the emergence of the Biafra Must Be Society (BIAMUBS) following the imprisonment of MASSOB's leader. This splinter group gave up the non-violent strategy and switched to more combative strategies, imitating the violence of Niger Delta militants.[501] Their actions, including hostage-taking, highlighted the potential for radicalization when grievances remained unaddressed.

Consequently, a former MASSOB member, Mr. Anayo, revealed that BIAMUBS, though not widely known at the time, had existed for some time and advocated for violence as the path to achieving Biafra. He recounted a meeting where BIAMUBS pressured Uwazurike to embrace violence, confident of defeating Nigeria. Uwazurike, however, cited a non-violent agreement with the United Nations and his unwavering commitment to peaceful means.[546]

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[500] "Government reconciles with former military foes," 30 May 2000, accessed 24 August, 2022, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/15347/nigeria-government-reconciles-former-military-foes.
[501] Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," 63. [546] "Nigeria: Terrorism - Police Arrest 9 MASSOB Members," 20 January 2007, accessed 19 March 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200701221278.html.

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Anayo went on to say, "Since he [Uwazurike] does not want violence, no matter what you do to him, he will remain resolute in continuing with non-violence; until Nigerians push him to the wall, he is still saying non-violence."[502] He suggested that with enough pressure, Uwazurike might resort to violence, leading to widespread unrest. This disagreement ultimately led BIAMUBS to break away from MASSOB, forming a separate, more militant group. Anayo also mentioned the presence of other breakaway factions but emphasized that MASSOB remained the primary force advocating for Biafra. However, the rise of BIAMUBS brought attention to a growing trend of militancy within the movement, driven by old grudges and a sense that peaceful means were not being used to advance the cause.[503]

Ralph Uwazuruike faced a series of arrests and detentions as the Nigerian government sought to curtail the group's influence. His encounters with law enforcement spanned international borders, including an incident at an OAU Summit in Lome, Togo. Uwazuruike's most significant period of confinement began in 2005 when authorities apprehended him in Okwe and transferred him to Abuja. He spent two years in an SSS facility while legal proceedings unfolded. Justice Binta Nyako granted him temporary release to attend his mother's funeral.[504] In 2011, Uwazurike and numerous MASSOB members were detained in Enugu, only to be freed on presidential orders.[505] The extended imprisonment of Uwazurike demonstrably fractured MASSOB. While activists denied financial pressures beyond membership fees, the organization received substantial donations from the diaspora, enabling the construction of a massive headquarters in Uwazurike's

[502] Duruji, "Social inequity, democratic transition and the Igbo nationalism resurgence in Nigeria," 64.
[503] Day, "Nigeria: Terrorism - Police Arrest 9 MASSOB Members."
[504] "Nigeria: Court Grants Uwazurike 3-Month Bail to Bury Mum," 27 October 2007, accessed 2 February 2024, https://allafrica.com/stories/200710290244.html.
[505] "Jonathan Orders Release Of Uwazuruike, Massob Members From Detention," 30 August 2011, accessed 22 December 2023, https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/59371/jonathan-orders-release-of-uwazuruike-massobmembers-from-d.html.

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hometown. Some questioned the legitimacy of these funds, given Uwazurike's limited income outside of activism.[506]

This financial suspicion significantly contributed to MASSOB's decline. Upon his release in December 2007, Uwazurike struggled to control dissent within the organization. His prolonged absence undoubtedly led to internal rifts. Accusations of financial mismanagement, particularly regarding the headquarters, further fueled these conflicts. Uwazurike's leadership proved unable to quell these upon his return. This episode exposes the vulnerability of leadership in separatist groups. Extended absences create opportunities for dissent and power struggles, mainly fuelled by resource allocation and transparency concerns. Uwazurike's inability to control the "renegades" underscores his weakened control over the organization's direction and internal conflicts.[552] The emergence of MASSOB in 1999 marked a significant resurgence of the Igbo separatist movement in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Formed in the aftermath of the failed Biafran secession, MASSOB reignited the Igbo quest for self-determination through its explicit advocacy for an independent state of Biafra. Essentially adopting a non-violent approach, the organization sought to mobilize support through peaceful protests, rallies, and international advocacy campaigns, challenging the perceived marginalization and discrimination of the Igbo people within the Nigerian federation.

MASSOB's achievements, such as organizing numerous protests and rallies, engaging in international advocacy efforts, and establishing a solid online presence, brought renewed attention to the Igbo separatist agenda. By garnering widespread support from the Igbo population and the

[506] Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022. [552] "Arrest Uwazuruike, divide Nigeria – MASSOB," 3 June, 2013, accessed 19 February 2024, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/06/arrest-uwazuruike-divide-nigeria-massob/.

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diaspora, MASSOB revived the Biafran cause and reintroduced it into the national discourse, challenging the Nigerian government's stance.

MASSOB emerged in 1999, seeking to revive the idea of Biafra as an independent state. From 1999 to 2011, this period presented challenges that hampered the group's efforts to achieve its objectives. These challenges stemmed from both internal divisions within the Igbo community and the broader political environment of Nigeria, dominated by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) administrations of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, and Goodluck Jonathan.

The political landscape in Nigeria during this period was marked by successive PDP-led administrations' staunch commitment to national unity. Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, and Jonathan administrations regarded Nigeria's unity as sacrosanct and non-negotiable. Consequently, the Nigerian government did not hesitate to deploy military force to suppress any activities perceived as threats to national cohesion. This approach was particularly evident in the government's handling of MASSOB.

The Nigerian state employed violent and excessive force to silence MASSOB's activities. Between 1999 and 2011, there were instances where security forces clamped down on group members. Many members were killed, and many more were arrested, including Ralph Uwazuruike, the leader of MASSOB. These actions were part of a broader strategy to dismantle the group's organizational structure and deter its supporters through intimidation and fear. The state's aggressive response highlighted the severe obstacles MASSOB faced in its quest for Biafran independence.

Internally, MASSOB struggled to garner unanimous support from the Igbo community. Not every Igbo person in Nigeria supported the movement, particularly in the context of the newly established Fourth Republic and the return to democracy in 1999. For many Igbo politicians, this

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new democratic era presented an opportunity for self-actualization within the Nigerian political framework. By joining political parties, particularly the PDP, these politicians saw a chance to advance their careers and influence national policies from within the system. This pragmatic approach often puts them at odds with MASSOB's separatist agenda.

The reluctance of Igbo politicians to support MASSOB was further compounded by the stance of the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, one of the most recognized Igbo socio-cultural organizations. Ohaneze Ndi Igbo advocated for the rights and recognition of Igbos in Nigeria through dialogue, mediation, and peaceful means. Their strategy was to work within the existing political framework to achieve incremental gains for the Igbo community rather than pursuing outright secession. This approach often clashed with MASSOB's more radical objectives, leading to a need for more cohesive support for the movement within the broader Igbo community.

The socio-political dynamics of Nigeria during this period also played a significant role in shaping the challenges faced by MASSOB. The return to democracy in 1999 brought new avenues for political participation and representation for all ethnic groups, including the Igbos. For many Igbos, particularly those with political ambitions, engaging with the Nigerian state offered a more pragmatic path to achieving their goals than supporting a separatist movement. This pragmatic engagement was reflected in the increasing number of Igbos who held significant political positions during this period, including appointments in the federal government and leadership roles in various political parties.

The participation of Igbos in mainstream Nigerian politics served to dilute the appeal of MASSOB's separatist ideology. As more Igbos found opportunities for self-actualization within the Nigerian state, the notion of Biafran independence seemed less attainable and more idealistic. This pragmatic engagement with the Nigerian political system was a significant obstacle for MASSOB, as it needed to maintain its relevance and mobilize widespread support for its cause.

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A combination of repression and suppression characterized the Nigerian government's approach to dealing with MASSOB. Security forces regularly conducted raids on MASSOB gatherings, arrested its leaders, and used lethal force to disperse protests and demonstrations. These actions were intended to disrupt the group's organizational structure and deter its supporters through fear and intimidation. The frequent arrests and detention of Ralph Uwazuruike, MASSOB's leader, were particularly significant, as they deprived the movement of its central figure and weakened its leadership.

The government's repressive measures were not limited to physical suppression. There were also legal and administrative efforts to undermine MASSOB's activities. The Nigerian state employed various laws and regulations to criminalize the group's actions and delegitimize its cause. These measures included charges of treason, terrorism, and unlawful assembly, which were used to justify the arrest and detention of MASSOB members. The combination of physical and legal repression created a hostile environment for the movement, making it difficult for MASSOB to operate openly and effectively.

MASSOB also faced significant internal leadership challenges that hindered its ability to achieve its objectives. A critical factor in this internal discord was the perception among some members that Ralph Uwazuruike, the group's leader, was a sellout and a weak leader. These accusations arose from various disagreements over strategy, the direction of the movement, and suspicions about Uwazuruike's dealings with the Nigerian government.

As a result of these internal conflicts, MASSOB experienced fragmentation, leading to the formation of splinter groups. This disunity weakened the movement's overall effectiveness and diluted its efforts. The emergence of multiple factions created confusion and reduced the cohesion

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necessary for a unified struggle. Each faction often pursued its agenda, further complicating the group's ability to present a united front against the Nigerian state.

This lack of cohesion within MASSOB diminished its operational capacity and eroded its credibility among potential supporters. The movement's fragmented nature made coordinating activities, mobilizing resources, and sustaining momentum easier. Consequently, internal strife and leadership disputes significantly contributed to MASSOB's inability to achieve its primary objective of actualizing an independent Biafran state.

This chapter's exploration of MASSOB's resurgence resonates with various theoretical perspectives on ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. The "constructionist" approach highlights how social and political forces, such as the transition to democracy and the potential for inadequate representation, may have influenced the construction of grievances and fueled separatist sentiment among the Igbo community. The "dialectical" perspective acknowledges the interplay between historical experiences and the social construction of ethnicity, offering insights into how socioeconomic challenges faced by the Igbo community if perceived as stemming from continued marginalization, could have strengthened the narrative of injustice and bolstered support for separatist movements.

Furthermore, the "objectivist" perspective emphasizes the historical and cultural factors that shape ethnic identity. This chapter's examination of political representation for the Igbo people can be analyzed through this lens, as a lack of representation in key positions of power could reinforce the sense of being an excluded group within Nigeria, potentially fueling separatist aspirations. By applying these theoretical perspectives, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of factors contributing to the persistence of Igbo separatist movements in the Fourth Republic. Analyzing the democratic transition, socioeconomic challenges, political representation, and the

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enduring sense of Igbo identity provides valuable insights into the dynamics shaping the separatist landscape from 1990 – 2010.

As this chapter concludes, it becomes evident that the rise of MASSOB and other Igbo separatist movements challenged Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The persistence of these movements underscores the unresolved tensions and aspirations for self-determination within the Igbo community. This sets the stage for the next chapter, which delves into the impact of digitization on Igbo separatist movements from 2000 to 2015. It is necessary to analyze the role of the digital revolution, the emergence of online separatist platforms, and the influence of social media in shaping and amplifying Igbo separatist activism. The digital realm introduced new avenues for mobilization, communication, and dissemination of ideologies, potentially reshaping the strategies and dynamics of the Igbo separatist movement during this period.

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Chapter Five

IPOB and the Digital Age: The Digital Phase, 2012 - 2015

The dawn of the 21st century witnessed a transformation in Nigeria, marked by the advent of the digital revolution; this period ushered in unprecedented connectivity, enabling the proliferation of online platforms and reshaping the dynamics of socio-political movements. Within this landscape, Igbo separatist movements experienced a notable evolution, leveraging digital tools to amplify their voices and mobilizing supporters in ways previously unimaginable.

As we examine the impact of digitization on Igbo separatist movements from 2012 to 2015, understanding the historical context of Nigeria's digital landscape and the emergence of online platforms as catalysts for social change becomes imperative. Moreover, this chapter aims to emphasize how the utilization of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped the strategies and dynamics of Igbo separatist movements, particularly focusing on the rise of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement.

The central argument of this chapter is that the proliferation of digital technology profoundly influenced the trajectory of Igbo separatist movements during the specified period. Through the emergence of online platforms and social media, these movements found new avenues for communication, mobilization, and dissemination of their ideologies. The digital realm, as a battleground and a sanctuary, became the intense struggle for voices advocating for Igbo selfdetermination.

This chapter explores the interplay between digitization and Igbo separatist movements to provide insights into the complexities of contemporary Nigerian politics and the evolving nature of dissent in the digital age. Through a nuanced analysis of historical events and socio-political dynamics, this research aims to elucidate the relationship between technology, activism, and the pursuit of autonomy within Nigeria's diverse landscape.

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Nigerian Founding Fathers on National Integration

The challenge of fostering national integration persisted in many African nations, including Nigeria, due to the inherent ethno-religious diversity within these countries. This diversity often fueled overt or implicit ethnic politics, linguistic divisions, and discrimination, leading to sociopolitical violence, civil wars, and even separatist movements. In Nigeria, the urge to mitigate ethnolinguistic nationalism and promote national integration drove the political discourse and administrative designs of the ruling elite, from the founders of the Nigerian Federation to contemporary presidents. However, in various visible forms, separatist tendencies survived in Nigeria's sociopolitical fabric, resisting the government's multiple and varied efforts to mitigate them while necessitating better methodologies to address them. Indeed, ethnicism and separatism remained a persistent challenge for Nigeria, as revealed by the observations of the nation's founders from the pre- to post-independent eras.

As early as 1948, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who later became the Prime Minister from 1960 to 1966, lamented several times about Nigerians' lack of national sentiment. In a public address, he candidly acknowledged: Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one ... this pretence of unity is artificial ... the Southern tribes ... now pouring into the North do not mix with Northern people ... We in the North look upon them as invaders."[507]

[507] Thomas J. Davis and Azubike Kalu-Nwiwu, "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa's Colonial Legacy.," *The Journal of Negro History 86, no. 1. https://doi.org/10.2307/1350175.* (2001): 5.

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Tafawa Balewa also observed that: “since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper ... it is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country”.[508]

Like Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo, another founding nationalist who led a political party called the Action Group, raised concerns over the emergence of embryonic forms of separatism in the country. In 1947, he pointedly observed that Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no “Nigerians” in the same sense as there are “Englishmen” or “French.” The word “Nigeria” is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.[509]

Nnamdi Azikiwe, a critical founding father who led the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), expressed concern about the lack of national unity among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. In a lecture at the University of Nigeria Nsukka on 15 May 1964, Azikiwe acknowledged the persistent reality of tribalism in Nigeria. He stated, "tribalism is a reality. National unity can be a reality, but at present, it is not quite a reality."[510] He added that tribalism and its polarizing effects on the country's political landscape made Nigeria's emergence as a federal republic difficult from a social, economic, and political standpoint.[511]

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[508] Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu, "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa’s Colonial Legacy.," 6.
[509] Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu, "Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa’s Colonial Legacy.," 7.
[510] Okechukwu Ibeanu, Nwachukwu Orji, and CK Iwuamadi, "Biafra separatism: Causes, consequences and remedies," *Enugu: Institute for Innovations in Development* (2016): 11.
[511] Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Zik: A selection from the speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Governor General of the Federation of Nigeria, formerly President of the Nigerian State, formerly Premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 80.

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The efforts of Nigeria's founders to build a unified nation faced persistent challenges from separatist movements. Groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) are examples of how these tensions have existed throughout the country's history. The presence of numerous separatist groups, such as the Niger Delta Liberation Front, Yoruba Liberation Command, IPOB, and MASSOB, underscored the ongoing struggle to create a cohesive Nigerian identity. Members of these groups often viewed the idea of "One Nigeria" as detrimental to their interests.

The recent strategies employed by these movements, including digital activism and social media manipulation, reflected the changing nature of the separatist threat. The Nigerian government needed to adapt its approaches to counter these new tactics. IPOB, for instance, utilized online platforms to gather international support for their goals of self-determination and an independent Biafra. Their online campaigns frequently employed anti-government rhetoric and fostered animosity towards other ethnic groups, further threatening Nigeria's unity.[512]

Igbo Separatism and the IPOB Movement

The civil war and unfulfilled aspirations fueled a resurgence of separatism in southeastern Nigeria. Decades after the conflict, new calls for an independent Biafra emerged, driven by grievances distinct from those of the 1960s. Notably, the leadership of this new movement differed from the one that led the previous secession attempt.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the Igbo people have been increasingly advocating for a more equitable Nigerian federation. Their desire for a political system where all ethnic groups could compete for power and a fairer distribution of economic resources was initially pursued through peaceful means, setting the context for the subsequent rise of separatist groups. However,

[512] "IPOB using propaganda to malign Nigerian Army – Official," 1 May, 2022, accessed 23 March 2024, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/527106-ipob-using-propaganda-to-malign-nigerian-armyofficial.html?tztc=1.

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over time, frustration mounted among some Igbo who felt their aspirations were being ignored. This disenfranchisement led to the rise of various separatist groups with varying degrees of radicalism. These groups included the Igbo Concerned Citizens, Igbo Elders' Forum, the Igbo Renaissance Movement, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Their emergence highlighted the growing dissatisfaction with the existing political structures and their inability to address Igbo grievances.[513]

Factors contributing to this dissatisfaction were limited development opportunities, high unemployment, widespread corruption, and a stagnant economy. These grievances provided fertile ground for the formation of separatist groups, with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerging as a prominent player in the digital age. Notably, IPOB emerged as a splinter group from the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), a group established in 1999 with the sole purpose of pursuing Biafran independence. Over time, MASSOB fractured, giving rise to groups like the Biafra Zionist Movement in 2010 and IPOB in 2012.[514]

Amnesty International[515] maintains that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerged in 2012, coinciding with the revival of Radio Biafra. While Nnamdi Kanu rose to prominence in proBiafra activism through Radio Biafra in 2009, the exact timing of IPOB's formation remains unclear. An interview with Kanu in April 2013 sheds no light on IPOB's existence then. Kanu mentions collaboration between Radio Biafra operators and certain members of the Movement for

[513] Olasupo O Thompson, CC Ojukwu, and OGF Nwaorgu, "United we fall, divided we stand: Resuscitation of the Biafra state secession and the national question conundrum," *Journal of Research in National Development* 14, no. 1 (2016): 10.

[514] Ifeanyichukwu Michael Abada, Paul Hezekiah Omeh, and Ikechukwu Remigius Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," *Journal of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (2020): 12.

[515] "Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere': Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists," 2016, accessed 18 May 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/5211/2016/en/#:~:text=It%20documents%20extrajudicial%20executions%20and,other%20ill%2Dtreatment%20of%20detainees.

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the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), but not its leadership. He also directed listeners towards established organizations like the Billie Human Rights Initiative, which pursued legal action against the Nigerian government alongside the Biafra Liberation Council (BLC) and the Lower Niger Congress (LNC). This suggests that IPOB may not have been a prominent force at this point.[516] IPOB established a distinct organizational structure under the leadership of Kanu, who previously oversaw London-based Radio Biafra. This structure included regional chapters overseen by coordinators, with Kanu at the helm and Uche Mefor serving as his deputy.[517]

Additionally, IPOB formed its own security service and a "Customary Government of Indigenous People of Biafra.[518] Regarding the activities of IPOB, aside from the frequent use of inflammatory statements by Nnamdi Kanu, the group's operations also included the 'distribution of flyers, awareness-raising amongst the population, meetings, marches, and other gatherings (such as prayer meetings).'[519] Like MASSOB, IPOB claimed to be a non-violent organization – which the government contests. However, IPOB's' leader, Nnamdi Kanu, repeatedly made derogatory statements about President Muhammadu Buhari (describing him as a 'terrorist-in-chief') and the need to arm the movement at the World Igbo Congress in 2015, he told the audience: 'We need guns, and we need bullets'.[520]

[516] "What we want to achieve with Radio Biafra — Nnamdi Kanu," 24 April, 2013, accessed 23 March 2024, https://radiobiafra.co/what-we-want-to-achieve-with-radio-biafra-nnamdi-kanu/.
[517] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 11.
[518] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 11.
[519] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 11.
[520] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 11.

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Ojukwu and Nwaorgu added to the conversation by discussing how IPOB utilized online radio as a communication tool, creating a two-way reception channel that involved both the Igbo community at home and in the diaspora, as well as the Nigerian government.[521] They noted that IPOB, with the radio media being its primary tool, is alleged to have addressed the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a zoo and President Buhari as a terrorist, evil and a paedophile in some of its radio messages.[522] However, in a video clip, while addressing some Igbos in the Diaspora at the World Igbo Congress in the US, Kanu was seen soliciting weapons from the audience and boasted that some powerful countries have recognized the Biafran passports and sovereign status.[523]

This indicates that IPOB employed social media and online radio to mobilize Igbo people both at home and abroad in support of its separatist agenda. Moreover, Kanu used language that was considered provocative and inflammatory to promote the cause of Biafran. Supporting these points, Ekpo noted that since 2009, Radio Biafra, broadcasting online from London, attracted Igbo listeners with its nationalist propaganda and used inflammatory statements to draw the attention of the Nigerian government. According to Ekpo, Kanu called for the supply of arms and ammunition to wage war against the northern Hausa-Fulani people if they would oppose the independence of Biafra, stating that this time, Biafra would defeat Nigeria in war.[524]

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[521] Chris C Ojukwu and Felix George O Nwaorgu, "Ethnic elite organisation and political transitions in Nigeria: Ohanaeze Ndigbo in perspective," *Canadian Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2013): 106.
[522] Thompson, Ojukwu, and Nwaorgu, "United we fall, divided we stand: Resuscitation of the Biafra state secession and the national question conundrum," 6.
[523] Thompson, Ojukwu, and Nwaorgu, "United we fall, divided we stand: Resuscitation of the Biafra state secession and the national question conundrum," 8.
[524] Charles E Ekpo and Cletus A Agorye, "A (un) just and (un) holy war? The theme of imagery and symbolism in the IPOB secessionist struggle," *International Journal in Management and Social Science* Volume : 6, Issue : 06 (2018): 28.

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Although Kanu's statements were provocative and capable of inciting another civil war in the country, it remains a fact that all separatist movements, whether violent or non-violent, tend to produce inflammatory rhetoric. Such statements are a common feature of separatist agitations. In addition, Ugorji,[525] captured the implications of IPOB's provocative rhetoric and its effects on the Nigerian state. Leaders of the Indigenous People of Biafra often included graphic images and videos from the 1967 Nigeria-Biafra war in their messages and propaganda. This strategy aimed to rekindle ethnic sentiments among the Igbos and further their cause for independence. The impact of such propaganda was significant.

Efforts to promote Biafran independence through emotional appeals demonstrably escalated ethnic tensions within Nigeria. Pro-Biafra activists leveraged the strong sentiments of their supporters, effectively silencing or dismissing dissenting views, particularly those from the HausaFulani population who opposed the movement.

A prime example of this dynamic unfolded on 6 June 2017, when a coalition of northern youth groups issued an eviction notice to Igbos residing in northern Nigeria. Citing the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum, historical records show the notice demanded Igbo relocation within three months and a reciprocal return of Hausa-Fulani from the eastern states. The group further threatened violence against any Igbo who remained past the 1 October 2017 deadline. This episode highlights the potential for emotional appeals surrounding Biafra to have exacerbated ethnic divisions and incited violence.[526]

Nevertheless, Ugorji rightly notes that the consequences of a renewed Biafran secessionist agitation extended beyond intra-ethnic divisions. It had diverse implications, such as disruptions

[525] Basil Ugorji, "Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB): A revitalized social movement in Nigeria," *International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation* (2017): 439.
[526] Ugorji, "Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB): A revitalized social movement in Nigeria," 7.

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to the education system due to youth involvement in protests, threats to regional peace and security deterring foreign investors and tourists from visiting the southeastern states, economic downturns, the emergence of criminal networks hijacking the non-violent movement for illicit activities, confrontations with law enforcement resulting in the loss of protesters' lives as had occurred in late 2015 and 2016, and a reduction of Hausa-Fulani or Yoruba confidence in potential Igbo presidential candidates, making the election of an Igbo president of Nigeria more challenging.[527] In April 2012, Nnamdi Kanu revived Radio Biafra in London. Initially, broadcasts were limited to the UK and Europe. However, by April 2013, Radio Biafra began operating as a mobile station in Nigeria, transmitting on the FM frequency 88.2 and reaching audiences in southeastern and south-southern regions. While the station garnered a local following between 2013 and 2015, it emerged as a significant mobilizing force during the 2015 elections. This coincided with the defeat of former President Goodluck Jonathan, who enjoyed overwhelming support in the southeast and south-south, and the perceived ethno-religious insensitivity of the new administration under President Muhammadu Buhari. These factors significantly bolstered Radio Biafra's influence.[528] Until 2015, IPOB's activities were largely superficial, confined to online radio broadcasts through Radio Biafra and other media outlets, and were mostly ignored by then-President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. However, the group became increasingly bold and audacious when President Muhammadu Buhari took office in 2015. Some scholars note that "IPOB pushed Nigeria's national security to the brink by audaciously recruiting a militant group named Biafra Security Service (BSS) for intelligence operations."[529] It became evident that IPOB posed a

[527] Ugorji, "Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB): A revitalized social movement in Nigeria," 8.
[528] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 13.
[529] Ekpo and Agorye, "A (un) just and (un) holy war? The theme of imagery and symbolism in the IPOB secessionist struggle," 38.

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significant security challenge, yet addressing it within the bounds of established laws and conventions rendered the group legally immune from repercussions.

By mid-2015, Nigerian authorities deemed Radio Biafra's broadcasts subversive, leading to a search for its operators. The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) attempted to jam the station's signal in June 2015, but Radio Biafra countered by frequently changing frequencies. This tactic mirrored strategies employed by Radio Democracy in the 1990s during the Yoruba struggle against military rule. The Nigerian government's pursuit of Radio Biafra's operators culminated in the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu. Kanu and Benjamin Madubugwu (allegedly his accomplice in illegally importing a radio transmitter) were apprehended on 14 October 2015 upon arrival from London. Authorities also arrested David Nwawuisi, an MTN engineer, on suspicion of conspiring to install Radio Biafra transmitters on MTN infrastructure in exchange for a bribe. Additionally, Chidiebere Onwudie, the national coordinator of IPOB, faced accusations of researching improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with terrorist intent. These arrests marked a significant escalation in tensions between the Nigerian government and pro-Biafra groups.[530]

Many IPOB and MASSOB members and sympathizers erupted in protests, demanding Kanu's unconditional release. The IPOB movement gained momentum after authorities refused to release Kanu despite meeting bail conditions. Massive demonstrations occurred across southeast and south-south states, including Enugu, Delta, Imo, Abia, Cross River, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, and Rivers, starting in late October 2015. These protests gained notoriety in cities like Asaba, Aba, and Onitsha, with incidents like blocking the Niger Bridge and disrupting major transportation routes.[531] Commercial activities were halted in many cities, leading to confrontations with security

[530] "Kanu: IPOB not unlawful group – Court," 2 March, 2017, accessed 25 February 2024, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/kanu-ipob-not-unlawful-group-court/.
[531] Ikenna Mike Alumona, Stephen Nnaemeka Azam, and Emeka Charles Iloh, "The Nigerian state and the resurgence of separatist agitations: The case of Biafra," (2017): 12.

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forces and allegations of human rights abuses. Pro-Biafra solidarity demonstrations erupted in the diaspora, with protests in India, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These included protests during President Buhari's visits to India and South Africa for summits in late 2015.[532] The international dimension of these demonstrations highlighted the growing global reach of the pro-Biafra movement.

IPOB's emergence in 2012 sparked mixed reactions within the Igbo community. While some embraced the movement, others, including Igbo elders, business leaders, politicians, intellectuals, and even pro-Biafra groups like BIM, viewed its methods sceptically. IPOB's disruptive tactics, particularly the protests and unrest, negatively impacted business activity and political stability in southeastern Nigeria and south-south. These disruptions also raised concerns across other regions of Nigeria, threatening the nation's integrationist agenda.[533]

RE-IPOB, a rival pro-Biafra group, emerged as a critical voice against IPOB's uncompromising approach. RE-IPOB advocated for Biafra as a bargaining chip to achieve a more equitable reintegration of the affected region into Nigeria, with secession as a last resort. They proposed dialogue with prominent Igbo figures, including Dr. Arthur Nwankwo, Dr. Kenneth Opigo, and others.[534] RE-IPOB struggled to match IPOB's mobilization capacity. Furthermore, some radical pro-Biafra supporters levied harsh criticism against RE-IPOB, branding them as anti-Igbo, sellouts, and government stooges. While the calls for dialogue had limited immediate impact, they did prompt the Nigerian federal government to engage with stakeholders from the southeast.

[532] Celestina Ekene Chukwudi et al., "IPOB agitations for self-determination and the response of the Federal Government of Nigeria: Implications for political stability," *Academic journal of interdisciplinary studies* 8, no. 3 (2019): 185.
[533] "Interview, Austin Ifeajuna, a Biafran veteran, Imo, 25 February, 2022."
[534] "RE-IPOB names new leader, list eminent persons to negotiate with FG," 30 August, 2016, accessed 30 March 2024, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/re-ipob-names-new-leader-list-eminent-persons-to-negotiate-with-fg/.

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However, this engagement had the unintended and significant consequence of further marginalizing IPOB.

Social Media and IPOB

Nigeria's internet and social media landscape experienced a dramatic transformation after the year 2000. Urban areas saw a surge in internet access, with usage increasing by over 60 percent between 2000 and 2020.[535] This growth, documented by Internet World Stats, led to a growth rate exceeding 70 percent by 2020. NoiPolls data suggests that internet access reached a staggering 61 percent of the Nigerian population by that same year.[536] Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp became commonplace, with Facebook alone boasting over 30 million users and projections exceeding 40 million by 2025.[583]

This digital revolution fostered the development of diverse online cultures in Nigeria. Simple web blogging, citizen journalism, and online activism all flourished. Recognizing the power of social media, Nigerian political activists began utilizing platforms to mobilize citizens with clicks, tweets, and blogs. The past decades witnessed numerous hashtag movements and online campaigns tackling social and political issues like bad governance, pollution, police brutality, terrorism, and ethnic discrimination. These movements, like #BringBackOurGirls, Occupy Nigeria, #EndSARS, and others, aimed to instigate positive change within the nation. Endong highlighted the significance of online activism using the #BringBackOurGirls and #OccupyNigeria movements as examples. He argued that these campaigns empowered Nigerians

[535] Farooq A. Kperogi, ed., *Digital dissidence and social media censorship in Africa* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2022), 123.
[536] Kperogi, *Digital dissidence and social media censorship in Africa* 123. [583]
"Internet Users Statistics for Africa ", 2020, accessed August 23, 2022, https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm.

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to hold their government accountable and advocate for crucial issues like fighting corruption, promoting good governance, protecting citizens, and ensuring transparency.[537]

Given the immense potential of online activism, separatist groups in Nigeria have also turned to the internet. They leverage online propaganda and internet-based diplomacy to promote their agendas. The IPOB movement, to be explored further, exemplifies this trend. The proliferation of the internet created a conducive environment for the emergence of online Igbo separatist platforms. However, internal and external pressures exerted influence on the leadership of MASSOB over time, leading to the factionalization of the movement. This reinforces Crenshaw's[538] perspective that over time, it is common for resistance movements to become more focused on maintaining their organization rather than achieving their original goals. In late 2015, Uchenna Madu effectively took control of MASSOB from its founding leader, Ralph Uwazurike, and ousted him from the group.[539] Before this, Uwazurike had been repeatedly dismissed from the movement or its leadership by dissatisfied associates, with minimal impact.[540] On 5 December 2015, he asserted that his control of MASSOB was firm, declaring that Madu had ceased to be part of the group since September 30 2009.[541] Nevertheless, on 6 December 2015, Uwazuruike lamented that

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[537] Floribert Patrick C Endong, "Hashtag Activism and Democratisation in Nigeria: A Study of the #OccupyNigeria and #BringBackOurGirls Movements," in *Activism, Campaigning and Political Discourse.* , ed. Innocent Chiluwa and G. Bourvier (New York: Nova Science Publishers.: 2018), 9.
[538] Martha Crenshaw, "Theories of terrorism: Instrumental and organizational approaches," *The Journal of strategic studies* 10, no. 4 (1987): 16.
[539] Samuel Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 9, no. 1 (2019): 9.
[540] "MASSOB Sacks Uwazuruike, Gets New Leadership," 1 Dec 2015, accessed 15 February 2024, https://dailytrust.com/null-2572/.
[541] "I remain MASSOB leader – Uwazuruike laughs off expulsion," 5 December 2015, accessed 25 February 2024, https://dailypost.ng/2015/12/05/i-remain-massob-leader-uwazuruike-laughs-off-expulsion/.

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MASSOB had been taken away from him and declared the establishment of the Biafra Independent Movement (BIM) shortly thereafter.[542] BIM was often seen as a way for Uwazuruike to save face, although there were opposing claims.

The internal strife within MASSOB was evident in a string of allegations and rebuttals. Uwazuruike pointed out that Madu was dismissed for orchestrating a confrontation between members from Onitsha and Okwe, resulting in the deaths of approximately four individuals in 2009.[543] He further alleged that Nnamdi Kanu, the original leader of IPOB, was ousted from MASSOB due to his rebellious behaviour and lack of transparency. In retaliation, both Kanu and Madu accused Uwazuruike of profiting from the collective cause and suppressing dissent, which led to the departure of numerous skilled members from the organization.[544] This validates Collier's viewpoint that greed often infiltrates movements born out of grievances.[545]

Madu highlighted that MASSOB accumulated approximately 60 million naira from monthly contributions and garnered over 100 million naira from the sale of Biafran international passports, with minimal transparency regarding financial matters within the organization.[546] Moreover, it was alleged that the leadership of MASSOB, under Uwazuruike, received payment for campaigning on behalf of the PDP on various occasions, diverting attention and resources from the core struggle.[547] In essence, the divisions within MASSOB stem from a sequence of leadership conflicts, purported financial mismanagement, and divergent approaches to engagement tactics.

Factionalism within MASSOB gave rise to various other pro-Biafra groups, such as the Biafran

[542] "Uwazuruike Renames MASSOB," 7 December, 2015, accessed April 16, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/biafra-uwazuruike-renames-massob-2/.
[543] Post, "I remain MASSOB leader – Uwazuruike laughs off expulsion."
[544] Trust, "MASSOB Sacks Uwazuruike, Gets New Leadership."
[545] Paul Collier, "Rebellion as a quasi-criminal activity," *Journal of Conflict resolution* 44, no. 6 (2000): 840.
[546] Oyewole, "The fracturing of pro-Biafra nationalist movements," 9.
[547] "Biafran leader Nnamdi Kanu: The man behind Nigeria's separatists," 5 May, 2017, accessed 14 January 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39793185.

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Liberation Council (BLC), Biafra Youth Congress (BYC), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), Coalition of Biafra Liberation Groups (COBLIG), BIM, IPOB, Biafran Revolutionary Organisation (BRO), Eastern People Congress (EPC), Joint Revolutionary Council of Biafra (JRCB), Salvation People of Biafra (SPB), Rebrand Indigenous People of Biafra (TRIPOB), and the Reformed Indigenous People of Biafra (RE-IPOB). Nonetheless, it was the IPOB which became the most daring and consistent during this period.

IPOB's Digital Activities: The Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Service

In April 2012, Nnamdi Kanu revived Radio Biafra in London. Initially, broadcasts were limited to the UK and Europe. However, by April 2013, Radio Biafra began operating as a mobile station in Nigeria, transmitting on the FM frequency 88.2 and reaching audiences in southeastern regions of Nigeria. While the station garnered a local following between 2013 and 2015, it emerged as a significant mobilizing force during the 2015 elections. This coincided with the defeat of former President Goodluck Jonathan, who enjoyed overwhelming support in the southeast and southsouth, and the perceived ethno-religious insensitivity of the new administration under President Muhammadu Buhari. These factors significantly bolstered Radio Biafra's influence.[548]

Radio Biafra initiated its shortwave broadcasts with assistance from MASSOB members. It operated as a mobile station covering areas such as Enugu, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Nnewi, Abakaliki, Owerri, and other southeastern regions. According to Kanu, the broadcasts aimed to make the station's messages more accessible to Igbo people and other Nigerians. The station had been inactive for two years but resumed online broadcasts on 13 April 2012, following the killing

[548] "What we want to achieve with Radio Biafra — Nnamdi Kanu," 24 April 2013, accessed 9 February 2024, https://radiobiafra.co/what-we-want-to-achieve-with-radio-biafra-nnamdi-kanu/.

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of Igbo people in the North. Its revival sought to provide hope, enlightenment, and knowledge to Igbo aborigines.[549]

Kanu explained that the renewed Radio Biafra intended to advance the ideology of Biafra, focusing on the freedom and emancipation of all Biafran people, united by genetic, cultural, and value systems.[550] Kanu's emphasis on truth rather than propaganda distinguished the new Radio Biafra from its earlier incarnation during the Civil War. His statements reflected a commitment to restoring the Biafra republic. However, the Nigerian government viewed Radio Biafra as a controversial network propagating the ideology of the former secessionist Republic of Biafra, accusing it of inciting hate and violence.[551]

Originally known as the Voice of Biafra, the radio station was initially established by the government of the Republic of Biafra and later operated by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. It was believed to have been transmitted before the Nigeria-Biafra war, playing a crucial role in broadcasting speeches and propaganda by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to the Biafran people.[599] Based in the United Kingdom, Radio Biafra was transmitted via the internet and shortwave, primarily targeting Eastern Nigeria. The station claimed to broadcast the ideology of Biafra, advocating for the freedom of the Biafran people.[600]

Radio Biafra utilized both Internet radio and terrestrial radio to disseminate its ideologies. The station offered a mix of platforms by broadcasting online through its website, Facebook page, and

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[549] Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, "Separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and national question in Nigeria," 10.
[550] Gideon Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," *The Journal of Society and Media* 6, no. 2 (2022): 352.
[551] "Nigerian Govt. lied, Radio Biafra still broadcasting. ," 15 July 2015, accessed 20 April 2024, http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/186692-nigerian-govtlied-radio-Biafra-still-broadcasting.html. .
[599] "MASSOB Is Dying, But Pro-Biafra Crusade Spreads Dangerously," 24 October 2015, accessed 19 April 2024, https://dailytrust.com/massob-is-dying-but-pro-biafra-crusade-spreads-dangerously/. [600] "Finally, Radio Biafra is off the airwaves," 2015 accessed 9 January 2024, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/186872-finally-radio-biafra-is-off-the-airwaves.html?tztc=1. [601] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 353.

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terrestrially on 103.1 FM and 15.6 AM. To casual listeners, Internet radio and traditional AM/FM radio appeared similar, as both provided non-interactive services from a single broadcaster.[601] Reactions to Radio Biafra were mixed. Critics accused the station of inciting conflict and spreading hate messages against Nigeria, which it derogatorily called a "zoo." However, an editor for Sahara Reporters defended the station by comparing it to the British Broadcasting Corporation's Hausa service.[552] On 14 July 2015, reports claimed that Radio Biafra had been jammed due to the lack of a broadcasting license from the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission. The station quickly refuted these claims as false and released new frequency details to the public.[553]

Radio Biafra communicated the plight of Biafrans in Nigeria to Igbo people domestically and abroad. It focused on issues like marginalization, enslavement, insecurity, and the denial of human rights by Nigeria. The station maintained a robust online presence, using social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to reach its audience.[554] Listeners discovered Radio Biafra primarily through Facebook Live broadcasts, followed by word of mouth and FM broadcasts.

Radio Biafra served as a platform for the IPOB group to voice their demands for self-determination from Nigeria. With the slogan "In defence of freedom," IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu reiterated the desire of Igbo people for a referendum to decide their fate in seeking the Republic of Biafra.[555] The provocative and disturbing broadcasts and digital activities of Radio Biafra were

[552] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 354.
[553] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 354.
[554] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 355.
[555] Thompson, Ojukwu, and Nwaorgu, "United we fall, divided we stand: Resuscitation of the Biafra state secession and the national question conundrum," 8.

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viewed as threats to Nigerian unity by the administration of President Muhammed Buhari and other stakeholders.[556]

Many adherents of the IPOB movement engaged in gathering and sharing information, often functioning as citizen journalists. They created content that brought attention to the movement's issues, which mainstream media sometimes neglected. Their efforts aligned with the trend of social movements relying on alternative media, thereby keeping protests visible and relevant. Many supporters dedicated significant time online daily, either through direct digital activism or by staying informed and disseminating information.[557] This underscored the vital role of citizen journalism and alternative media in sustaining and promoting the IPOB movement, demonstrating substantial engagement and commitment from the supporters.

Most IPOB supporters frequently used the internet in their daily activities, which helped them stay engaged with the movement and contributed to its visibility and communication.[558] The online dissemination of pro-Biafra messages was crucial for maintaining the movement's presence. Participants consistently posting and engaging with related content helped sustain the movement's momentum. Despite the increasing internet penetration in Nigeria, access remained costly and varied by location and service provider, highlighting the dedication of supporters who invested their resources to stay connected.[559] Social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, played a significant role. Supporters used these platforms to gauge public opinion, share information, and reflect on their activities and strategies. Most supporters actively used the internet

[556] Thompson, Ojukwu, and Nwaorgu, "United we fall, divided we stand: Resuscitation of the Biafra state secession and the national question conundrum," 10.
[557] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 356.
[558] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 357.
[559] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 357.

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to promote Biafra independence, reflecting a high level of individual commitment to the cause.[560] This demonstrated how frequent internet use and social media engagement contributed to the movement's communication and visibility, despite the challenges of internet access in Nigeria.

The internet was a crucial tool for sourcing information supporting the Biafra cause. Its ease of access significantly contributed to the movement's activities. The internet facilitated the quick and wide circulation of information, including reports on military actions and brutality against IPOB supporters in Southeast Nigeria, such as in Imo and Abia States.[561] This was essential for raising awareness and mobilizing support. It played a role in increasing protest attendance and securing support and funding for the movement, thus sustaining and growing its activities. Although slightly less impactful, the internet also aided in verifying information or evidence against the Nigerian government, contributing to the movement's credibility.[562] The internet played a strong positive role in supporting the IPOB movement by facilitating information dissemination, mobilization, and verification, emphasizing its importance in these areas.

The Nigerian Government's Response to IPOB - Reflections

The Nigerian government's crackdown on IPOB's separatist agenda raised concerns about human rights violations. Amnesty International documented a surge in extrajudicial torture and executions by Nigerian security forces, particularly the army. Their report alleged that these abuses resulted in the deaths of over 150 pro-Biafra protesters in southeastern Nigeria between August 2015 and August 2016.[563]

[560] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 358.
[561] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 359.
[562] Nwafor, "No Referendum, No Election Campaign: How Radio Biafra Internet Broadcasting Mobilized IPOB Worldwide during the 2019 Nigerian Election," 360.
[563] "Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere': Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists," 2016, accessed 28 May

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The report specifically cited the deaths of IPOB members during military operations codenamed "Python Dance" and "Crocodile Dance" on Biafra Remembrance Day. Amnesty International further documented the violent arrest of over a thousand IPOB members and proBiafra supporters during rallies in Onitsha, Aba, and other southeastern cities. Security forces reportedly raided homes and even a church where some individuals were sleeping. Amnesty International's report exposed the chilling reality of the crackdown. Streets across the southeast, particularly in Anambra state, fell silent as residents, many not even IPOB members, retreated indoors until the military presence subsided.[564]

The report likened the government's approach to that of a parent who resorts to beatings to silence a child's cries. A more constructive solution, it argued, lay in open dialogue to address the underlying issues.[565] Ignoring the concerns championed by IPOB risked emboldening other groups to take similar paths. The report concluded with a call for the Nigerian government to prioritize national unity through a collective examination of the root causes of these tensions. This introspection, it argued, was essential to salvaging Nigeria's future as a cohesive nation.

The emergence of IPOB in 2012 marked a significant shift in the trajectory of the Igbo separatist movement, ushering in a more militant and confrontational phase. Unlike its predecessor, MASSOB, which adopted a non-violent approach, IPOB advocated for the secession of Biafra from Nigeria through all means necessary, including the use of force. Led by Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB claimed to represent the interests of the Igbo people and their quest for self-determination, challenging the perceived marginalization, oppression, and human rights violations against the Igbo within the Nigerian federation.

2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/5211/2016/en/#:~:text=It%20documents%20extrajudicial%20executions%20and,other%20ill%2Dtreatment%20of%20detainees.

[564] International, "Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere': Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists."

[565] International, "Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere': Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists."

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IPOB's achievements during this period included gaining significant support from a segment of the Igbo population, particularly the youth disillusioned with MASSOB's non-violent tactics. The group organized numerous protests and rallies, often leading to confrontations with Nigerian security forces. IPOB's strong online presence and media arm, including the Radio Biafra station, proved instrumental in disseminating its message and mobilizing support. Additionally, IPOB brought renewed international attention to the Igbo secessionist movement and the human rights issues faced by the Igbo people in Nigeria while challenging the Nigerian government's stance on the Biafran issue and demanding a referendum on self-determination.

IPOB faced obstacles in pursuing objectives between 2012 and 2015. This period was marked by increasing tensions between the group and the Nigerian government and internal divisions within the Igbo community. A comprehensive analysis of these challenges reveals a complex interplay of political, social, and security factors significantly impacting IPOB's activities and aspirations.

One of the primary obstacles faced by IPOB during this period was the Nigerian government's firm stance on national unity. President Muhammadu Buhari, who took office in 2015, maintained that Nigeria's unity was non-negotiable. This inflexible position left little room for dialogue or consideration of IPOB's demands for self-determination. The government's approach to dealing with IPOB's activities was characterized by a heavy-handed security response, often resulting in violent confrontations.

The use of military force against IPOB members became increasingly prevalent, especially in the latter part of this period. Between 2014 and 2015, there were numerous reports of security forces clamping down on IPOB gatherings and protests. This aggressive approach led to casualties among IPOB members and supporters, with many being killed or arrested. The government's

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willingness to deploy military force to quell IPOB activities created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, making it difficult for the group to organize and mobilize support openly.

This excessive use of force not only resulted in the loss of lives but also had a chilling effect on IPOB's ability to advocate for its cause peacefully. The threat of violence and arrest deterred many potential supporters from openly associating with the group, limiting its ability to grow and gain broader acceptance. Furthermore, the arrests of IPOB members, including key leaders, disrupted the organization's structure and operations, making it challenging to maintain momentum and cohesion.

During this period, another significant obstacle for IPOB was the need for unanimous support within the Igbo community. While IPOB claimed to represent the interests of all Igbo people, the reality was far more nuanced. Many Igbo politicians and influential figures did not fully endorse IPOB's separatist agenda, creating a divide within the community that the group sought to represent.

This lack of unified support can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, many Igbo politicians had invested heavily in their careers within the Nigerian political system. These individuals had much to lose if they openly supported a separatist movement, as it could jeopardize their positions and influence within the broader Nigerian context. Their reluctance to back IPOB's cause created a significant obstacle for the group in gaining legitimacy and political traction.

Moreover, the economic interests of many Igbo business people and professionals were deeply intertwined with the Nigerian state. The prospect of separation posed potential risks to these individuals' livelihoods and investments. This economic consideration led many to adopt a cautious or even oppositional stance towards IPOB's objectives, further fragmenting support within the Igbo community.

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The division within the Igbo community presented IPOB with a challenging dilemma. On one hand, the group needed to maintain its radical stance to keep its core supporters energized and committed. On the other hand, this hardline approach alienated more moderate voices within the Igbo community who might have been sympathetic to some of IPOB's grievances but were uncomfortable with the idea of complete secession.

IPOB's leadership, particularly under Nnamdi Kanu, often adopted a confrontational rhetoric that, while appealing to hardline supporters, made it difficult to build bridges with more moderate elements of Igbo society. This polarizing approach limited IPOB's ability to create a broad coalition necessary for achieving its objectives.

The international community's response, or lack thereof, to IPOB's cause, also presented a significant challenge during this period. IPOB sought to internationalize its struggle, hoping to gain support and recognition from foreign governments and international organizations. However, the group struggled to gain meaningful international backing, with most countries reaffirming their support for Nigeria's territorial integrity. This lack of international support left IPOB isolated on the global stage, making it difficult to exert pressure on the Nigerian government through diplomatic channels. Without significant external backing, IPOB was primarily constrained to operating within Nigeria, facing the full brunt of the government's security apparatus.

To conclude, the period from 2012 to 2015 presented IPOB with formidable challenges and obstacles in achieving its objectives. The Nigerian government's unyielding stance on national unity, coupled with its willingness to use force, created a hostile environment for IPOB's activities. The lack of unanimous support within the Igbo community, particularly among politicians and business leaders, further complicated IPOB's efforts to build a cohesive movement. These internal divisions, combined with the group's confrontational approach and lack of international support, significantly hindered IPOB's ability to make substantial progress towards its goals during this

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period. The challenges faced by IPOB during these years will continue to shape its trajectory and the broader discourse on Igbo self-determination in Nigeria in the coming years.

This chapter explores IPOB's emergence and activities in the digital age and resonates with various theoretical perspectives on ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. The "constructionist" approach highlights how online separatist platforms and social media can function as tools for disseminating narratives, grievances, and ideas that reinforce a sense of Igbo national consciousness, potentially attracting new supporters to the separatist cause. The "dialectical" perspective emphasizes the interplay between historical experiences, social construction, and the emotional aspects of ethnicity, shedding light on how social media platforms can be powerful tools for expressing emotions, fostering a sense of community, and potentially strengthening the movement's resolve.

Furthermore, the "objectivist" perspective, while acknowledging the enduring historical and cultural foundations of Igbo identity, recognizes that online spaces can amplify existing cultural markers and historical narratives, potentially influencing how Igbo identity is perceived and expressed in the digital realm. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this chapter offers an understanding of the role of digitization in the evolution of Igbo separatism. It examines how online platforms and social media activism were leveraged to construct narratives, cultivate a sense of shared identity, express emotions, foster solidarity, and potentially strengthen the resolve of the separatist movement. It also considers the influence of digital spaces on the expression and perception of Igbo cultural markers and historical narratives.

Regarding the challenges to IPOB's separatist activities during this digital phase, the cost of internet data posed a significant barrier to engaging in movement-related activities. Furthermore, concerns about privacy, security, and poor network quality and coverage were also prevalent. Protesters engaged in various forms of digital activities, yet the affordability of data remained a

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primary concern.[566] This raises questions about the economic implications of digital media for social activism in developing countries. While the idea that resource mobilization is crucial for social movements is becoming outdated in the digital age, limited resources can still pose a significant obstacle to digital activism. In developing countries, economic, social, and political contexts can constrain the use of digital technologies for social activism. High living costs make even the acquisition of internet-enabled devices like smartphones uncommon.

The high cost of internet access is a significant barrier to digital activism. Subscribing to internet data and purchasing smart mobile devices can be financially burdensome, hindering frequent engagement in digital activities. For instance, to have internet access that supports the digital activities of IPOB activists, one needs to budget at least 5000 naira per month, a cost that is beyond the reach of the average Nigerian.[567]

Consistent and effective internet access was essential for IPOB members to post and access videos, audio, and text on social media, enabling them to participate fully in the IPOB movement's digital activism. It is easier for activists in Nigeria to afford this monthly expense with a good income. Nevertheless, IPOB members adopted a radical view of freedom and even those with lower earnings strived to stay active online. Some shop owners even closed their businesses on protest days to show solidarity.[618]

The period between 2012 and 2015 witnessed Radio Biafra's resurgence as a potent force in disseminating separatist ideology among the Igbo people. This revival of the radio station, dormant since the Nigerian Civil War, reignited discussions about Igbo autonomy and self-determination.

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[566] Emmanuel S Nwofe, "The Internet and Activists' Digital Media Practices: A case of the Indigenous People of Biafra Movement in Nigeria," *IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication & Film* 6, no. 1 (2019): 17.
[567] "Interview, Tochukwu Abaribe, a war witness and Biafra Loyalist, Lagos, 18 February, 2022." [618] Nwofe, "The Internet and Activists' Digital Media Practices: A case of the Indigenous People of Biafra Movement in Nigeria," 18.

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Radio Biafra's broadcasts resonated with many listeners who harboured feelings of marginalization within the Nigerian political landscape. The station's programming often focused on exclusion and victimization, which struck a chord with those who perceived themselves as outsiders in the nation's bureaucratic structure.

While Radio Biafra played a crucial role in mobilizing support for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), it did not operate in isolation. The internet emerged as a complementary channel for spreading pro-Biafran information and organizing protests. This dual-media approach allowed IPOB to reach a wider audience and coordinate its activities more effectively. A complex set of motivations drove the movement's participants. Many were compelled by a sense of collective grievance fueled by perceptions of systemic discrimination against the Igbo ethnic group. The reports of violence against IPOB members further galvanized support, overshadowing concerns about broader leadership failures in Nigeria.

IPOB's protests provided a platform for articulating these grievances and challenging the status quo. Participants viewed these demonstrations as an opportunity to voice their discontent with their perceived place in Nigerian society and politics. The operators of Radio Biafra positioned the station as a truthful voice for the Igbo people, distancing themselves from accusations of propaganda. They pledged to maintain integrity in their broadcasts, even as Nigerian authorities sought to suppress the station's activities, thereby significantly impacting the political discourse.

The re-emergence of Radio Biafra in 2012 marked a significant shift in the media landscape of southeastern Nigeria. Its impact on IPOB's mobilization efforts and the broader discourse on Igbo self-determination was substantial, echoing the role played by its predecessor during the Nigerian Civil War. The station's influence persisted despite government efforts to silence it, underscoring radio's enduring power and resilience as a medium for political mobilization in the region. The next chapter will synthesize the accomplishments and challenges of the Igbo secessionist

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movements and analyze their implications for Nigerian politics and interethnic relations, emphasizing the study's significance and potential for future research. Through this analysis, the chapter will offer an understanding of the changing nature of the Igbo quest for self-determination, setting the stage for further exploration and discourse on this pivotal aspect of Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape.



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Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis delved into the Igbo people's quest for separatism and self-determination in 1970 – 2015. It chronicled a journey that spanned decades of socio-political transformations and evolving strategies. This research explored the complex interplay between Igbo identity, historical experiences, and the enduring aspiration for an independent state within the Nigerian context. The study's research objectives include assessing the reconstruction of Igbo Identity after the civil war, 1970 to 1979, investigating the development of different Igbo agitation for sovereignty from 1980 to 1990s, and exploring the impact of digitization on Igbo separatist movements from 2000 – 2015. In addition, the study sought to examine the achievements of Igbo separatist movements from 1970-2015.

After the Nigerian Civil War, 1970-1990, the Igbo separatist movement experienced a dormant phase. The Igbo community faced challenges in rebuilding their lives and communities. The focus was on addressing needs and reconstruction due to devastation, displacement, and disruption. Efforts included providing displaced people housing, services, security, and support. The regional government and organizations also focused on reuniting families, offering counseling, and rebuilding infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals. The war disrupted the region's economy, affecting businesses, industries, and activities. Recovery efforts involved reviving businesses, supporting farmers, and attracting investments to stimulate growth. Despite these efforts, the Igbo community faced obstacles, including a lack of access to capital and federal policies.

The landscape in Nigeria during the 1970s was marked by changes and challenges, affecting the Igbo people's representation level. Centralizing federal authority, intended to promote unity,

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led to discontent and marginalization among groups like the Igbo. This centralization meant that Igbo priorities were overshadowed by federal decisions, fueling disenfranchisement and a sense of alienation among the Igbo community. The lack of engagement and representation made it challenging for the Igbo to address their concerns and aspirations. The period, however, saw the emergence of the Ohanaeze Ndigbo in 1976, which aimed to promote the development of the Igbo people and advocate for their rights within Nigeria's landscape.

During the 1980s, the Igbo community continued to face challenges. They struggled to recover, and there was some recovery in enterprises and startups. Despite efforts, obstacles like lack of access to capital persisted, hindering progress. Adequate representation of the Igbo people remained an issue during this period. Efforts to achieve engagement were met with federal resistance, and the community continued to grapple with the centralization of authority. The need for reform and autonomy remained a concern for the Igbo.

Ohanaeze Ndigbo advocated for the rights and interests of the Igbo community during the 1980s. The organization focused on promoting unity, preservation, and development. It also raised awareness about issues of marginalization and underrepresentation, highlighting the grievances and aspirations for autonomy within the federation. Nevertheless, the lack of access to capital and the burden of the recovery efforts overshadowed the advocacy of Ohaneze Ndigbo, hence the dormancy of the Igbo separatist movement.

Exploring the Igbo experience post-civil war through theoretical perspectives on ethnicity provides deeper insights into the Igbo separatist movement. The "dialectical" perspective emphasized the interplay between historical experiences, cultural revival, and the emotional impact of the war, underscoring the Igbo community's efforts to maintain a distinct identity within the Nigerian state. The "objectivist" perspective highlighted the historical and cultural bonds that strengthened the Igbo collective identity during their reintegration efforts.

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The resilience and determination of the Igbo people in the face of adversity set the stage for the resurgence of separatist movements in the early 21st century. The Igbo separatist movement experienced a resurgence in 1999 – 2011, essentially associated with re-introducing the multi-party system and the birth of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The dawn of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999 marked a significant phase in the Igbo agitation for sovereignty, characterized by the resurgence of organized separatist movements and renewed fervour for self-determination.

MASSOB, under the leadership of Ralph Uwazuruike, emerged as a formidable force driven by longstanding grievances over perceived Igbo marginalization, boundary disputes, military underrepresentation, and social ostracism. The group reignited the quest for an independent state of Biafra through a multi-pronged strategy that included non-violent civil disobedience, international networking, and the provision of social services to garner support from the Igbo community.

MASSOB faced challenges, including internal divisions and factionalism. Ralph Uwazuruike's imprisonment and the struggles within the organization weakened its cohesion and effectiveness. Besides, the Nigerian government's response to MASSOB's activities, including the arrest and killing of members, hampered the group's ability to operate. The use of force and intimidation created an environment of fear that limited MASSOB's growth and efforts.

Nevertheless, MASSOB's activities were instrumental in reviving the Igbo separatist movement and re-introducing it into the national discourse, challenging the Nigerian government's stance on the issue. By mobilizing support from the Igbo population and the diaspora, MASSOB succeeded in keeping the quest for self-determination alive and visible on the national and international stage. 2000 – 2015 marked a transformative era for the Igbo agitation for sovereignty, significantly influenced by the advent of digital technologies and social media. The emergence of the

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Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2012 represented a shift in the Igbo separatist movement. Unlike its predecessor, MASSOB, which embraced non-violent tactics, IPOB, under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu, adopted a more militant and confrontational approach, attracting the Igbo youth. The group leveraged digital platforms and social media to mobilize supporters, amplify its message, and establish transnational networks, fundamentally altering the dynamics of Igbo separatist activism. IPOB's strategic use of digital technologies included the establishment of Radio Biafra, a digital radio station dedicated to the secessionist cause. This platform became a powerful tool for disseminating information, rallying supporters, and symbolizing the movement's resilience and determination. Through social media, IPOB organized numerous protests and civil disobedience actions, drawing significant national and international attention to the Igbo struggle for separatism. The Nigerian state responded to IPOB's activities with a combination of repression and conciliatory measures, highlighting the contentious relationship between the Igbo separatist movement and the Nigerian government. In summary, the Igbo separatist movement from 1970 to 2015 saw periods of achievements in mobilization, advocacy, and media presence. However, it also faced failures due to divisions, crackdowns, and opposition within and outside the Igbo community.

This study examines the Igbo people's quest for secession and self-determination, shedding light on the changing phases that have shaped the Igbo separatist movement over the past six decades. By delving into the historical roots of Igbo identity, the post-war predicament, and the evolving strategies and dynamics of separatist movements, this research offers invaluable insights into the complexities and nuances of the Igbo's continual struggle for secession. Also, this study's exploration of the transformative impact of digitization on separatist movements holds relevance for broader discussions on the role of technology and social media in shaping contemporary nationalist and secessionist discourses.

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While this study analyses the changing phases of Igbo separatist movement from 1970 up to 2015, it is notable that the Igbo separatist movement is an ongoing and evolving phenomenon. As such, future research should focus on exploring the developments and dynamics of the Igbo quest for self-determination in the years following 2015. Potential areas of inquiry include the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and metaverse platforms, in shaping the discourse and mobilization efforts of Igbo separatist groups and the potential implications for governance, security, and conflict resolution.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Interview Questions

1. Do you believe that Igbo people are politically and socio-economically marginalized and victimized in Nigeria?
2. If so, when did Igbo marginalization become apparent?
3. Have Igbos dealt effectively with the issue of marginalization?
4. Has the Igbo identity and agitation changed over the years?
5. If so, what are the changes, and who are the prominent actors or groups?6. Doo you believe that violent protests and agitation have contributed to Igboland's poverty?
7. Do you believe that the Igbo attitude and way of life have an impact?
8. Is there evidence of internal strife and backbiting among the Igbo political class?
9. What's the way forward to resolve the Igbo agitation and question in Nigeria?

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APPENDIX II: Broadcast Statements from the Federal Military Government before and during the Nigerian Civil War Source: Lagos State Records and Archives Bureau (LASRAB), Lagos. LAS/218.

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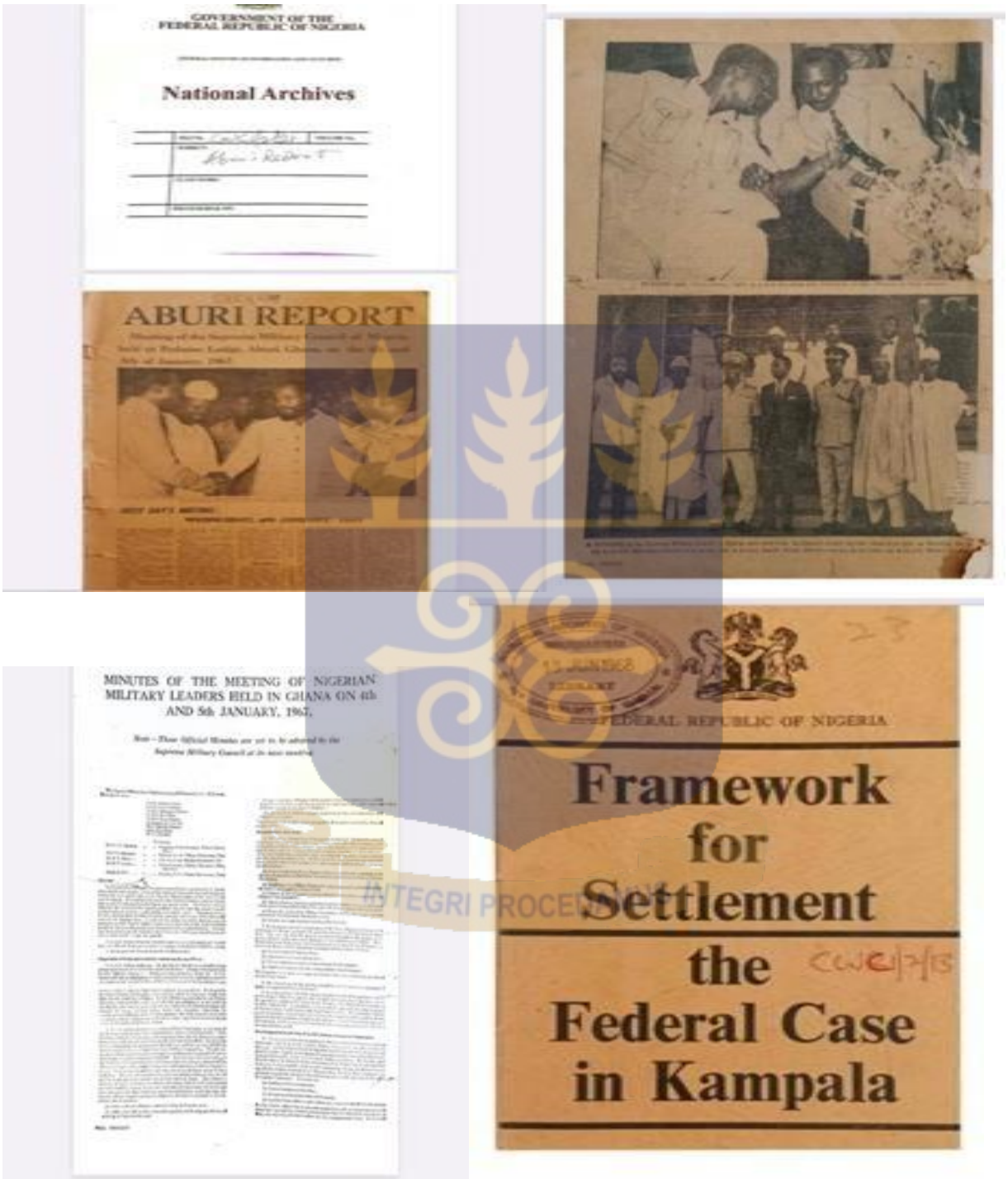
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APPENDIX III: Images from the Aburi Accord Conference held in Ghana between Ojukwu and Gowon

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Source: National Archives Ibadan, Oyo, Nigeria. File FRP/NAI/111



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APPENDIX IV: Newspaper Images Covering Nigerian Civil War Events
Source: National Archives Ibadan, Oyo, Nigeria. File FRP/NAI/121













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APPENDIX V: Newspaper Images Covering Nigerian Civil War Events Source: National Archives Ibadan, Oyo, Nigeria. File FRP/NAI/107





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APPENDIX VI: Images of Starving Biafran Children during the War
Source: National Archives Ibadan, Oyo, Nigeria. File FRP/NAI/116

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APPENDIX VII: Images of the Biafran Pound Currency issued by the Biafran government as legal tender, replacing the Nigerian currency.

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Source: Lagos State Records and Archives Bureau (LASRAB), Lagos. LAS/224.



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