



**EXTERNALIZATION OF NIGERIA CIVIL WAR: INTERROGATING THE ROLE OF CÔTE
D'IVOIRE IN THE RECOGNITION OF BIAFRA; 1968-1970**

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Introduction

Nigeria had her history rooted in political crises since 1914 which are violently contested along ethnic, religious and regional boundaries in the country¹. Nigeria was involved in a civil war from 6 July 1967 to 12 January 1970. The war was between the forces of the federal government and those of the then Eastern region which was unilaterally declared the republic of Biafra. Both civilians and military took part in the war of liberation as claimed by Easterners. Consequently on the declaration, the two parties engaged in propaganda activities designed to win support of external supports, thereby leading to the externalization of the conflict. The employment of mass press and other public relations agents in Europe and the USA publicized the war in the Biafran favour. It was aimed at federal government that it was committing genocide against the Igbo. Furthermore, they also claimed that the war was basically based on religious sentiment. In this regard, some Europeans and Americans who accepted these views gave moral, material and financial supports to the Biafra while Federal Government believed that it was fighting a just war to unite the country and so thought that it did not need to convince the Europeans and the Americans about it².

Despite global criticism of the suffering endured by the Biafran people, many states in the developing world, including France, Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Zambia and Haiti offered humanitarian aids to Biafra and in addition, officially recognized the enclave as a sovereign state was Tanzania on April 13, 1968, Gabon on May 8, 1968, Ivory Coast on May 14, 1968 and Zambia on May 20, 1968³.

Conceptual Clarification

¹ T. Falola, History of Nigeria 3: *Nigeria in the 19th Century*, Nigeria; Longman,1991, pp. 119-120

² Ibid, p.129

³ J. O Akinbi, "Interrogating The Involvement Of African States During The Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970" Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce, Vol.–VI, 2015, p.55

Recognition is the operation by which another state accepts that government as representing the old State in international intercourse, and continues or renews relations accordingly. It can be explicit or implicit (tacit). In state practice there is generally an explicit declaration of recognition, perhaps addressed to the government of the new state. A distinction is also drawn between *de jure* and *de facto* recognition. If a state is accorded *de jure* recognition that means all the preconditions under international law for final and complete recognition have been fulfilled while *de facto* recognition has a comparatively less binding effect, because the legal relationship, though effectively in existence is only provisional. Provisional *de facto* recognition for political reason can of course be converted to *de jure* recognition once all the required legal preconditions have been fulfilled⁴. Recognition of a new state is an act that confers a status; as a result of recognition, the recognized entity acquires the legal status of a state under International law. In this sense, a (new) state is not born, but chosen as a subject of international law. Only when the new state has been recognized does it become a subject of international law, and this initially only with respect to the existing states recognizing it⁵. Hence, on admission as a member of the United Nations, the new state then becomes part of the globally organized community of states by way of co-optation. It merely signifies that the state which recognizes it accepts the personality of the other with all the rights and duties determined by international law.

Examining the Causes of Nigerian Civil War

Many factors could have been responsible for the cause of Nigerian civil war. It is generally believe in history that, no single factor could have claimed to be cause of an event in history. The remote cause of the Nigerian civil war was linked to the 1914 amalgamation of Southern and Northern protectorates by the British government⁶. The fusion made administrative sense to manage Northern and southern Nigeria together, but it appears illogical because despite their proximity, their people, religion and culture were different. One of the main reasons for the amalgamation of the protectorates in 1914 by the colonial government was to enable the government to reduce its subsidy to the Colony of Nigeria by using the surpluses from Southern Nigeria to augment the scanty resources in the North. When, in Southern Nigeria and Lagos became one administrative entity, the financial resources of the South increased substantially⁷.

⁴ Colin Warbrick, "Recognition of States" *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), p.473....Current Developments: Public International Law Edited by A. V. Lowe and Colin Warbrick* Recognition Of States When in 198.... Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law

⁵ P.M. Brown, "Recognition of Israel", 1936 *Annuaire de l'institut de Droit international* 300-301; 42 *A.J.I.L.* 620-621 (1948) *Convention on Rights and Duties of States* Source: *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Supplement: Official Documents (Apr., 1934), pp. 75-78 Published by: American Society of International Law; Cambridge University Press

⁶ M. Hiskett, 'Lugard and the amalgamation of Nigeria: a documentary record [book review]', *African Affairs*, 70 (1971) P. 181

⁷ Report of the Commission on Revenue Allocation (Lagos, 1951, ' Hicks-Phillipson Report'), 68; O. Osadolor, 'The development of the federal idea and the federal framework', in K. Amuwo, A. Agbaje, R.

The region with its meager resources from direct taxation, found it difficult to balance its budget. It therefore relied heavily on grants from the colonial government to function. Amalgamation thus became a means to reduce the dependence of Northern Nigeria on British taxpayers. Because of the vast differences between the regions, the Nigerian state that Lugard constructed was one with strong regional governments and a weak centre. This effectively ensured that the North was protected from Southern influences⁸. In 1946, the British colonial government further divided Southern Nigeria into two regions: East and West. The North, which was not affected, retained its position as the dominant region both in population and landmass. In the construction of the state, the revenue-sharing formula was critical to the creation of strong regions. In Nigeria, this sort of competition and rivalry among various ethnic groups is seen as a product of colonial contact. Ethnic factor, however, did not diminish with the attainment of independence, rather, it became a yardstick for measuring contribution to the national development effort and especially for allocating and distribution power and national resources⁹

The Nigerian civil war had its immediate causes as the coup of 15 January, 1966 and the chain of events that triggered by the coup. The link between the January 1966 coup and the outbreak of the civil war in July 1967 was direct. In January 1966 coup, the premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Brigadier S. Ademulegun, Colonel Kur Mohammed were killed in Kaduna. Several other people, including one of the Premier's wives and some policemen on guard were also killed¹⁰. Obviously, the vast majority of those who staged the coup were Igbo officers. In Lagos, the prime Minister, Sir Abubaka Tafawa Balewa, the Finance Minister, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari, Lt Colonel J Y Pam, Lt Colonel A C Unegbe and Lt Colonel Largema were killed. The reprisal which the 29 July coup claimed to represent extended to the larger civilian society. It is interesting to note that, the bulk of those who were killed were top northern politicians and military officers. The above assertion corroborates David Ejoor, who was the Brigade commander in Enugu: "instead of being ordered to kill the politicians and other Igbo leaders, soldiers were indeed deployed to guard the Igbo leaders"¹¹.

It is important to note that the establishment of unitary government was seen as a terrible mistake after the unanimous decisions of the four military governors against it by Major General Aguyi. After General Aguyi-Ironsi announced the establishment of unitary government, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu promoted some civil servants to permanent secretary grade with the aim of serving their country at any region of the country. More to insinuations was the appointment of mainly the Igbos into his advisory cabinet confirmed fear that he was moving along ethnic lines.

Suberu and G. Herault (eds.), *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria* (Ibadan, 1998), 35; R. Nwokedi, *Revenue Allocation and Resource Control in Nigerian Federation* (Enugu, 2001), 20; and Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Report of the Political Bureau* (Lagos, 1987), p.169

⁸ A. Waugh and S. Cronje, *Biafra: Britain's Shame* (London, 1969), p.19.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Onuoha Chidiebere, *The Nigerian Civil War: A Historical Interpretation*, *Journal of African Studies and Development*, vol 2(4), 2016, pp.2-9

¹¹ Ibid

The situation worsened when he appointed Francis Nwokedi, an Igbo, sole administrator to inquire into the unification of the regional public services¹². The promotion in the army also favored mainly the Igbo living in the north. The northerners expressed their response in serious rioting in many parts of the north in May 1966. On 29 July 1966, a second coup took place. It was clearly a coup by northern officers and it was directed towards the Igbo military officers and men in the army¹³. The mainly Igbo and other Eastern who fled to Eastern region from the North during the May riot were persuaded to return to their livelihoods in the North by Nigerian military government. These calls were predicated upon assurances from the Northern Region's governor, Hassan Katsina, that no harm would befall them¹⁴.

The absence of a concerted effort to address the eruption of violence thought Nigeria against Easterners, mainly Igbos, and the inaction around the refugee problem amplified the anger and tensions between the federal government, now led by Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, and the Eastern Region. Agitations in the East for independence grew louder, and threat from the deferral government grew more ominous, in a vicious cycle. After a failed consensus agreement between Yakubu Gowon and the then military head of the Eastern state, Major Ojukwu at Aburi in Ghana to forestall the tension, Lt Colonel Ojukwu announced secession on the 30 May, 1967 and the birth of a new republic, "Biafra". Initially, federal government termed the operation as a surgical police action and not a civil war. It was intended to last only a few days, especially after the initial military success of the federal troops¹⁵.

Nigeria- Ivory Coast Relations; An Appraisal

Nigeria's diplomatic missions in Africa were increased from two to twenty-four in 1966 and stationed two missions in Côte d'Ivoire. The relations between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire were bound to be of particular importance because of substantial influence of the two countries in the West African Region. In the case of Nigeria, this external influence was almost inherent in the size and population of the country¹⁶. Nigeria's external relations with West Africa after her independence remains impossible to assess until the speech which Balewa delivered in August 1960. This was partly due to the Nigerian Prime Minister's refusal to issue any statement on the foreign policy of his government. At the same time, previous statements by Nigeria's various political parties could not help, giving a definite image of Nigeria's policy towards her

¹² T. Falola, al. History of Nigeria3: *Nigeria in the 19th Century*, Nigeria; Longman,1991, p.122

¹³ Ejoor, David , A. Reminiscences, Malthouse Press Limited, 1989, p.34

¹⁴ Ibid, P. 123

¹⁵ T. Falola, al. History of Nigeria3: *Nigeria in the 19th Century*, Nigeria; Longman,1991, pp 125

¹⁶ O. Obasanjo, My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70", (Heinemann, Educational Publishers, London, 1971), p.64

neighboring francophone countries. During the Federal election campaign of 1959, Nigeria's three major parties presented closely similar foreign policy platforms, which only made short and general references to Africa. Azikiwe committed an independent Nigeria to good neighborly relations aimed at the development of closer political and economic co-operation with other African countries¹⁷.

Nigeria's future relations with Africa would be of great importance to Ivory Coast's influence in the West African region. It remained unclear whether the visible strength of Nigeria would be employed in order to achieve the stabilizing effect in Africa that Balewa wished. Different political tendencies within the Nigerian Government coalition and the country's weak unity could reduce this earnest hope of the Prime Minister to mere wishful thinking¹⁸. On 5 April, 1960, under strong pressure in parliament, the Federal Government agreed to the adoption of a strongly-worded condemnation of France's second atomic explosion in the Sahara. In spite of Balewa's restraint on this issue, it was also moved that an independent Nigeria would strongly retaliate against France in the case of further tests. Since 1959, Nigerian attitudes to the tests appeared to follow very closely Ghana's radical pledges and were often accompanied by virulent criticism of the commitment of the French states to their continuation¹⁹.

The Houphouet Boigny's meeting with Balewa in 1960 allayed fears of Nigeria's possible adoption of radical and challenging policies in Africa. The meeting took place four days after Balewa's reading of his first foreign policy statement to the House of Representatives in Lagos. This had defined general principles for the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy, much appreciated by the president of the newly independent Ivory Coast. Balewa's statement had considered that it was premature to think in terms of a common Market in Africa. At Abidjan in August 1960, Balewa and Houphouet Boigny established a close relationship of mutual trust which was the backbone of the *entente cordiale* between Ivory Coast and Nigeria. Their first encounter in Abidjan occurred four days after the break-up of the Mali federation, of whose constitution both Balewa and Houphouet Boigny disapproved. After the meeting, Balewa emphasized that they had been in total agreement on all the problems concerning West Africa. The concern of Ivory Coast and Nigeria for the preservation of peace and security in Africa was the basis of their closely similar policy objectives in Africa. The two countries emphasized such principles as the respect for boundaries inherited from the colonial administration, the exclusion of any devolution of sovereignty, the condemnation of subversion and interference in the internal affairs of other independent African countries. The extensive reliance of Ivory Coast on foreign private capital as well as foreign (both European and African) labour, accounted for Houphouet Boigny special sensitivity on this latter principle²⁰.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ TNA/FCO/65/299 – Ivory Coast: Bilateral Relations with Nigeria 1968-9

¹⁹ HRD.14 January 1960, Col 33.12.

²⁰ See HRD, 11 August 1959, cols 1733, 1752 and 1757

Economic considerations provided no incentive for Nigerian government to develop an active policy in the West African region. This was an indirect effect of the substantial size of the country to which were added increasingly attractive natural resources. The conservative African policy of the Federal Government, unlike Côte d'Ivoire's, related sharply to the need to preserve and enforce the unity of the Federation. Nigeria had greater natural resources and commercial outlets than Côte d'Ivoire, the political stability of its environment appeared less likely to affect the continuing inflow of private aid and private capital from the West²¹. Domestic political considerations accounted for the fact that Nigeria soon after its independence became one of the leading defenders of the territorial status quo in Africa. The preservation of peace and stability in Africa constituted a major field of agreement between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire until 1966. It largely dictated the response to Ghana's radical pledges to African continental unity. Hence, The African policies of Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire stemmed from similar guiding principles, but they often adopted different tactical approaches²².

Ivory Coast's Open Recognition of Biafra

Ivory Coast had become involved in an international dispute which caused it to adopt a low profile in the Nigerian Civil war in 1967. By 1968, Ghana and Guinea shared frontiers with Ivory Coast were no longer a threat to its prosperity and influence in West Africa. This transformation of the setting surrounding Ivory Coast provided the background to its decision to recognize and support Biafra³¹. Unlike other African states that played neutrality in the Nigerian civil war, Ivory Coast gave a diplomatic recognition to Biafran state. Houphouët Boigny of Ivory Coast showed much recognition for Biafra. He raised a point when he said:

*“ when is it that justifies our culpable, I would even say criminal indifference in the face of the massacres of our brothers an internal problems, respect for the territorial integrity of every member of the O.A.U , the sacrosanct respect of unity, thing of the sort excuses our apathy in the face of the kind of crimes perpetrated by black brothers against other black brothers”*²³

Recognition of Biafra was announced on 14 May 1968, after a meeting of the Conseil national 'elargi. Besides the senior party officials who constituted its regular membership, the

²¹ A. Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (London, 1967), p. 66

²² O. Ojedokun, 'Nigeria's Relations with the Commonwealth with Special Reference to her Relations with the United Kingdom, 1960 1966' (London Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1968 mimeo), p.102

²³ J. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics* (London. 1966), p.278; see also G.I. Idang, 'The politics of Nigerian Foreign Policy, the Ratification and Renunciation of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence

meeting included all the members of the Conseil Economique et Social and the Assemblée Legislative. Ivorian diplomats, senior civil servants and army officers, representatives from the trade unions and the student and women's associations. Over 1,000 participants attended. Houphouet Boigny first explained his reasons for advocating diplomatic recognition of Biafra. Participants then intervened, but the major issue of the Conference became increasingly a vote of confidence in the Ivorian President, who had been away from the country over two months²⁴.

Ivorian government claimed that the country's policy in the conflict was purely humanitarian were greeted with dismay in Abidjan itself, where it was widely known that air traffic with Biafra was not confined to relief aid. Perhaps the most important reason for the recognition was the humanitarian concern shown by the Ivorian government. The Ivorian foreign minister, Arsene Usher Assovan explained at the fifty summit of O.A.U in the Algiers that his government's recognition of Biafra had been a matter of conscience and that the government had been forced to act on purely humanitarian ground²⁵. The whole idea of the humanitarian was personified in Houphouet-Boigny himself who never failed to dramatize this at every available opportunity especially to the international community. Houphouet Boigny came in contact with Biafran propaganda material on the casualties of the war while in Paris. Figures were often quoted in publications whose authors had near-total ignorance not only of Nigeria, but indeed of Africa. These publications had ready patrons in the western public where a sizable number of people knew next to nothing about Nigeria but were ready to accept these propaganda hand-outs as they were. This was often done neither with reference to the issues at stake nor the complexity of the country's political background²⁶.

Such outrageous publications included the Afrique Express which in one of its articles claimed that over 1 million people had died of hunger in Biafra. There was also the claim that in the month of July 1968 alone, half a million people died. More so, Novel observateur whose publication had it that about 6,000 died daily in Biafra. In as much as these figures were clearly the products of their authors' imagination, one should not overlook its impacts on the society²⁷. This made Nigerians outside the country and other stakeholders believe in the narrative of genocide in Nigeria which necessitated sympathy for the Biafra. French television stations did not spare their viewers the horrible pictures of kwashiorkor – skeleton children. The word genocide became a household word for describing the war in Nigeria. At a point, some people came together to form a committee known as the International committee against genocide. This committee published a pamphlet in which a certain Tues-Guy³³. These publications and the effect of preparing Western agitators towards the eventual recognition of Biafra, various appeal

²⁴ O. Ojedokun, "The Anglo-Nigerian Entente and its Demise", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, IX, 3(November 1971), 216

²⁵ Financial Times. 17 April 1968

²⁶ J.J. Strelau: *International Politics of Nigerian Civil War*, University Press, New Jersey , 1981, p.117

²⁷ Ibid

funds launched Biafra to support it. Through this medium, millions of pounds in foreign exchange were realized with which arms and ammunitions were purchased for Biafra²⁸.

Open recognition of Biafra could be the fact that Houphouet Boigny has always shown a great dislike for federal structure of government. He believes firmly that federations are always doomed to fall. This conviction pushed him into decisively sabotaging the French West Africans Federation that was based in Senegal and also the post-independence federation in Mali. This might point to the fact that Houphouet Boigny was highly suspicious of the Nigerian Federation, which he might have thought would exert too much influence on her smaller French West African neighbour. Hence, if his recognition and support for Biafra would ensure the dismemberment of Nigeria, he was eager to give it. Ivorian president justified this when he said:

“if our brothers involved in this conflict cannot live together in a federation, let them accept to live in peace as neighbours....therefore, rather than people being forcefully incorporated into structural federations, they should be left alone moreso when unity could only be for the living and not for the dead²⁹”

After the OAU Conference of February 1968, the Ivorian leader became convinced that the OAU was being used by Muslim or Arab states like the UAR, Algeria, Somalia, Guinea, the Sudan and Nigeria, to achieve their own ambitions. This coalition of forces threatened Israel and Biafra in particular and non-Muslim Black Africa in general. Not surprisingly, the Biafran view that it faced a modern version of the 'Jihad' conducted by Muslim expansionist states found in Ivory Coast its strongest support in Africa. Houphouet Boigny was of the opinion that since 1966, pro-Islamic and Fulani movements had become increasingly influential in Nigeria. The Federal troops action against Biafra was interpreted as an attempt to pursue Usman dan Fodio's advance to the sea, and a revival of what Houphouet Boigny considered to be 'le reve Peuhl de rétablir un empire'. Houphouet Boigny was particularly concerned at this development, as he considered himself the representative of non-Muslim Black Africans³⁰.

Furthermore, Ivorian recognition was based on economic expediency in the Eastern part of Nigeria. President Houphouet Boigny and the government had undeniable interest in Biafra's oil resources. Therefore, when Ojukwu assured Houphouet Boigny of access to Biafran Oil in exchange for French arms and military hard ware, the Ivorian recognition became a question of time. It was apparent that Nigeria's oil resources would increase the potential impact of its diplomacy in West Africa. If Nigeria remained united, it was bound to exert an increasing influence on its francophone neighbours and jeopardize Ivory Coast's leadership of the Conseil

²⁸ J.J. Stremmlau: International Politics of Nigerian Civil War, University Press, New Jersey , 1981, p.112

²⁹ D. Anglin, 'Zambia and the Recognition of Biafra', The African Review, I, 2 (September 1971) ,p. 119

³⁰ Ibid

de l'Entente³¹. Ivory Coast's attitude to Biafra contributed to her increasing isolation in Africa. Houphouet Boigny's policy undermined his leadership and authority among the francophone states of West Africa. Unlike Tanzania's recognition and subsequent support of Biafra which intended to bring about a settlement that would provide the Ibos with guarantees for their security; it did not necessarily exclude the preservation of Nigeria's territorial integrity, Côte D'Ivoire policy was committed to the emergence of Biafra as an independent state. In Tanzania, Nyerere believed in the necessity of solving the conflict through African initiatives and distrusted attempts of non African powers or institutions to impose a solution³²

It is evident that Côte D'Ivoire's uncompromising support of the Biafran leadership prompted its attempts to elicit support in the wider arena of international diplomacy in Western Europe, the US and the UN. The aim was to create conditions which would induce the Federal military government to agree to a cease-fire without preconditions. Indeed, it was clear to all sides that if this could be brought about, military pressure on Biafra would be relieved, thereby strengthening its negotiating position. While it appears the official position of the British government was to prevent the break-up of Nigeria along tribal lines, evidence suggests that oil interest played a much more important role in the determination of the British attitudes to the war, France was interested in a divided Nigeria through her francophone country, Ivory Coast majorly because of her rich in oil deposits and influence in West African sub- region which posed a threat to French deliberate policy of maintaining her colonial link and control over her erstwhile colonies in West Africa³³ The Ivory Coast and France were both anxious about the growing economic strength of Nigeria and were not averse to exploiting her internal tensions. But support for secession was contrary to the spirit and the letter of the OAU Charter, as was intervention in the affairs of an independent, sovereign state³⁴.

On this note, one can now agree that humanitarian factor was a façade to cover up by Ivory Coast for the recognition. French government dispatched a first batch of fifty mercenary soldiers to Biafra to assist her capture Calabar so as to provide a clock for ship loads of arms and ammunition. The second batch of mercenaries and massive military hardware were flown in through Abidjan to Biafra between 1968 and early 1969. It was therefore possible for the Biafran to have guns before the federal troops could even get the 122m guns. There was also indirect approach by which the French supplied arms to the rebels. This entailed that a Biafran emissary should contact Faccart Jacques who was the Head of the secretariat for African Affairs in Paris. It was Forccart who then introduced an arms dealer to the emissary³⁵. Through this medium, arms such as the two American built B-26 Bombers were purchase without the French government entangling itself in the shady business. These aside, Ivory Coast and Gabon were given the necessary orders to grant loans directly to the Biafrans with which they could purchase

³¹ D. Anglin, 'Zambia and the Recognition of Biafra P.116

³² Ibid

³³ Z. Cervenka, the Nigerian war, 1967-70; Bernard and Crafe verlasfur, Wohreweren Frankfurt, 1971, p.110

³⁴ Ola Balogun, the Tragic Years: Nigeria in Crisis 1966-1970, Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1973, p.103

³⁵ Chinua Achebe, There Was A Country: A Personal History Of Biafra: Britain, penguin press, 2012, p.100

arms. In addition to the loans, the Ivorian and Gabonese governments were also directed to turn over their military stock to the Biafrans with the assurance that they would be adequately replenished by the French government³⁶

Nigeria Foreign Policy and Biafra Recognition

The civil war marked a significant era in the interactions between Nigeria and her neighbours. This had far-reaching consequences on the integrity of Nigeria and the O.A.U because, the involvement of foreign powers and recognition given to the Biafra brought significant change in the domestic and foreign policy of Nigeria. From about 1968 till the 1970, there was a paradigm shift in the direction of Nigerian relationship with its neighbours sequel to the position of Côte d'Ivoire during the Nigerian civil war³⁷. Nigeria was concerned, however, with ending the domestic crisis, as it was her belief that the greatest contribution she could make at that time to the cause of regional integration and African unity and the independence of the African states, was a strong and united Nigeria under effective central leadership. The disintegration of Nigeria would have robbed black Africa of an influential and respected voice in international affairs and the result would have been a considerable addition to the African population living at a subsistence level and in conditions of economic dependency³⁸.

The war was a major test of Nigeria diplomacy and of the loyalty of her immediate Francophone neighbours which, despite the very considerable pressures on them, from France and some of her closest African clients, nevertheless remained true allies of Nigeria and firm in their commitment to the charter of the OAU. At the end of June 1967, Houphouët-Boigny had already confided to General de Gaulle his growing concern about the deterioration in the political situation within Africa, notably in Nigeria³⁹. It has been revealed that one of the OAU's most enduring articles of faith has been Article III of its charter and similar sections emphasising non-interference, sovereignty, and the inviolability of the inherited colonial boundaries. The majority of African states appeared, initially at least, to perceive events in Biafra as a challenge to Nigerian territorial integrity with wider continental implications rather than just an assertion of Biafra's right to self-determination⁴⁰.

The position adopted by the four states that recognized Biafra (Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, and Zambia) has been referred to as revisionist, and that reflected in the attitudes of Botswana, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, and Uganda have been referred to as wavering. The Côte d'Ivoire and France were both anxious about the growing economic strength of Nigeria and were not averse to exploiting her internal tension. But support for secession was contrary to the spirit and the OAU charter, as was intervention in the affairs of an independent,

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Daniel C. Bach, Relations between Nigeria, France and Selected Francophone States in West Africa 1960 – 1975, A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, p.2

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Le monde, 21 March 1968.

⁴⁰ Panter- Brick, S.K, The right to self determination: its application to Nigeria." Int. Affairs 44, 1968, pp.254-266.

sovereign state. Unless the rebellion had a reasonably good chance of success there was, therefore, little point in needlessly offending the great majority of African leaders⁴¹.

The attitude of Ivory Coast to Biafra contributed to her increasing isolation in Africa. Houphouet Boigny's policy undermined his leadership and authority among the francophone states of West Africa. Earlier before the Algiers OAU summit, Houphouet Boigny met the heads of state of the Entente in Ouagadougou. The meeting saw another attempt at making the member states revise their policy towards the conflict. On 9 September de Gaulle had suggested at a press conference that Nigeria might become a confederation. This proposal failed to secure support at Ouagadougou and at Algiers. The idea of a confederation appeared unrealistic, given Ojukwu's intransigent contention that our survival cannot be separated from the sovereign independence of our state⁴².

At the early of August 1968, Gowon announced a final military push against Biafra and predicted that the war will end within four weeks. Aba and the railway junction at Owerri had surrendered to the Federal troops and when the OAU meeting began, Owerri was under siege. Biafra was now merely a rectangle, 60 miles long and 30 miles wide, with refugees clogging the roads and a death toll at a soaring rate because of starvation and air raids⁴³. African states such as Tunisia, Senegal, Dahomey, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia had expressed readiness to mediate in the conflict, publicly or when their leaders had met Biafran envoys. But they had all insisted that Biafra should make some concessions prior to the Algiers Conference. These should take loose arrangement with Nigeria so as to enable the mediators to press the Federal military government to revise its stance on a settlement. At the OAU heads of state meeting in Algiers, the four states which had recognized Biafra, found themselves particularly isolated. Strong pressure from Algeria, Morocco, Guinea, Mali and the Sudan failed to prevent a debate on the Nigerian crisis but succeeded in blocking an invitation to Biafran representatives to attend the assembly meeting⁴⁴.

More importantly, OAU and UN members were also asked to refrain from any action detrimental to the peace, unity and integrity of Nigeria a point clearly directed to the four countries which had recognized Biafra. Houphouet Boigny's last attempt to mobilize the francophone bloc over the Nigerian issue was made during the OCAM summit meeting held at Kinshasa at the end of January 1969. The rift between members of the francophone group from Central and Equatorial Africa was the main item on the agenda. In order to improve relations between the two Congos, Rwanda, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad, it was decided that a series of missions of conciliation would travel to these countries⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Z. Cervenka, *The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p. 64-5.

⁴³ The account of the Conference in G.Akuchu, "The Organization of African Unity Peace Making Machinery and the Nigerian-Biafran Conflict 1 (Denver Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1974, mimeo), pp. 179-80

⁴⁴ Daniel C. Bach; *Relations between Nigeria, France and Selected Francophone States in West Africa 1960 – 1975* A Thesis submitted at the University of Oxford Trinity Term(1978), pp. 185-186

⁴⁵ Financial Times, 30 January 1969

Conclusion

It has been examined that, the civil war was a major political crisis that rocked the integration of Nigeria between 1967 to 1970. However, diplomatic recognition of Biafra by handful of states in the developing world, including Tanzania, Gabon, and Ivory Coast Zambia led to the prolongation of the war. In essence, the study is an assessment of Ivory Coast's recognition of Biafra in 1968 and its impact on Nigeria foreign policy, 1968-1970. Nigeria was concerned, however, with ending the domestic crisis, as it was her belief that the greatest contribution she could make at that time to the cause of regional integration and African unity and the independence of the African states, was a strong and united Nigeria under effective central leadership. The disintegration of Nigeria would have robbed black Africa of an influential and respected voice in international affairs and the result would have been a considerable addition to the African population living at a subsistence level and in conditions of economic dependency.

Diplomatic recognition of a state is usually divided into two different types, *de facto* and *de jure* recognition. The first one, *de facto*, is revocable and less formal than the *de jure* recognition which implies a stronger type of recognition. However the statement that *de jure* recognition would be irrevocable could be questioned, history has shown that recognition of a state could be revoked regardless whether it is a *de jure* or *de facto* recognition. Sequel to the declaration speech of General Phillip Effiong, officer administering the government of Biafra that the republic of Biafra ceased to exist instructively, in the declaration, Biafra was once a republic but not recognized as state in international law.

Although four countries recognized Biafra, none of them had diplomatic relations with it. It does not mean that a state is bound to have any dealings with any specific government of a recognised state. If it does so, it maintains diplomatic relation with such state and if otherwise, it suspends it. The African Unity also took a strong position to support the unity of Nigeria and constituted a committee of six heads of state to look into the Nigeria situation. It affirmed that the territorial integrity and unity of its member states is not negotiable. Moreover, the United Nations did not at any time throughout the war consider the civil war or statehood of Biafra. It is evident that both external and internal involvement in the civil war contributed to the prolongation of the war. Ivory Coast's recognition of Biafra was not only premature, but probably invalid and outright move to alter the principle of OAU.

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