



Dynamics of Ethnicity in the Post-Independence Political Space of Nigeria

Oluwaseun S. Osadola*

History and International Studies Department, Federal University Oye Ekiti, Nigeria

*Corresponding author

Olawale J. Gbadeyan

Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Federal University Oye Ekiti, Nigeria

Serifat B. Asiyanni

History and International Studies Department, Federal University Oye Ekiti, Nigeria

C. U. Umenyilorah

Theatre and Media Arts Department, Federal University Oye Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria is not a homogenous nation due to its diverse population and ethnic groupings. This statistic highlights the concerns surrounding ethnicity in Nigerian politics from 1960 to the present day. Due to the diverse composition of the country, the many ethnic groups tend to prioritize their own local interests above a sense of national identity. The three dominant ethnic groups make up 57.8% of the total population of the nation. All other ethnicities are considered varying degrees of minority groups. The three largest ethnic groups exerted their control over the national population via the implementation of a regional administration structure known as the tripod system in the 1950s. This system allocated a specific territory to each majority group, serving as the primary setting for ethnic mobilization and competition. This research serves as a reference for addressing the subject about ethnicity in Nigeria. It provides a comprehensive account of the origins of ethnicity in Nigeria, the role of ethnic politics before independence, and the dominance of ethnic groups in the post-independence era. This research utilizes both secondary sources and comprehensive descriptive method.

Keywords

Ethnicity, Hegemony Ethnic Politics, Colonial rule, Post-colonial, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Prior to the merger exercise of 1914, the region now referred to as Nigeria consisted of separate and self-governing countries such as the Yoruba, Hausa-Fulanis, and the Igbos, among others (Lloyd, 1970: 13). Each of these groups exhibited distinct social, cultural, political, and economic lifestyles that varied from one another (Osadola, 2012). The process of colonising Nigeria led to the consolidation of these many groups into a unified geopolitical entity, now referred to as Nigeria.

The 1914 amalgamation exercise initiated by Lord Lugard, which aimed to unite the North and South sectors, resulted in a lack of true unification or variety in unity. Therefore, the actions of these many factions that make up the present-day Nigerian state have, at different points in Nigeria's political history, caused tensions and pressure inside the Nigerian federation (Ojo & Osadola, 2017). The pressures and tensions often pose significant dangers to the stability of the corporate life of the Nigerian state. The political, economic, and social activities inside the Nigerian state are primarily influenced and driven by the impact of ethnicity (Osadola and Gbadeyan, 2023). This study will analyse the impact of ethnicity on Nigerian politics. The study will examine how different ethnic groups use the established political parties to further their ethnic interests both before to and after independence, and assess the impact of their actions and inactions (Ikime, 1980: 56).

2. Ethnicity

Nnoli (1978: 6) defines ethnicity as a social phenomenon characterised by interactions between members of diverse ethnic groups. It manifests as behavioural patterns and often involves conflicts. Ethnicity is not solely determined by one's

individual identity but rather by the collective identities and shared cultural practices of a particular group. These interactions can lead to the formation of distinct social hierarchies and power dynamics within a society. He provided a functional description within the framework of the Nigerian colonial experience. He said that the idea of ethnicity pertains to the awareness of belonging to, identifying with, and being loyal to a social group that is marked by shared cultural traditions, a common language, a sense of belonging, and self-identity. Based on the aforementioned criteria, it can be inferred that ethnic groups must interact with one another in order for the occurrence of ethnicity to take place.

The origins of ethnicity may be attributed to the period of colonial administration. Under colonial governance, ethnic groups first developed a shared awareness. However, due to the imposition of colonial control in Nigeria, it seems that the several communities that make up present-day Nigeria were not able to grow independently and at their own individual rates. Hence, the prevention of ethnic clashes and internal disputes among the many factions in Nigeria, along with their subsequent implications for the country's political landscape, should have been prioritized (Osadola & Gbadeyan, 2023). The issues in Nigeria mostly stem from the tensions that have emerged between the major ethnic groups. It is important to note that this antagonism arises not from the ethnic distinctions themselves but rather from the fight between these groups for money and power (Lloyd, 1970). This statement becomes evident when considering the evolution of relationships among different ethnic groups during and after gaining freedom. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the extent of ethnic politics in both the period before Nigeria gained independence and the period after independence in order to understand Nigeria's political growth.

3. Ethnic Politics in Nigeria before Independence

Prior to the establishment of the Nigerian state in 1914, there were already many ethnic groups present. However, the politicization of ethnicity and its increased impact on the Nigerian political landscape occurred in the late 1930s (Osadola, 2023). Subsequently, the Nigerian Youth Movement arose in 1934 as a political organisation opposing Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic organization. Its purpose was to compete in the election for the Lagos Town Council (Idahosa, 2014).

The Nigerian Youth Movement had difficulties when Kofo Aboiyomi resigned his seat from the legislative council, prompting the need for a successor. Two members, Ernest Sessi Ikoli and Samuel Akinsanya, emerged as nominees for the position. Azikiwe endorsed Akinsanya, who is of Yoruba-Ijebu descent, whereas Awolowo backed Ernest Ikoli, who is of Ijaw heritage (Soetana & Osadola, 2018). The executive, in accordance with the organization's norm, made the ultimate judgement in favour of Ikoli. Azikiwe resigned in exasperation, prompting all the Igbo members of the organisation to quit with him. This raised suspicions among non-Ibo members, since they suspected that Azikiwe's support for a Yoruba candidate was not genuine, but rather motivated by his desire to divide the organisation where he felt his ambitions were being hindered (Lloyd, 1970). According to Ikime (1980), the resignation of all the Igbo members together with him made the other members contemplate the situation. They concluded that if the Igbo people continued to unite on matters while others remained split based on principles or personalities, it was only a matter of time until the Igbo people would come to control everyone else. This debate resulted in the party being fragmented, ultimately transforming it into a completely Yoruba organization. The political rivalry between the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups, which originated in the 1930s, persisted even after Nigeria gained independence. Consequently, the detrimental ethnic animosity between the Igbo and Yoruba communities permeated other aspects of society, including newspaper articles and football matches (Awolowo, 1947: 128). The situation reached its peak when Awolowo became the head of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, which later transformed into the Action Group in the early 1950s. As a result, he also became the leader of the Yorubas (Ojo, 2016: 76-80).

Governor Bourdillon had a role in creating a division between the North and South, although there is evidence suggesting that he also aimed to promote more interaction between the two regions. The Richards constitution, implemented in 1945, provided a platform for the expression of his ideals. One of his goals was to foster national unity among the many components of the country. An important feature of the constitution was the incorporation of the notion of regionalism. The colonial officials had a separatist mindset. The notion of regionalism, first established via the Richard constitution, underwent significant transformations as a result of the increasing tensions arising from ethnic conflicts (Ezera, 1960: 70-85).

Ethnic rivalry prior to the 1950 General conference at Ibadan, which was preparatory to the birth of the Macpherson Constitution, was limited only to the Western and Eastern parts of Nigeria. Issues discussed at the General Conference brought the North into the main stream of ethnic antagonism in Nigeria (Greene, 1971). Disagreement erupted between the Northern and Southern representatives, at the conference on some issues (Greene, 1971: 23). The Eastern and Western participants at the meeting raised objections to these requests. The Northern delegates at the conference expressed their opposition to the need for cabinet accountability, both at the national and regional levels. Disputes also arose on the modification of the previously established regional borders (Albert, 1998: 50). The Northern delegates prevailed on this matter. However, on the matter of granting Northerners half of the seats in the central assembly, the Emirs of Kastina and Zaria issued a warning. They said that unless their demands were fulfilled, they would choose to separate based on the previous system that existed before 1914 (Okwudibia, 1995: 121). According to Greene (1971), the decision to grant the North's claim had a significant influence on the formation of Nigeria's political culture, which continued to have an impact until the first republic collapsed thirteen years later.

The ethnic foundations of the three primary political parties exacerbated the inter-party tensions in Nigeria before and after independence. With the establishment of the Macpherson institution in 1951, three main political parties emerged. The parties involved were the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Action Group (AG), and the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC). Each of these parties had distinct advantages and enjoyed support from their own ethnic constituencies. Consequently, the NCNC had a dominant influence in the Eastern area, the AG in the Western region, and the NPC in the Northern region. Awolowo was the leader of the Action Group (AG) in the Western area, while Ahmadu Bello headed the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the Northern zone. Azikiwe, although being the head of the NCNC, lived in Lagos and served as a member of the Western House of Assembly representing that seat. According to Ikime (1980), none of the aforementioned leaders of the political parties had positions in the central council of ministers. The situation reached a critical point when Azikiwe, who aspired to join the House of Representatives, was unsuccessful due to the constitutional prerequisites for membership in the House of Representatives. Additionally, the presence of ethnic and party rivalry hindered Azikiwe's efforts, resulting in their failure (Nnoli, 1994). The 1951 constitution stipulated that the regional legislature would be responsible for choosing the members of the House of Representatives. The selection process allowed the dominant party, the AG, to choose delegates from the Western Regional House of Assembly to serve in the central legislature in Lagos. The Attorney General (AG) has the authority to select the individuals who would serve as representatives for the area in the House of Representatives in Lagos. The Attorney General (AG) efficiently used this authority, resulting in Azikiwe's exclusion from the House of Representatives. This was due to the fact that all the chosen members were of Yoruba descent (Lloyd, 1970). The only plausible explanation for the circumstances described is the influence of ethnicity.

The aforementioned circumstance exacerbated the simmering ethnic animosity in Nigerian politics. Consequently, the issue of ethnicity became a matter of political manipulation. In this context, Ezera (1960) succinctly summarises the situation by stating that Azikiwe was unsuccessful in his attempt to get a seat in the House of Representatives due to his Igbo ethnicity. Because all of his chosen party partners were Yorubas, Zik's resignation from the Western house and subsequent relocation to the eastern area were the direct consequences of the occurrence.

The 1951 constitution represented a notable advancement compared to the 1946 constitution. However, its ethnic connotation gave rise to regional divides. The conflicting interests of the ethnic groupings undermined the durability of the constitution.

The tension and apprehension over the power struggle among Nigeria's three major ethnic groups were greatly exaggerated when Anthony Enahoro, a member of the Action Group in the House of Representatives, proposed a resolution on March 31, 1953, advocating for Nigeria to achieve self-government by 1956. The Northerners saw the motion as an assault on their Northern interests and a bid by the Southerners to exert dominance over them (Nnoli, 1995). The Northerners in the House of Representatives opposed the resolution due to their lack of readiness for the year of independence in 1956. Sir Ahmadu Bello, the head of the NPC, proposed an amendment suggesting that the wording "as soon as practicable" be used instead of the specific year of 1956 (Idahosa, 2014). In his perspective, the North was deemed unprepared for self-governance and should not be rushed. The southern members of the House dismissed his opinions, leading to a pronounced rift between the southern and northern factions. As a result, both Western and Eastern members of the House of Representatives walked out, and four ministers from the south resigned from their positions in the central administration. Lagosians derided and insulted the Northern politicians. The occurrence persuaded the Northern region that it was unable to align itself with the Southern region. Consequently, the North proposed an eight-point agenda that, if executed, would have resulted in the fragmentation of the nation. They abandoned a cause due to the influence of the colonial administration (Sklar, 1963). The eight points demanded full executive and legislative autonomy for the North, with the exception of defence, foreign affairs, customs, and research institutions. One of the requests was that all income, save customs, should be imposed and collected by regions.

According to Nwosu (1999), it is proposed that Lagos, the capital, should function as a neutral zone; a non-partisan central institution devoid of legislative or policy-making authority. In May 1953, a series of events occurred rapidly and the situation spiralled out of control when the AG (Action Group) and NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) sent a team led by Chief S.L Akintola to gauge the opinions of the Northerners over the stance of the NPC (Northern People's Congress) members in the House of Representatives regarding Nigeria's independence in 1956. The consequences of this journey to the Northern area led to the occurrence of the Kano riot on May 16th, 1953. Approximately thirty-six individuals lost their lives, while two hundred and fifty individuals sustained injuries. This incident clearly demonstrated the ethnic tension within the Nigerian political landscape before independence, and it further deteriorated the connection between the Northern and Southern regions (Ojo, 2016).

The concerns over the dominance of either the Northern or Southern regions escalated dramatically throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In order to attain the desired autonomy, the Northerners implemented a proactive Programme of Northernisation, which resulted in the displacement of numerous southerners from their positions in the Northern public sector. These individuals were then encouraged to pursue work in the southern region, where they are considered to belong. In 1958, the highest tier of the service consisted of five individuals from the Northern region, while the administrative and professional cadre had sixty-nine individuals, and the executive and higher technical cadre included 237 individuals. Southerners were displaced (Ottawa, 1999). The only requirement for securing employment in Northern businesses was to be a member of the N.P.C. Sir Ahmadu Bello commented on the scope of the Northernisation agenda:

The Northernisation policies do not only apply to clerks' administrative offices, doctors and others. We do not want to go to Chad and meet strangers catching our fish in the water... we do not want to go to Sokoto and find a carpenter who is a stranger nailing our houses. do not want to go to the Sabon Gari Kano and find strangers making the body of a lorry, or to go to the market and see butchers who are Northerners. (Oyediran, 2000)

The Northernisation policy alienated the southerners and even the Ibo speaking people among them. This policy further heightened ethnic politics in Nigeria.

3.1 Post Independence Nigeria

The ethnic animosity between the Northern and Southern regions reached its peak in the aftermath of the nation's independence. The 1959 elections had significant importance for the political parties, as they would decide which party would have authority over the federal government upon independence. The NPC secured a complete victory by winning all 174 seats designated for the North, thus gaining control of the 312-member House of Representatives. Hence, the NCNC and the AG included in their plan the objective of preventing the NPC from securing all the seats in the northern region. They achieved this by forming partnerships with minor political parties in the northern region. However, none of the political parties had a functional majority (Ikelegbe, 1988). The NCNC and the AG together had a total of 162 seats, which was sufficient to establish a governing body. Considering the apprehension of northern dominance, it would be expected that an alliance between the NCNC and AG would arise. However, instead of that happening, what evolved was a partnership between the NPC and NCNC, despite the absence of any ideological common ground. The driving force behind this alliance, according to Nwachukwu and Osadola (2019), was just self-interest.

The NCNC, which had a satisfactory performance in the West, aspired to enhance its position in subsequent elections and maybe assume control of the West's government. By doing that, it would gain dominance over the southern region, bolstering its bargaining power with the North. Meanwhile, it would use collaboration with the federal government to obtain resources for the eastern area. The non-player character, in turn, harboured strong feelings of resentment against the AG and its leader, Obafemi Awolowo, due to their anti-Northern statements. Consequently, the NPC refused to form an alliance with the AG (Amadu, 1999). The NCNC benefited greatly from their choice, as its leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, ascended to the positions of first president of the senate, then governor general, and finally the first president of the federal republic of Nigeria (Akamere, 2005). Party members are appointed as ministers and get various forms of patronage. In May 1962, Nigeria conducted a countrywide population census, but there was a prevailing sense of suspicion surrounding the procedure. On May 13, 1963, a new census was carried out, which was not without of controversy. The user's text consists of a single quotation mark. The final data revealed that the population of the northern area exceeded the combined population of the other regions, including Lagos. Consequently, political analysts recognised that this would provide the North with a greater number of electoral districts compared to the other regions. The premier of the eastern area, the mid-western region, and the Attorney General (AG) disputed the findings, arguing that the numbers attributed to the north were significantly exaggerated. However, the federal government acknowledged and approved the statistics. The census difference had significant political repercussions, leading to a sequence of party realignments that occurred before the federal election that year. Both the Eastern and Western regions significantly lost trust and confidence in the election as a result of fraudulent activities and electoral misconduct. Since the NPC-led Alliance had accepted the outcome, the Ibos felt helpless (Nwachukwu and Osadola, 2019). The anxieties and emotions of the Ibos reached a critical level in 1965 due to the electoral crisis in the Western House of Assembly. In contrast to the 1964 federal election, the result of the 1965 election was unequivocal in the eyes of the voters. Despite resorting to violence, fraud, and other manipulative tactics, the Akintola administration, which lacked popularity, had no possibility of securing a majority vote. On the other hand, the NCNC and its partner, the AG, were confident in their chances of winning. The initial confidence transformed into disappointment, frustration, isolation, and violence after the NNDP's victory in the election (Ojo & Osadola, 2017). Anarchy has been unleashed in the area. The rapid realisation occurred that the arrogance, political imprudence, and political avarice of the Hausa Fulani group were insurmountable within the framework of a unified nation, prompting contemplation of the dissolution of the country. Such was the prevailing situation when the January 1966 coup occurred (Idahosa, 2000).

3.2 Ethnicity in the Context of "1966 Coup"

In all cases of analysis, the coups of 1966 present themselves as ethnic in character (Muffet, 1982). In the January 1966 coup, the prime ministers of the Eastern Region and the Midwest, who were Ibos, were not killed, and the bulk of the senior military officers killed were of Northern origin. Also, among the civilians killed, none were Igbo. They included the premier of the North, Ahmadu Bello; the controversial and hated premier of the West, S. L. Akintola; and the Federal Prime Minister, Abubaka Tafewa. No harm came to Michael Okpara or O.C. Osedebe, the Igbo premier of the East and Midwest, respectively (Emah & Osadola, 2021).

Six of the seven majors and nineteen out of the other twenty-three persons who participated actively in plotting and executing the coup came from the same ethnic group, the Igbo. An Ibo-led federal government took the place of a Northern-led one as a result of the military coup. According to Ikime (2006), he posited a question in his work to depict the analogy behind the military coup by asking, "had the gun achieved for the Ibos what politics and the ballot box could

not?”. This question highlights the underlying frustration and perceived marginalisation that the Igbo people may have felt leading up to the coup. It suggests that they may have believed that resorting to violence was their only option for achieving political power and representation (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

From independence to January 1966, the country had been in serious ethnic turmoil, but the coup placed her in an even more uneven situation. The coup exacerbated the existing ethnic tensions in Nigeria, further deepening the divide between different ethnic groups. The marginalised Igbo people saw the coup as a means to address their grievances and gain a more equal footing in the country's political landscape (Osadola et al., 2023). However, the aftermath of the coup only intensified ethnic conflicts and set the stage for a series of violent events that would ultimately lead to the Nigerian Civil War. The Northerners saw the coup as a deliberate plan to eliminate the political heavyweight in the North in order to pave the way for the Easterners to take over the baton of leadership. According to Osadola & Asiyanbi (2022), the assassination of prominent Northern leaders during the coup heightened the sense of betrayal and anger among Northerners, fueling their resentment towards the Igbo people. This perception further fueled ethnic tensions and contributed to the escalation of violence that ultimately led to the Nigerian Civil War. The coup not only deepened existing divisions but also created new fault lines within Nigerian society, exacerbating the already fragile political landscape (Gbadeyan & Osadola, 2023). The North wanted to reassert itself, as Muffet (1982) further pointed out:

"The old song of Ibo dominance is recklessly driven home with increasing venom. The north is beginning to speak out, and language does not make good music to the ears."

According to Muffet (1982), the perception of Ibo dominance heightened this sentiment of resentment towards the Igbo people. The growing voice of the North in opposition to this dominance added to the already fragile political landscape and contributed to the escalation of violence that ultimately led to the Nigerian Civil War. And so the north hoped to reassert itself, which it did in the July 1966 counter coup, which led to the 30-month civil war starting in July 1967. It can be shown from the post-colonial history of Nigeria (1960–1977) that ethnic pressures and demands have resulted in tensions and conflict that threatened its political order (Osadola, 2012). The 1979 constitution, which entrenched the federal character principle, extended it to political parties, insisting that each political association must establish in 13 of the 19 states its leadership reflecting the geographical diversity of the country and that ethnic connotations must be absent from their emblems before they are registered as political parties. This constitutional provision aimed to address the ethnic tensions and conflicts that had previously threatened Nigeria's political order. By requiring political parties to reflect the country's geographical diversity and avoid ethnic connotations, it sought to promote inclusivity and prevent the dominance of any particular ethnic group in the political arena. This measure was a response to the lessons learned from the 30-month civil war and an effort to maintain stability and unity within Nigeria. But after the 1979 elections, the results of the elections did not only show the predominance of personalities but also the importance of their ethnic origin. This realisation highlighted the challenges of implementing a system that solely focused on geographic diversity while disregarding the influence of ethnic identities in Nigerian politics. It underscored the need for a more comprehensive approach that balances both factors to ensure fair representation and minimise ethnic tensions in future elections (Ikegbe, 2004).

4. Implications of Ethnicity on Nigeria's Political Development

Since gaining its independence decades ago, Nigeria has continued to experience sociopolitical instability. For instance, in 1967, the secessionist movement led to the Nigerian Civil War, resulting in the loss of millions of lives and further deepening divisions within the country. Additionally, the rise of militant groups like Boko Haram in recent years has further destabilised Nigeria, causing widespread violence and displacement among its citizens (Adu & Osadola, 2022). This is an outcome resulting from the ethnic diversity and political peculiarities that characterise Nigeria, as well as longstanding issues of corruption and economic inequality. These factors have contributed to a lack of trust in the government and a sense of marginalisation among certain ethnic and religious groups, exacerbating tensions and fueling conflict. Despite efforts to address these challenges, Nigeria continues to grapple with sociopolitical instability, hindering its progress and development. Intermittent crises contribute to the political instability that pervades the nation (Ojo & Osadola, 2017). For example, the Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria is a direct result of the marginalisation and grievances felt by the predominantly Muslim population in the region (Gbadeyan & Osadola, 2023). The group's violent attacks and recruitment of disillusioned youth further destabilise the already fragile political landscape. Furthermore, corruption within the government hampers effective governance and perpetuates economic inequality, leading to widespread discontent and social unrest. These complex issues create a vicious cycle of instability that Nigeria struggles to break free from. According to Gbadeyan et al., (2024), communal conflicts between ethnic groups have been increasing in frequency and intensity in recent years, exacerbating the already tense situation. The lack of trust and cooperation between different ethnic communities further fuels the conflicts, making it difficult to find peaceful resolutions. Additionally, the competition over scarce resources such as land and water resources adds another layer of complexity to these communal conflicts, deepening the divide among different groups and hindering efforts for reconciliation and peace building.

Otito (1999) opines that Nigeria has never truly been an integrated nation; rather, what is frequently referred to as harmonious coexistence between groups is frequently extremely precarious, rupturing into violent clashes that claim lives

at the slightest provocation; the Warri ethnic war of 1997 is one such instance. An additional significant consequence of ethnicity in Nigeria is the absence of accountability in governance, as ethnic leaders exploit sentiments of competition among their followers to obscure their adherence to democratic principles and good governance. For example, during the Warri ethnic war in 1997, tensions between the Ijaw and Itsekiri communities in Nigeria escalated into violent clashes, resulting in numerous deaths and widespread destruction (Osadola & Gbadeyan, 2023). Competing claims to land and political influence stoked the conflict, highlighting the precarious nature of peaceful coexistence in the nation. Additionally, ethnic leaders often manipulate ethnic sentiments to divert attention from their own corrupt practices, impeding accountability and hindering progress towards democratic principles and good governance (Osadola and Soetan, 2018).

Since 1999, when the military was ultimately removed from power in response to widespread public opposition to military rule, ethnic politics and power struggles have returned to prominence in Nigeria, hindering the country's progress towards a truly inclusive and representative democracy. This has resulted in a lack of trust in the government and institutions, as well as increased social and economic inequalities among different ethnic groups. Additionally, the prevalence of corruption has further eroded public confidence and hindered development efforts in Nigeria. For example, in recent years, Nigeria has seen an increase in ethnic tensions and conflicts, such as the clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and local farmers in various parts of the country (Gbadeyan, et al., 2024). These conflicts have led to the loss of lives, the displacement of communities, and the destruction of farmlands, exacerbating social and economic inequalities among different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the lack of effective governance and accountability has allowed for the exploitation of natural resources, leading to environmental degradation and exacerbating these inequalities. This has created a cycle of poverty and marginalisation, further fueling social unrest and hindering Nigeria's overall development progress (Gbadeyan & Osadola, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The Nigerian political landscape has been significantly impacted by the matter of ethnicity, which originated from the British imperialistic consolidation of groups with distinct social, cultural, and historical origins into a single geopolitical entity; the result was a state of "unity in diversity." The impact of this phenomenon precipitated political crises in both pre-independence and post-independence Nigeria. Consequently, ethnicity became a matter of politics, as the prevailing ethnic groups vied for power and prosperity within the Nigerian state. The struggle for independence was also shaped along ethnic lines; the objective of each faction was to establish a Nigeria that reflected its image and was governed by that group, or at the very least, subject to its influence; thus, division, animosity, detrimental competition, and significant discrepancies in progress resulted.

Ethnic consciousness increased and manifested itself in the political landscape of the nation upon independence. Moreover, ethnic inequality contributed to the nationwide political crisis that erupted from 1960 to 1966. These occurrences reached their zenith with the coup and subsequent countercoup in 1966, which sparked a violent thirty-month civil war in 1967. Despite the presence of ethnic consciousness, the conflict was supported by the bosos in all regions, both in terms of ideology and military endeavours. The Ibos gathered en masse to participate in a conflict with the objective of evading the penalties that had been imposed upon them. Ibos residing in different parts of the nation, particularly those in the mid-western areas laid the groundwork and created opportunities for their compatriots to enter with the intention of aiding them in their struggle.

References

1. Adu, F. M and Osadola, O. S. (2022) Geo-Strategic Analysis of Identity Politics and Ethnic Separatism: A Re-Evaluation of Nigeria's Good Neighbourliness Political Framework In The Face Of Terrorism. *American Journal of International Relations*, Vol.7, Issue 1, pp 1 - 19, <http://dx.doi.org/10.47672/ajir.939>
2. Akamere, F. A. C., (2005) Issues and concepts in Government and politics of Nigeria, (Lagos: Olu — Abbey Modern press,), p. 156-157.
3. Albert, O., (1998) Federalism, Inter-ethnic Conflicts and the Northernisation policy of the 1950s and 1960s in Federalism and political Restructuring in Nigeria Edited by Kunle Amuwa et al (Ibadan, Spectrum Books limited,), p. 50.
4. Amadu, K., (2000) The Nigerian General Elections, 1959 and 1979 and the aftermath, Lagos Macmillan, p. 34
5. Awolowo, O., (1947) Path to Nigeria freedom, (London, University press,), pp 124-134.
6. Boahen, Webster, (1979) The Revolutionary years; West Africa since 1800. Dudley, B., (1973) Instability and Political Order. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press,
7. Emah, G. S., & Osadola, O. S. (2021). The Indifferent Attitude of the Ibibio to The Biafran Enterprise in The Context of The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, 9(03), 1-8.
7. Ezera, K. Constitutional Development in Nigeria (London, Cambridge University press, 1960), pp. 70-84
8. Gbadeyan, O. J., & Osadola, O. S. (2023). Healing the wounds of insurgency in the North East: Reflections on the critical roles of women in mediation and peace-building. *Gender and Behaviour*, 21(2), 21746-21755.

9. Gbadeyan, O. J., Ola, A. A., Osadola, O. S., & Ojo, O. M. (2024). Strengthening women engagement in post-Conflict Peace-building in North-East Nigeria: An interrogation of the UN Resolution 1325. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1), 2286067. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2286067>
10. Greene, A. H. M K, (1971) *Crisis and conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary source book 1966- 1970*. (London, University press.), pp. 1-24. Idahosa, S. A. and A. E. Ehizuelen (1996) *Readings in politics and Administration.*, Silva Publication Limited p. 118
11. Idojije, A.D. and Ehizuelen, A.E., (1996) *Political Behaviour. The case of ethnic and sectional Tension in the Nigerian political formation in readings in politics and Administration (Akure, Ondo state: Sylva publications Ltd).*, P. 116.
12. Ikelegbe, A., (1988) *Post Colonial Nigerian Government and Politics: First Republic and Military Regimes*. In: A. G. Onokerhorage (ed) *An Introduction to Integrated Social Science for Africa*, Benin City: Geography and Planning Series, p. 10
13. Ikime, O. (1980) *Ground work on Nigerian History (Ibadan Heinemann Educational Books (Nig) Ltd)*, p. 56. Ikime, O., (2006) *History, the Historian and the Nation*, Ibadan, Olusey press Ltd), p. 297.
14. Lloyd, P. C., (1970) *The Ethnic Background to the Nigeria Civil war in S.K. Panter Brick (ed), Nigeria politics and military rule: prelude to civil war (London university press pp. 1-13)*
15. Maier K., *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*. London: Penguin Books, 2000,
16. Maitama-Sule, Y., (2000), *Ethnic Conflicts: When Tribes and Tongue Differ in Ethnic Conflicts – Counting the Human Cost*. News Africa (UK) Limited,
17. Muffet, D. J., (1982) *Let Truth Be Told: The Coups d' etat of nineteen sixty six*, Haduhuda publishing company), pp. 39-40 Nnoli, O., (1978) *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers,
18. Nnoli, O., (1994) *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa- Intervening Variables*. Lagos: Nigeria: Malthouse Press Limited, Nnoli, O., (1995) *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria*. Aldershot: Avebury Publisher.
19. Nwachukwu J. U. & Osadola, O. S., (2019) *Nexus between Elections, Good Governance and Democracy in Nigeria: 1922-1979*, *Global Scientific Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 5,
20. Nwosu, I. N., (1999) *Nigeria in the Management of sub- Regional Conflicts*, in A. Sanusi (ed.) *Selected Themes in Nigeria Foreign Policy and International Relations*. Ilorin: Sally and Associates,
21. Ojo, E. O, (2016) *The Awolowo-Akintola Leadership Tussle: A Reinterpretation*. *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp 76-80 Okwudibia, N., (1995) *Ethnicity and development in Nigeria*, (Ashgate publishing Limited, p. 121.
22. Ojo, E. O., & Osadola, O. S. (2017). *The Nigerian Federation and Secession Threats–The Case of the IPOB*. *Journal of Public Policy in Africa,(JOPPA) African University, Zimbabwe*, 5(2).
23. Otite, O., (1999) *On Conflicts, their Resolution, Transformation, and Managements*, In : Otite, O. and Alberts, I. O. (eds.) *Community Conflicts in Nigeria, Management Resolution and Transformation*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books,
24. Ottawa M., (1999) *Ethnic Politics in Africa: Change and Continuity*, In Joseph, R. (eds.) *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*. London: Boulder Lynne,
25. Osadola, O. S. (2012). *A historical analysis of ethnic conflict in Nigeria*. *Research Paper (Postgraduate)*.
26. Osadola, O. S., & Asiyanbi, S. B. (2022). *The Nigeria War of Unity 1967-1970: Strategies and Diplomacy*. *Polit Journal*, 2(3), 145-155.
27. Osadola, O. S. (2023) *The Dark Legacy of European Imperialism in Africa*. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*; 3(6):913-919
28. Osadola, O. S. & Gbadeyan, O. J (2023) *A Historical Reassessment Of Ethnic Conflicts In Nigeria: Juxtaposing The Old And New Dimensions* *ISRG Journal of Arts Humanities & Social Sciences*, Vol 1 (4)
29. Osadola, O., Gbadeyan, O., Asiyanbi, S., & Oludemi, S. (2023). *A historical analysis of the mediation efforts of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture*, 33, 2842-2863.
30. Oyediran, D., (2000) *Nigeria Government and Politics under military rule 1966— 1979*. P.9
31. Oyewale, P. O. and Osadola, O. S. (2018) *Military Regimes and Nigeria's Economic Growth, 1966-1999*, *Journal of Social Economics Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2018, 29-38 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.35.2018.51.29.38>
32. Sklar, R. L., *Nigerian Political Parties*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963
33. Soetana, S. O. and Osadola, O. S., (2018) *Intra-Party Primaries in Nigeria's Democratization Process: A Historical Assessment*, *American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*, Vol. 3, Iss. 30, DOI: 10.28933/AJERR
34. Soetan, S. O., and Osadola, O. S., (2018) *Debt Burden: A Re-Examination of its Effects on Nigeria's Nation Building*. *Journal for Studies in Management and Planning* ISSN: 2395-0463 Volume 04 Issue 01, pp. 43-50