United States Policy in the Nigerian Civil War

C. Onokata Idisi

Western Michigan University

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UNITED STATES POLICY IN THE
NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

by

C. Onokata Idisi

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1, 1975
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Western Michigan University, M.A., 1975
Political Science, international law and relations

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>BACKGROUND OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I B A C K G R O U N D  O F T H E NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The People and Tribes of Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Fulani-Hausas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Ibos</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Yorubas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population Distribution in Nigeria</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Colonization of Nigeria</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentary Democracy in Nigeria</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tribal Politics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Aguiyi-Ironsi Heads First Military Government in Nigeria</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yakubu Gowon Heads Second Military Government in Nigeria</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>UNITED STATES PRE-CIVIL WAR RELATIONS WITH NIGERIA</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United States Representatives Visit Nigeria</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The United States Expressed Optimism about Independent Nigeria</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The United States Offered Nigeria Economic and Related Assistance</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The United States and Nigeria Established Diplomatic Relations</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade Between Nigeria and America</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Private Investments in Nigeria</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The African-American Institute:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Private United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to Nigeria</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE BIAFRAN-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIGERIAN WAR</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American News Media</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Responses to Starvation in Biafra</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Investors Supported Nigeria</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED STATES POLICY IN THE NIGERIAN</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Department and United States</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy in the Nigerian Civil War</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress and United States Policy in the Nigerian Civil War</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Executive Branch and the Nigerian Civil War</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REASONS FOR UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Indicating United States Support of Nigeria</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States Supports Nigeria to Protect Its Investments</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain and America Collaborated to Support Nigeria</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pro-Nigerian Position of the Organization of African Unity Affected American Policy</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Policy Neutralized the Role of the Soviet Union in the Nigerian Civil War</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>EPILOGUE</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the 1967-70 Nigerian Civil War, most observers, including this writer, believed, on mere speculation, that the United States government favored Biafra. This belief was held because Americans appeared to be sympathetically pro-Biafra. A close examination of official American policy, however, shows that Presidents Johnson and Nixon as well as the United States Department of State decided to maintain the pre-civil war relationship, namely, a non-military but friendly policy with Nigeria.\(^1\) This decision was based partly on tradition or an adherence to, and continuation of an established policy of minimum involvement in Nigerian affairs.

There were tremendous pressures on American decision makers at the time. These pressures were exerted by the mass media, interest groups such as businessmen whose petroleum production was affected by the war, religious organizations whose doctrines supposedly justified their assisting fellow Biafran Christians even though the issue of the war was religious,\(^2\) and a sizeable segment of the American public whose basic concern was overwhelmingly emotional. In addition, the situation was complicated by Congressmen who were critical of American policy. The pro-Biafran

\[^1\text{See John R. Sullivan, }\textit{Breadless Biafra}.\text{ Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Press, 1969.}\]

\[^2\text{The civil war has been attributed to a tribal power-struggle between the Fulani-Hausas and the Ibos rather than conflicting religious beliefs.}\]
position of most of these groups, however, did not change the administration's pro-Nigerian policy.

This study is an examination of the Nigerian Civil War, concentrating on American policy. It seeks to examine why the U.S. government decided to maintain its relations with the Federal government of Nigeria while American opinion appeared to want a change.\textsuperscript{1} It is mainly a library thesis which relies on books, newspapers, scholarly journals, and other related primary sources.

Several people have assisted in the realization of this project. I am grateful to Professors Lawrence Ziring and Ernest Rossi for serving as major readers. I am also indebted to Mr. Marlon Gerould, Professors Jack C. Plano, William Hardenbergh, John Igbruke and others who have helped me in their respective, valuable ways in this study program.

C. Onokata Idisi

\footnotesize
\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1}I plan to characterize this policy as United States diplomatic support of Nigeria in the course of the thesis.
\end{flushright}
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

The People and Tribes of Nigeria

The state of Nigeria contains over 200 tribes. Each of these tribes has a separate language and a separate group culture. Before the European advent, they were at different stages of civilization. Because Nigerian politics is basically a power struggle between the Fulani-Hausas and the Ibos, a close look at these two peoples, as well as the Yorubas, the third major tribe, is in order.

The Fulani-Hausas

The Fulani-Hausas inhabit Northern Nigeria. Apart from these ethnic groups, there were other subgroups such as the Ilorin Talak Parapo, the Middle Belt and Bornu. The Fulani-Hausas and the subgroups constitute the Northern population of 29 million Nigerians. For many years, Hausa-land which makes a sizeable proportion of the North was considered a district and the name was loosely applied to all the tribes that spoke the language. But this took a different turn after the Fulanis had conquered the Hausas and established themselves as rulers. Because of their conversion to the Islamic religion, their common spoken language and intermarriage, the Hausas

---

and the Fulanis became closely related. Since the other subgroups were small and less influential, the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups formed the dominant cultural grouping in the region. Such other ethnic groups as the Ilorin, Middle Belt and Bornu functioned under the shadow of these two powerful tribal groups. They sought separate status but were not successful. While 73 per cent of the Northerners are orthodox Muslims, about 10 per cent are Christians. Although the Fulani-Hausas are the least educated of the three major groups, as a result of their blatant resentment of British Colonization and their Muslim outlook on education, they aspired to high political positions with the other groups.\(^1\) Because they were suspicious of the more educated tribes, the Fulani and Hausas were not enthusiastic about a centralized Nigerian government. The Fulani-Hausa political party was the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Economically, the Northerners were dependent on Ibo and other migrant manpower to run their industrial sector and to mine their tin. In addition, they were land-locked and hence dependent on the ports of Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Calabar. The Fulani-Hausas were described as follows:

Northern society is hierarchically structured and, at least in the upper echelons, conservatively Islamic. Paradise awaits the true believer and fatalism blunts, social action in depth; the goal is the protection of the received structure...(viewed from the north, Nigeria might have been) conceived as a theocracy...if the alien population is an implicit threat to the social basis of the

\(^1\)The fact that the attainment of formal education was the criteria for obtaining civil service jobs made the more-educated Ibos suspicious of the means and ways by which the less-educated Fulani-Hausas obtained these positions. This was one potential source of friction between the two groups.
hierarchy, then it must be obliterated.¹

The Ibos

Traditionally, the Ibos were a highly individualistic people with no political chieftaincies and no politically conceived hierarchical structures. Their major political party was the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). Although the British were never able to rule the Ibos using traditional techniques, the Ibos accommodated the colonizer. The Ibos' accommodation of the British contributed to the education of a considerable number of the Ibo people. And the education of the Ibos partly led to their domination of the Nigerian civil service, government and the economy. Nepotism amongst the Ibos also led to this outcome.²

The Ibo Region includes other minority groups such as the Ijaws of the creeks of the River Niger, the Ibibios, the Efiks, and the Ekois. The Ibos relied heavily on these subordinate groups for their beef, fish and yams, for trade outlets through Port Harcourt and Calabar, and also for mineral wealth. Nigeria's oil deposits are also among the Ijaw, Ibibio, and Efik coasts. But like most minorities in other parts of Nigeria, their interests were largely neglected. "When the politicians were in power the Ibo-speaking groups dominated the assembly (of the Eastern Region) and some


²Stanley Meisler, "Breakup in Nigeria," Nation, 205 (October 9, 1967), 335.
minority areas felt neglected in the apportionment of funds, facilities and investments.¹

Population pressure on the poor soils of Ibo-land and a general desire for upward mobility forced hundreds of thousands of Ibos to migrate to other parts of Nigeria, especially to the Northern Region which constituted over two-thirds of the country.² The Ibos "are essentially Christian in faith, though secular in temperament."³

The Yorubas

The Yorubas lived in Western Nigeria. The Yorubas constituted two-thirds of the population of this region. Other ethnic groups in the area were the Binis, Itsekiris, Urhobos and "Western" Ibos and Ijaws. Edo was the common language of these minority groups and it was quite different from Yoruba. Like the other regions of Nigeria, tension existed in the Western Region between the pre-dominant Yorubas and the minorities. Some of the minorities wanted to establish separate states. For example, the Binis had long struggled to create their own kingdom. The Binis sought to influence the other minorities in the creation of a Bini-Delta state but within the Nigerian federation. This demand was somewhat fulfilled when the Mid-Western Region was created in 1963.

²Diamond, op. cit., p. 16.
³loc. cit., p. 19.
The ruling party in the West was the Action Group (AG) and it was formed and run by the Yoruba cultural organization: the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. In 1957-59, the AG participated in the National Government. Later, the party led the parliamentary opposition and Chief Obafemi Awolowo was its leader.

Population Distribution in Nigeria

The tribal population before the independence of Nigeria can be ascertained from a census conducted in the years 1950-53:

**TABLE I**

Population Distribution in Nigeria by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria, excluding the Cameroons</td>
<td>29,093,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Nigeria</td>
<td>17,007,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Nigeria</td>
<td>4,595,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Nigeria</td>
<td>7,217,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos area</td>
<td>272,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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### TABLE II

Population Distribution in Nigeria by Tribe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>1952-53 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>5,544,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>5,458,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>5,045,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>3,030,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanuri</td>
<td>1,301,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiv</td>
<td>788,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibibio</td>
<td>762,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>466,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anang</td>
<td>435,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw</td>
<td>343,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**British Colonization of Nigeria**

Nigeria produced and exported cocoa, groundnuts, asbestos, plywood, textiles, tin, uranium and other mineral ores. And as a colonial and post-colonial power, Britain was mainly interested in these and similar Nigerian resources. Britain, therefore, sought political means to exploit them. The British supported indirect rule, a nominal system which recognized existing African tribal societies and encouraged their continuation, especially in Northern
Nigeria, mainly for economic reasons.¹ The British did this because these pre-colonial systems were less expensive to run as they utilized fewer staff members.² Britain also created Nigeria for economic reasons:

the north...(had) no access to the sea except through the south; its revenue was insufficient to maintain its administration and deficits had to be met by annual grants from the south (western and eastern regions) and the Imperial Treasury. It was expected that the unification of the north and south would relieve the Imperial Treasury of the necessity of making such yearly contributions. Also, it was desirable that transportation and communication should be under some central authority to avoid competition and clash of territorial interest.³

The British administrators were aware of the ethnic differences and the unsuitability of Nigeria as one nation-state, yet the British created Nigeria because it was economically advantageous for them to do so. The creation of Nigeria meant the Fulanis, Hausas, Yorubas, Ibos and other varied ethnic groups would be called Nigerians. But, in creating the state of Nigeria, the British overlooked the tribal heterogeneity, consequently it was hard for these Nigerian groups to cooperate with one another.

Parliamentary Democracy in Nigeria

Apart from the tribal differences, the regions were unbalanced. The Northern Region alone was bigger than the two Southern regions

²loc. cit., p. 10.
³ibid.
combined. Also, in each of the three regions, the majority party which made up the Government represented mainly one ethnic group. But many smaller groups in these regions were doomed to a sort of a perpetual opposition "because of the monolithic character of the major parties." A 1957 commission set up to look into the problem of the minority groups, did not consider it necessary to divide the existing regions for the sake of solving the minority problems. So that when the 1959 federal elections were held, a regional struggle for control of the House was anticipated. A satisfactory compromise was worked out after the 1959 election where

of the 312 seats in the Federal House, 274 were allocated to the North, 73 to the East, 62 to the West, and 3 to Lagos. The election gave 142 seats to the NPC, 89 to the electoral coalition of NCNC and NEPU, 73 to the Action Group and 8 to the Independents.

These elections reduced the political power of Northern Nigeria which was bigger in land area and population than the two southern regions.

Moreover, most Nigerians, including Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-educated Ibo and Abubakar Balewa, a devout Northern Muslim, were more concerned with Nigeria's prospective independence on October 1, 1960 than with the domination of one ethnic group over the others. As a result, "the Ibos of the East sought an alliance


2ibid.

3loc. cit., p. 266.
with the Fulani-Hausa Northerners."¹ In this coalition government, Balewa became Prime Minister, Azikiwe was made Governor-General, and later President of Nigeria. These positions had constitutional rather than political importance.² On the other hand, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Christian Yoruba, became the opposition leader in the Nigerian government.

### TABLE III

Members of Nigerian Cabinet after Independence on October 1, 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alhaji Muhammadu Ribadu</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. R. A. Njoku</td>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>Transportation &amp; Aviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhaji Muhammadu I. Wada</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Works and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. J. M. Johnson</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malam Zanna B. Dipcharima</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Commerce and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Aja Nwachuku</td>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhaji Shebu Shagari</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Pensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhaji Usman Sarki</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Internal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malam Maitama Sule</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Mines and Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE III-Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. T.O.S. Benson</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Onu Akinfosile</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malam Musa Yar Adua</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>Lagos Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Joja Anchu Wachuku</td>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. T.O. Elias</td>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. M.T. Mbu</td>
<td>Ibo</td>
<td>State, in Defence for the Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. E.A. Esin</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>State, in Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malam N. Bamalli</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>State, in Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. M.A.O. Olarewaju</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>State, Prime Minister's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. J.C. Obande</td>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>State, Prime Minister's Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief H. Omo-Osagie</td>
<td>Ibo supporter</td>
<td>State, Finance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Federal Cabinet had an equal number of ministers from NPC and NCNC; each party was represented by eleven members. The breakdown was as follows:
TABLE IV

Members of Nigerian Cabinet after Independence on October 1, 1960 by Tribe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Number of Cabinet Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulani-Hausa</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibos</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibo supporters</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal Analysis of Table III.

Tribal Politics

For two years, 1960-62, the three dominant groups were relatively satisfied. They tried to make certain that no changes were made to the disadvantage of the other especially in matters relating to employment in civil service jobs. But the Ibos were more educated than the Hausas, and education was a necessary prerequisite for employment in the Nigerian civil service. Consequently, the Ibos held a high percentage of these jobs. The Hausas were able to benefit in the early 1960's for "as southerners (Ibos) went on leave, northerners with lower educational qualifications were placed in acting positions and tended to remain substantively."¹ This unusual attempt to increase the number of civil service employees of members of the Hausa tribe had no substantial impact on Ibo

domination of the Nigerian civil service, government and the economy.\textsuperscript{1}

Meanwhile, Awolowo became ineffective as an opposition leader and was more interested in the Western premiership.\textsuperscript{2} Chief Samuel Akintola, a subtribal Yoruba and pro-Northerner, was unwilling to give up his office.\textsuperscript{2} While negotiating with Awolowo, Akintola informed the North of the internal struggle in his region. After this notification, Akintola engineered a disturbance in the Regional House (of western Nigeria).\textsuperscript{3} This incident gave the federal government an excuse to declare a state of emergency in the Western Region. The leading Yoruba politicians were put under house arrest and Awolowo was imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of treason, a move which brought the judiciary into some disrepute. Akintola (Yoruba) emerged as the leader of a new party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), allied with the North and virulently anti-Ibo.\textsuperscript{4}

By allying with a Yoruba Party, the Northerners aimed at forming a new coalition with the West rather than with the East for the up-coming 1964 federal elections. However, the Ibos also had similar interests and fortunately for the Ibos and unfortunately for the Hausas, not all the Yorubas joined the Akintola camp.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}Meisler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 335.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4}Ferguson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1014.
The Yorubas in the Awolowo-run Action Group found it necessary to support the Ibo National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) party and together they formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA).

In their respective drives for maximum federal power, the Ibos and the Hausas eliminated Awolowo. Furthermore, the Hausas feverishly campaigned in the 1964 federal elections as they were determined to win the elections at whatever cost and means. The ambition of the Fulani-Hausas made the Ibos suspicious of their opponents' campaign tactics. Thus, rather than lose, the Ibos boycotted the 1964 federal elections and rejected the formation of a new coalition which would give the North hegemony.1 In the meantime, the Northerners were, naturally, willing to allow their uncontested victory to remain, and the Ibos did not try to discount the elections because of their weak electoral strength.

In the West, Akintola lacked the support of the majority of the Yorubas. In the regional elections (in the Western Region) of October, 1965 he was decisively defeated but the elections were rigged and Akintola hastily declared himself re-elected. As a result, the region exploded into violence.2 Since the North was


2Ferguson, op. cit., p. 1014.
pro-Akintola and was partially responsible for the crisis in the West, Prime Minister Balewa, who had the legitimate power to quell the disturbances, refused to do so. In addition, the North had obtained the largest number of votes in the 1964 federal elections resulting in an absolute majority in the federal legislature. The federation was thus controlled by one of its component regions. This was intolerable to the Ibos, and the dissolution of Nigeria's first republic was only a matter of time.

Using the West's lawlessness and disorder, and the corruption and nepotism among government officials as justification for intervention, the Nigerian Army, which was composed mainly of Ibos, deposed the civilian rulers on January 15, 1966. Prime Minister Balewa, the Northern Premier, Ahmadu Bello, Federal Finance Minister, Okotie-Eboh Western Premier Akintola and many others (especially Northerners, the potential reason for a counter-coup) were killed.

John Aguiyi-Ironsì Heads First Military Government in Nigeria

Major-General John Aguiyi-Ironsì, an Ibo, who was the General Commander of the Nigerian Army, became the head of state. He suspended the Nigerian Constitution and dissolved all the political parties. "As Head of the Federal Military Government (FMG) and Supreme Commander of the armed forces, General Ironsì decreed that the FMG was the supreme authority."

1Skurnik, op. cit., p. 142.
2Ibid.
3Panter-Brick, op. cit., p. 15.
For a period of time, the military coup was largely welcomed by the Nigerian populace. It was less violent than the anarchy forecast by the tribal struggle. But the Ironsi regime had many flaws. The small killings of ethnically selected politicians and others (not a single Ibo lost his life in the First Coup) was delineated by nepotism and tribalism. Ironsi was noted for his nepotism. "During Ironsi's reign, many of the key jobs in government went to Ibos, mostly because of their ability, but partly because of their clannishness, one Ibo making sure another filled the opening in a ministry."1 Ironsi "erred in leaning more on the advice of Ibo colleagues..."2 The Fulani-Hausas felt threatened and therefore demanded the trial of all those who participated in the killing of their leaders. But Ironsi did nothing to clear the cloud of suspicion over his government. His critics were convinced that since many Ibos were involved in the January coup, Ironsi would not ask for a trial because of "ethnic reasons."3

The Fulani-Hausas insisted the First Coup was an Ibo strategy aimed at dominating the country. Since an Ibo, Major-General Ironsi, was head of state, this would mean a shift in power from the North to the East and the possibility of an Hausa coup to counteract Ibo "domination" grew.

1Meisler, op. cit., p. 335.
2Panter-Brick, op. cit., p. 10.
3Sku'nik, op. cit., p. 144.

The Eastern government estimated the death toll with meticulous care: 43 officers, 170 other ranks. Lt.-Col. Yakubu "Jack" Gowon, a Christian reared Angas from the Middle Belt - the southern and non-Moslem part of the Northern Region was taken prisoner. Shortly afterwards Gowon was released after the assassination of Ironsi by the army because the former was pro-Ibo.1

For three days, July 29-31, 1966, there was no head of state in Nigeria because Colonel Olufemi Ogundipe, a Yoruba and the highest ranking army officer, fled to London. He was subsequently appointed Nigerian High Commissioner in London. Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon was "negotiating on behalf of the rebel-Ibos when he was concurrently persuaded to take command of a new national military government."2

Some observers have noted that the appointment of Yakubu Gowon was questionable. This is so because the Military Governor of the East, Odumegwu Ojukwu, an Ibo, was also a Lieutenant-Colonel and was equally entitled to national leadership. In strict military-hierarchical considerations, Lieutenant-Colonels Gowon, Ojukwu, and others of this rank, could have become Nigeria's heads of state. However, "Gowon commanded general respect in the army, and he fulfilled the need for a Head of State who was not easily identified


2Skurnik, op. cit., p. 146.
with one of the three major ethnic groups." In the light of the power struggle between the Fulani-Hausa Northerners and Ibo Easterners, it is very doubtful that the Fulani-Hausa Northerners who had things under their control would have made Ojukwu, or any other non-Northerner, custodian of their highly valued federal power.

Yakubu Gowon Heads Second Military Government in Nigeria

As soon as Gowon was proclaimed the new Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, he was determined to exercise that responsibility to the fullest. After all, he was "a young member of the new elite from a small plateau tribe, who felt a loyalty to Nigeria and wished to see its unity maintained." Attempting to fulfill this objective on August 9, 1966 Gowon ordered that army personnel should be assigned to the barracks within their respective regions of origin in order to lessen tensions. In addition, on September 1, 1966, he revoked the Ironsi unification decrees and announced his opposition to either extreme of unitary structure or secession. Instead he suggested four alternative arrangements, including an either weak or strong federation, a confederation or a new arrangement unique to Nigeria. He released many important Nigerian leaders from prison in an attempt to assuage tensions. Among those released are Chief Awolowo, a Yoruba, and Okpara, an Ibo.

Meanwhile, the military Governor of the East, Ojukwu, did not

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2Panter-Brick, op. cit., p. 86.

3Skurnik, op. cit., p. 147.
recognize Gowon's title and role. Therefore, on September 12, 1966, Gowon called a meeting in Lagos to discuss the reluctance of the Ibos to support his government. For one thing, mutual cooperation amongst Nigerians was difficult because of their different linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The British were responsible for making them live as people of one nation-state. It was a well-known fact, for example, that the Ibos were more advanced economically and in education. These facts met with strong resentment, especially on the part of the Fulani-Hausas, resulting in retaliatory killings of some 10,000 migrant Ibos in the North in late September, 1966. Gowon expressed regret for the killings.¹ These massacres convinced Ojukwu that the Ibos were not safe in other parts of Nigeria and therefore he asked them to return to their native land. Ojukwu also expelled all non-Easterners from his region. In the process, some Hausas were killed at Port Harcourt by Ibos as revenge.

Although there were killings of Hausas by Ibos in Port Harcourt, the scale of the massacres was in no way comparable to that of Ibos by the Hausas in the North. In this respect, Ojukwu's conviction about the insecurity of the Ibos in other parts of Nigeria was justified. But the question still remained whether the Ibos were insecure in the West or Midwest. Nonetheless, he refused to accept the idea that the bloody Ibo January coup led to the recent bloodshed. Ojukwu refused to heed any sort of cooperation from the

¹Ferguson, op. cit., p. 1017; Jorre, op. cit., p. 96.
federal government and at the same time, he made it clear that "the
day north accepts that power can be shared, there will be no
crisis."\(^1\) He then explained that the East could not accept federal
authority: "How can we when our people cannot travel to three-
quarters of the country? Unity is a foreign coat which does not
fit."\(^2\) For a brief period of time, Gowon was somewhat baffled
with Ojukwu's stubbornness and lack of cooperation. When he could
not take it any longer, he warned that Ojukwu's attitude towards the
federal government was not acceptable and would be dealt with
severely. At this point, officials of the United States Embassy
and the British High Commission became concerned. They, therefore,
pressured Gowon and Ojukwu to seek better methods and ways to
resolve their differences. Gowon then called for an out-of-state
meeting at Aburi, Ghana.

On January 4 and 5, 1967 all the military governors, including
Ojukwu, met at Aburi. Here, Gowon, as Nigerian Head of State
strongly emphasized the necessity of a strong central government.
On the other hand, Ojukwu refused to accept any form of federal
system that was short of autonomous regional governments.\(^3\) Ojukwu
had been considering secession and wanted to achieve it under the

\(^1\) John Baynes, "Nigeria," *Newsweek*, 69 (March 27, 1967), 68.


\(^3\) In one respect, Ojukwu's loose federation might have elimina-
ted the power-struggle between the Ibos and the Fulani-Hausas.
However, such an arrangement ignored the interests of the numerous
minority groups within the original four regions. Indeed, such was
the case under the civilian government.
cloak of loose federation. This was what he had in mind when he pondered: "secession would be an easy step, if he decided upon it. It might, in any case, be unnecessary if he already possessed executive sovereignty at the regional level to protect his regional interests."\(^1\)

Gowon could not agree with Ojukwu's argument, nor could he conceive that stronger regionalism would eventually lead to a stronger federal government. Gowon's civilian advisers and foreign diplomats shared the Nigerian Head of State's misgivings.\(^2\) They all agreed that Nigeria should remain one state for several reasons. For example, only the south is accessible to the sea. Foreign countries, particularly Britain and the United States, preferred to deal with Nigeria as one entity.\(^3\) In their view one Nigeria was economically more advantageous than small autonomous states like Biafra. In one Nigeria, Britain and the United States perceived fewer business hazards, i.e., the payment of multiple and more expensive oil royalties could reduce profits.\(^4\)

Rather than support a strong central government, Ojukwu decided at Aburi to secede thereby creating a state separate from Nigeria.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Meisler, *op. cit.*, p. 336.
\(^2\) *ibid.*
\(^3\) *ibid.*
\(^4\) *ibid.*
\(^5\) See pages 19, 20 for indications of Ojukwu's tentative plans for secession.
Hence, in addition to the $84,000 which Gowon pledged for the rehabilitation of Ibo refugees who had fled from the North to the East, Ojukwu declared on March 31, 1967 that all revenue collected in the East for the federal government should be paid to the East's treasury.\(^1\) On April 17, 1967, Gowon imposed a counter-measure against the East. He ordered the Central Bank of Nigeria to block transfer of foreign currencies to the East.\(^2\) On April 20, 21, and 22, 1967, Gowon held a meeting of the Supreme Military Council in Lagos to discuss more counter-measures against the East. On the 4th and 5th of May, there was a meeting of the National Reconciliation Committee which immediately dispatched a peace mission to Enugu, capital of the East. On May 26 and 27, there was a meeting of the Eastern Region's Consultative Assembly and Lieutenant-Colonel Ojukwu was given the power to take the Eastern Region out of Nigeria. On May 27, Gowon declared a state of emergency, assumed full powers, and divided Nigeria into twelve states. The immediate administrative arrangements were planned and military governors were appointed. When this decree went into effect, the Eastern Region of Nigeria ceased to exist.

The notion of more states in Nigeria did not originate from Gowon:

\(^1\)"Solving the Refugee Problem," Africa Report, 12 (February 1967), 35.

\(^2\)Panter-Brick, op. cit., p. ix.
Long before the British handed over power, indeed for nearly twenty years, the communities which did not form the major tribal groupings in the regions (but which add up to nearly half of the total population of Nigeria, despite being popularly known as 'minorities') were agitating for their own internal administrations. They wanted to free themselves from domination by the bigger tribal groupings in the regions in which they happened to live. In September, 1966, Dr. Azikiwe wished to produce a pamphlet in favor of the creation of states and was dissuaded from doing so by the secessionist minded Ojukwu.1

Similarly, "the interests of the Middle Belt and the Midwest politicians were overwhelmingly in favor of the creation of more states."2 In short, the 12-state arrangement ensured the practical realization of the long, overdue neglected interests of Nigeria's minority groups.

In spite of the preceding background of the creation of more states in Nigeria, Lt.-Col. Ojukwu refused to recognize this division because in the absence of the other eastern states, the Ibo state was landlocked and was therefore economically dependent on these states. Not surprisingly therefore, on May 30, 1967, Ojukwu declared the former Eastern Region the Independent Republic of Biafra and seceded from Nigeria. Following this, Gowon opened several bargaining initiatives to discuss matters amicably, but "Ojukwu insisted that Biafra's sovereignty was not negotiable. He arrested six hundred persons he suspected of plotting to bring about a compromise."3 He also proceeded to annex all the properties

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1 loc. cit., p. 92.
2 ibid.
3 Kirk-Greene, op. cit., pp. 416-422.
of the Nigerian government that were in the Ibo Region.

In essence, Biafra was synonymous with the right of Ibo people to self-determination. Nigeria, they felt, was an unfortunate accident of colonial history.\(^1\) In pursuit of post-colonial self-determination,

the Biafrans wished to get rid of neo-colonialist interests. They hoped for a future in which they would then govern themselves. The Biafrans were fearful of the Nigerians and in their separate state there would be more security for Ibos. A significant irony of Biafra's self-determination was the fact that it denied the same right to the over five million non-Ibo peoples: Ijaws, Ekois, Ibibios, Efiks and others who constitute about 41% of the population of the former eastern region. These minority groups wished neither to be coerced into secession nor left under the permanent domination of the neighboring and somewhat larger Ibo group.\(^2\)

In other words, the minority tribes of Biafra were in favor of the federal government that could liberate them from evident Ibo oppression.\(^3\)

Gowon took immediate steps to discourage the secession. He denounced the secession and called it an act of rebellion which was to be crushed. He ordered a mobilization of federal forces and sent two army battalions to the East's Northern border. He also ordered a naval blockade of the Eastern coast to choke the East's economy. He also warned foreign ships that they would dock at

\(^1\)As had been pointed out, Britain wedged together culturally different peoples to create the political entity of Nigeria. However, the Ibos or Biafrans were the strongest advocates of one Nigeria.

\(^2\)Timothy Adebanjo, "Beyond the Conflict," \textit{Africa Report}, 13 (February 1968), 12.

\(^3\)ibid.
Eastern ports at their own risk. With Gowon's economic blockade, Ojukwu anticipated war and he seemed prepared. Gowon was not interested in a war with the Ibos, especially since the latter's army was 5,000 men compared to the federal army of 7,000. But because he was bent on keeping Nigeria united, he declared war on Biafra on July 6, 1967. Following Gowon's radio announcement to the Nigerian people on July 5, 1967, the Nigerian civil war started in earnest. In the beginning, it looked as though the war would be an easy and short-term action. The war started at the border separating the Eastern and Northern Regions, near the university town of Nsukka. However, in many parts of Nigeria, it was difficult to tell the country was at war. In Lagos, for instance, life went on as usual. A few military roadblocks were erected and some military radio broadcasts interrupted normal programming. In some of the Embassies, "an air of nervous bustle existed" but, this was not the case in government offices.\(^1\) The Nigerian press, however, did mount a campaign to explain the necessity of Gowon's decision to go to war with Ojukwu and Biafra.

Success came to the federal troops rapidly and the Nigerian people were encouraged to stand firm behind Gowon. On July 12, 1967 the town of Ogoja was captured and three days later, Nsukka followed. Shortly after these successes, the war took a new turn when the Biafrans held the Nigerian army at Nsukka. Suddenly, the Biafrans were advancing on a number of fronts and on August 9, 1967,

\(^{1}\)De St. Jorre, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 125.
the Midwestern state was captured. After the capture of the Midwest
region the Biafran army went as far as Ore, less than 200 miles
from the capital city of Lagos. At the same time, Biafran B-26
bombers hit three heavily populated suburbs of the Federal capital.\(^1\)
In other action, Biafran planes hit the Nigerian Air Force Base at
the Northern capital of Kaduna.\(^2\) Given this "surprise" Ibo
strength, Ojukwu stated that it was Biafra's aim to defeat the
Nigerian Army and annex the remainder of the country.\(^3\)

Since Nigeria did not manufacture military hardware, the
Midwestern episode precipitated a desperate search for arms by the
federal government. And equating United States diplomatic support
with military assistance, Nigeria unsuccessfully sought arms from
America. Nigeria was then compelled to obtain arms from other
countries and General Gowon found the Soviet Union willing to help.
With British military aid and Soviet assistance, the war turned
against the Biafrans. The advancing Biafran army was eventually
halted at the Battle of Ore, situated between the Midwestern and
Western Regions, and Ojukwu's army was defeated with heavy casual-
ties. The fleeing Biafran army was pursued back into the heart of
the Midwest region in September 1967. After the fall of Onitsha,
Calabar and Bonny, "the war settled into a slow-moving, almost

\(^1\)I was an eye witness to the Lagos bombing. Biafra apparently
obtained American B-26 bombers from European sources.

\(^2\)Africa Report, 12 (October 1967), 53.

lackadaisical struggle, with fewer battles."

On April 13, 1968, Tanzania became the first country to recognize Biafra and this was when federal troops were already close to capturing Port Harcourt. Port Harcourt fell in May 1968 and proved to be a decisive setback for Biafra. This Biafran city was the center of oil refining and had become the main source of revenue for the Biafran army. Despite this setback, France, who had been Biafra's chief arms supplier, formally announced its support for the Biafran people on grounds of self-determination. But in The Nigerian Civil War, John de St. Jorre explained that President Charles de Gaulle favored Biafra to assert "France's own independence from the Anglo-Saxons and the Russians," all of whom supported Nigeria. The fact that France had a share in the Nigerian petroleum industry most of which was then located in Biafra could have also prompted France's pro-Biafran decision. At any rate, France's announcement had no significant impact on the course of the war as Federal troops were then capturing more Biafran towns with relative ease.

The complete collapse and surrender of the Biafran army came after the fall of Owerri. The actual surrender was announced by a Major-General Effiong in January, 1970. Ojukwu had fled and gone into exile in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The war had lasted two and


2De St. Jorre, op. cit., p. 213.
one-half years. During this period, a series of peace talks had been held in Kampala, Niamey, Addis Ababa and Algiers. But the efforts of the African leaders promoting these talks were unsuccessful. Moreover, consistent support of the Organization of African Unity for a peace settlement in the context of one Nigeria gave encouragement to the federal cause. Such official African support in behalf of one Nigeria produced a negative attitude toward Biafra among the African peoples. Only Tanzania, the Ivory Coast, Gabon and Zambia recognized Biafra before its collapse.
CHAPTER II

UNITED STATES PRE-CIVIL WAR RELATIONS WITH NIGERIA

Even before Nigerian independence, "there is no doubt that its world focus was the Anglo-American camp or what Nigerians refer to as the Western bloc."¹ Most notably, after the end of World War II, and especially in the last 5 years before Nigerian independence, American interest and involvement greatly expanded. There were not only economic relations but also other extensive programs such as teaching and research undertakings, technical and agricultural assistance projects, professional programs and exchange of persons, especially students.² In other words, United States - Nigerian relations have taken several forms: economic assistance, trade between the two countries, establishment of diplomatic relations via embassies and consulates, encouragement of private investment and other programs.

United States Representatives Visit Nigeria

Prior to Nigerian independence, the United States planned how it could effectively assist the future nation. In this context, various economic missions visited Nigeria. In June 1959, an


American trade mission toured the "entire length and breadth of Nigeria...and were received very warmly wherever they went."¹ The purpose of this particular mission was to exchange information. Nigerians were informed about the United States and opportunities for trade and development, and the mission learned about the Nigerian economy. As the members of the mission reported to Congress, they were hopeful that there would be more American trade with and investment in Nigeria. It was clear to them that Nigeria welcomed the mission and what it implied. According to the report, however, there were no immediate commitments. But the observation was made that "the leaders of the present Government in Nigeria are firmly anti-Communist and pro-Western."² Nevertheless, the delegation's report cautioned against excessive optimism on the future of Nigeria because of problems characteristic of newly-independent countries, especially that of personnel. It was noted that there were not enough people to take positions of leadership. Furthermore, there were other great problems which, according to the delegation, the Nigerians were expected to resolve by themselves. The main conclusion of the report was summed up by John K. Emerson, former United States Consul-General to Nigeria:

As I look at Nigeria from the vantage point, it seems to me there is a favorable economic future ahead and this

¹U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Briefing on Africa hearings before the subcommittee on Africa, 86th Congress, 2nd Session, January 20, 1960, p. 34. Hereafter referred to as Briefing on Africa.

²Ibid.
country with its size and with its population and the energy of its people can, I believe, play an important role in Africa, can exert a very good influence on its neighbors and Africa as a whole.1

Another important study recommendation was made by Professor David Apter, an American specialist on Africa. After a study tour of Nigeria in 1959, he appeared before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and said "Nigeria is the wealthiest country and has the greatest population of sub-saharan Africa..."2 He made a leadership comparison between Nigeria and Guinea. According to him, Abdoulaye Diallo, then Premier of Guinea, went to extremes, especially on the issue of political association with independent countries. Awolowo, on the other hand, stood for much more moderation. Apter concluded by saying "...this is where our policy in the immediate future is going to take a critical turn: Nigeria holds the ball in many ways in Western Africa for English-speaking West Africa."3

The United States Expressed Optimism About Independent Nigeria

United States' perceptions of and relationship with Nigeria became increasingly clear after the latter country obtained its independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. Even though there were the problems characteristic of a new nation-state, many American observers expressed optimism about independent Nigeria.

1 ibid.
2 loc. cit., p. 95.
3 loc. cit., p. 96.
They regarded Nigeria's population of 55 million as one significant indicator of its potential importance. As a result, the United States adapted its relationship with Nigeria. That is, having previously paid only minimal attention to African problems, the United States almost overnight created an elaborate network of relationships with Africa, especially Nigeria. As African independence began to unfold, not only the American and African governments but also the people as well regarded each other with good will and undue optimism as to the future.¹

One problem for the future of Nigeria was that of unity among its different peoples. David Apter was convinced that the new Nigerian government had made numerous moves towards unity.² He noted there were potential conflicts among the Nigerians and that some of these conflicts could lead to greater unity, while some only achieve larger disunities. But we must keep out of these conflicts for only Nigerians can resolve them. Similarly, only they can find the right form to contain their drive towards unity: federation, confederation, alliance. It is the business of the United States to back unity in Nigeria but never to dictate whose unity or what kind.³

The United States Offered Nigeria Economic and Related Assistance

After the initial United States missions to Nigeria and consequent understanding with officials there, the United States offered Nigeria aid on the basis of these criteria: stability, prospects

¹Emerson, op. cit., p. 5.
²Briefing on Africa, p. 38.
³loc. cit., p. 136.
for growth, ability to help itself by making effective use of foreign aid and its own resources and its readiness to play a constructive role in West African affairs.¹ The United States also gave aid to Nigeria because the latter was

the most populous African state, its moderation, its apparent ability to manage a democratic system of government, its economic planning which accepted private enterprise and its neutralism benevolent to the West, all were congenial to the United States.²

It was on the basis of these factors that President Johnson in his foreign aid message to Congress on January 14, 1965 described Nigeria as the only African state in the select company of 7 unidentified countries which, according to Rupert Emerson, received 64 percent of American development assistance.³ The President added that the aid was given because Nigeria had demonstrated effective programs of self-help and an ability to make good use of foreign assistance.

But some American observers thought that the above evaluation of United States aid to Nigeria was misleading. For example, Arnold Rivkin noted that if all American sources of aid were taken into account, despite being one of the favored states Nigeria had received less assistance from the United States than many third world countries.⁴

¹Emerson, op. cit., p. 38.
²loc. cit., p. 39.
³ibid.
⁴loc. cit., p. 39f.
United States aid to Nigeria took several forms. In the 1962-1968 Nigerian Development program which called for a total expenditure of $1.9 billion, the United States pledged $225 million in the form of aid.\(^1\) In 1962-1964 United States expenditures in the program were more than $90 million.\(^2\)

As regards education and training, American concern and involvement in Nigeria's development was considerable. The first United States aid assistance to Nigeria in this area started in 1964. This was used for training for the development of agricultural education, industrial improvement and Government administration. At the beginning, the United States released the sum of $50,829,000 in the form of loans and grants for the achievement of those programs.\(^3\) But on May 31, 1963, education alone accounted for $9,100,000 and at the end of 1964 two-thirds of the total allotment of $17 million went to education,\(^4\) a considerable increase in a short period due to the increase in specialist services. The specialist service and support was made up of United States personnel: advisers, experts and technicians who were sent on contracts to supervise the use of equipment, to organize surveys, to


\(^2\)Ibid.


\(^4\)Ibid.
seminars, scholarships and construction projects.\textsuperscript{1}

Another area of aid assistance was the establishment of teachers' training institutions, which had been a joint undertaking in most cases. That is, some of these institutions were either staffed with American teachers or funded by the joint effort of Nigerian federal, regional and American universities. A considerable number of universities in the United States were concerned with different educational projects. For example, in 1955 Ohio University assisted in the development of Olunloyo College of Education and later that year the first batch of experts arrived in Olunloyo for the purpose of upgrading Nigerian instructors.\textsuperscript{2} The establishment of Kano Teacher Training College was the joint effort of Northern Region and the University of Wisconsin and Ford Foundation. The focus here was on the training of Grade II teachers for the primary school in the North. The combined cooperation of the United States Agency for International Development, the Western Regional Government of Nigeria and Western Michigan University led to the opening of the Technical College of Ibadan in 1960. This institution was designed to provide advanced education in electrical, mechanical, civil engineering and commercial courses. The United States Agency for International Development contributed the sum of $395,000 to operate this technical institute.\textsuperscript{3} To encourage agricultural

\textsuperscript{1}ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}loc. cit., p. 114.
development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also provided funds and experts to advance agricultural education in Nigeria.\(^1\)

Another form of assistance to Nigeria from USAID involved staffing and equipping Nigerian universities. The universities which benefited from this arrangement were the Universities of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello, Nsukka and Ife. Among these four universities, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka gained the strongest American influence; the planning, development and the operational pattern of the University received the steady support of various United States agencies.\(^2\) Today, Nsukka stands as remarkably different from the other Nigerian universities which are British-oriented. At the end of 1964, it was estimated that United States aid for personnel and university development amounted to $2,263,734.\(^3\)

In addition, Nigeria benefited from the services of the Peace Corps, a program which originated with President John F. Kennedy. Established in 1960, the main objectives of the Peace Corps were:

(1) To provide middle level man-power to assist those developing countries which request it.

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\(^1\)loc. cit., p. 115.

\(^2\)The fact that former President Azikiwe is American educated and foremost advocate of this institution may account for the United States position. J.E. Adetoro points out in *The Handbook of Education in Nigeria*, p. 116, that it was inspired by the philosophy of the American Land College.

\(^3\)Adetoro, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
(2) To enable the nationals of the host country through the acquaintance with Peace Corps volunteers, to gain a better understanding of the United States through the returning volunteers, to gain a better understanding of the actions in which the Peace Corps serves.¹

TABLE V

Distribution of Peace Corps Volunteers in Nigeria

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<tr>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Agricultural and Rural Development Schemes</th>
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<tr>
<td>North</td>
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<td>East</td>
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<td>West</td>
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<td>Lagos</td>
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Peace Corps volunteers were assigned to Nigerian teacher-training colleges, technical schools and universities. The annual cost which was supplemented by the host country of each volunteer was approximately $2,500.²

¹ibid.
²ibid.
Within 2 years of the beginning of the Peace Corps program, its achievements were apparent. The young American volunteers received praise from many Nigerians. Their major role was in the area of education, since about 80 per cent of the volunteers were serving as teachers, especially in secondary schools, where Nigeria was experiencing an acute shortage. In addition to teaching, Peace Corps volunteers served in community development and health care service, and medical teams have included some doctors, dentists, nurses and laboratory technicians. But the most important aspect of the Peace Corps program was that Nigerians were brought in contact with Americans and their culture. Of course, the Peace Corps volunteers also gained from their contact with the Nigerians and many studied the indigenous customs and languages.

Despite the achievements and contributions of the Peace Corps volunteers, they were not well regarded by some Nigerians. Specifically, the Peace Corps' reputation was harmed when the postcard of a volunteer "critical of some of Nigeria's ways was intercepted on the way home to the United States and publicized in the country..."¹ Nigerian dissatisfaction with the Peace Corps could have been stimulated by African critics of the program, especially the late President Nkrumah of Ghana. In Nkrumah's view, "the Peace Corps was only one phase of a huge ideological plan for invading the so-called third world the United States had been developing since 1961."² He also stated that this volunteer

¹Emerson, op. cit., p. 43.
²loc. cit., p. 44.
program was certainly linked to the Central Intelligence Agency's chief, Allen Dulles. President Nkrumah felt that since the beginning of the Peace Corps program in 1961,

members of the Peace Corps have been exposed and expelled from many African, Middle-Eastern and Asian countries for acts of subversion...Indonesia, Tanzania, the Philippines and even pro-West countries like Turkey and Iran have complained of its activities.\(^1\)

The United States and Nigeria Established Diplomatic Relations

For many years African matters that required the attention of the United States were handled primarily by officials who worked on European affairs in the State Department. Until the late 1950's, there were few independent African countries, and therefore African problems were handled generally on a superficial level. With the spread of independence and self-government, a separate Bureau of African Affairs was established in the State Department in 1958. After the creation of the Bureau of African Affairs, the quantity and "quality of political and economic reporting from African countries had improved, but the European Affairs Bureau was still influencing decisions affecting United States relations with Nigeria."\(^2\)

In 1960, an American Embassy was opened in Lagos and a Nigerian Embassy was opened in Washington, D.C.

The United States Embassy consisted of "twenty foreign service


people, forty-nine International Cooperative Administration officers, seven United States Information Agency officers, one Army, Naval and Air each and one foreign Agricultural service. In addition, consulates were maintained in Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu, the three regional Nigerian capitals. Among the principal functions of the embassy and consulates was the dissemination of information about the United States through the United States Information Agency. The United States Information Agency continues to tell the "American story" through radio, libraries, films, and the press. Since Nigeria was an English-speaking country, it was not very difficult to reach the educated audience through English. To supplement coverage of West Africa, a short wave radio station had been built at Greenville, North Carolina. This station reached African countries in English and French.

The work of the United States Information Agency has been impressive and Africans, especially Nigerians, have come to understand more about the United States. For instance, in January 1960, the press division of the United States Information Agency stepped up its African output by inaugurating a daily radio-teletyped report especially prepared for about 15 monitoring posts in Africa, including Nigeria. This radio-teletyped report supplements such commercial agencies as the Associated Press and United Press International by presenting daily accounts of important policy

1loc. cit., p. 277.
2loc. cit., p. 286.
3loc. cit., p. 287.
statements in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{1} It also tried to counter the effect of some of the news releases of the British Agency, Reuters, which sometimes disseminated stories regarding violent and racial incidents characteristic of the United States in the 1960's.

When the American Embassy and consulates started to operate in Nigeria, the Nigerian government opened its embassy in Washington, D.C. and a consulate in New York City. Their main function has been to provide as much information as possible about Nigeria. They also give useful assistance to United States businessmen interested in the Nigerian market. They try to explain and assure United States investors of the opportunities available in Nigeria. The Embassy has also played an important role in helping Nigerian students in the United States whenever necessary.

Trade Between Nigeria and America

United States trade with Nigeria expanded dramatically in the 1960's. For example, United States exports to Nigeria expanded from $33 million in 1961 to $116 million in 1966.\textsuperscript{2} In 1963 the total Nigerian imports from the rest of the world was approximately $581 million and 9 per cent of this was from the United States.\textsuperscript{3} Major commodities which Nigeria imported from the United States were:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{3}ibid.
\end{itemize}
manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment, wheat and flour.\(^1\) On the other hand, Nigeria's total export for the year 1963 was $531 million and 9 per cent of this amount was exported to the United States.\(^2\) Cocoa, crude petroleum and crude rubber predominate among Nigerian products shipped to the United States. These commodities accounted for 81 per cent of total Nigerian exports to the United States before the outbreak of the civil war.\(^3\) Other important Nigerian exports to the United States included logs and lumber, tin and tin alloys, columbite ores and concentrates, palm kernels, hides and skins, palm oil and plywood.

The United States also encouraged private investment aimed at developing Nigeria. But American policy required that investors be protected by the host country with some sort of formal guarantee or contractual agreement. The United States, therefore, concluded an Investment Guarantee Agreement with Nigeria in 1962. Under this agreement, United States investments and related interests were protected. The Agreement was also meant to assist in the development of the Nigerian economy. The investment guarantee required Nigeria to recognize the transfer to the United States Government of any right, title or interest in assets expriopriated, currency, or credits with respect to which the guarantee payment was made... if the United States honors it.\(^4\)

\(^1\)ibid.
\(^2\)ibid.
\(^3\)ibid.
\(^4\)Mummery, op. cit., p. 59.
The United States was entitled to "any right, claim and course of action existing in connection" with the agreement.\(^1\) It was made clear that if any such claims arise, both governments should resolve them through direct negotiations. But if negotiations failed, the provision required a settlement through "a three-man arbitral tribunal comprising one arbitrator appointed by each government and a third to be agreed upon by the two governments."\(^2\)

There were other problems: for example, expropriation was not fully defined in the investment guarantee agreement. But when expropriation is used in the American legislation it includes any abrogation, repudiation, or impairment by a foreign government of its own contract with an investor, where such abrogation, repudiation, or impairment is not caused by the investor's own fault or misconduct, and materially adversely affects the continued operation of the project.\(^3\)

Another term which was not included in the agreement but was later added in 1963, was the "creeping" expropriation. This measure gave the right of coverage to "such additional risks as the President may determine."\(^4\) In addition, "the legislation also permitted guarantees to be issued against convertibility and loss due to war, revolution, or insurrection."\(^5\) In other words "convertibility guarantees as

\(^{1}\text{ibid.}\)
\(^{2}\text{ibid.}\)
\(^{3}\text{ibid.}\)
\(^{4}\text{loc. cit., pp. 59-60.}\)
\(^{5}\text{loc. cit., p. 60.}\)
well as guarantees against expropriation were available under the
pre-investment agreement between the United States and Nigeria.\(^1\)
The agreement also contained a clause known as the system-shifting
of claims,

under which the investor is entitled to have any dispute
with the foreign government arbitrated by special
machinery, rather than be required to resort to local
remedies. Under the guarantee scheme this privilege
was obtained not for the investor himself but for his
government, as part of the consideration for that
government undertaking to aid the flow of capital by
insuring this investment.\(^2\)

In reality and

unlike many of these concession agreements, however,
the investment guarantee agreement with Nigeria
contained no specific indication of the law to be
applied in proceedings before the arbitral tribunal.
The degree to which attention will be directed to
the several thrusts of Nigerian Law, United States
Law, and international law, including the general
principles of law recognized by civilized nations
will be something which will depend very much on
the particular circumstances and contextual
arrangement surrounding the transaction under
review.\(^3\)

Critics have also argued that the Guarantee Agreement is more
beneficial to United States' investors than to Nigeria. Of such
agreements it has been said:

much of the legal work has reflected the interest of
the capital exporting nations alone. With their
interests thus neglected, developing nations have
in many cases been loath to accept the proposals made,
considering that to do so would be to permit unwanted

\(^1\)ibid.

\(^2\)loc. cit., p. 61.

\(^3\)ibid.
inroads into their sovereignty and their sense of justice.\textsuperscript{1}

Nigeria understood this and its disadvantageous position in the Investment Guarantee Agreement but only signed it because the United States offered $80 million for the 1962-1968 Nigerian Development plan.\textsuperscript{2}

American Private Investments in Nigeria

The Nigerian Government's investment policy actively encouraged investment in all areas that could contribute to industrialization and growth of the economy. For instance, the top officials of federal and regional Nigerian governments have, on many occasions, assured prospective investors that

they are welcome in Nigeria; that profits, dividends and capital may be freely repatriated; that there is no intention of nationalizing industry beyond public utilities already under government supervision; and that where appropriate, the governments are prepared to provide fiscal incentives to new industry as well as assistance in securing suitable land and recruiting adequate labor.\textsuperscript{3}

In response, the United States Department of Commerce and the Agency for International Development, working in cooperation to increase development of private industry overseas, actively encouraged United States firms to consider new investments in Nigeria, especially in those industries that would increase economic growth.

\textsuperscript{1}loc. cit., p. xxvi.

\textsuperscript{2}loc. cit., p. 62.

\textsuperscript{3}Establishing a Business in Nigeria, p. 1.
These private firms were told of the investment guarantee agreement and related measures which were aimed at protecting foreign business in Nigeria. As a result of these encouragements, American investors became increasingly active in Nigeria and "by 1962, the United States took the lead as the principal source of new investment by providing over half of the net private capital inflow."¹ That is, out of the total "capital inflow of $29 million in 1962, the United States alone accounted for over half" of this amount.² This figure of $29 million represented a decrease from the 1961 record when the net capital inflow was $64 million. This was due to slack local business activities and to the fact that "the large expatriate trading companies "rolled-over" their investments from the commercial sector to the industrial sector."³ The areas of United States investment concentration were in petroleum and textiles, flour, asbestos, cement, plywood, plastics, pharmaceuticals, recombined milk, radios, leather, floor wax, sewing machines, mining and smelting.

The African-American Institute: Other Private United States Assistance to Nigeria

The African-American Institute, which was founded in 1955, also played a prominent role in the development of Nigeria. It is a

¹ loc. cit., p. 2.
² loc. cit., pp. 2-3.
³ loc. cit., p. 2.
private non-political organization whose purpose was to promote cultural and educational activities for a better understanding between the peoples of the United States and African countries.

Nigeria has benefited a great deal from the programs, particularly scholarships, of the Institute. For example, between 1960 and 1965 the Institute handled a total of 1,205 scholarships of which Nigeria alone accounted for 352 or just above 25 per cent.1 This success of this organization has been achieved through the joint effort of host governments, American universities and colleges, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Carnegie Corporation. The main contribution of some of these contributors was to bear the administrative expense that the universities incur in their support of students affiliated with this organization. The African-American Institute, however, was responsible for screening, selection, orientation, and provision for emergency assistance to African students in the United States. Many Nigerian educators and others were beneficiaries of the educational programs of the African-American Institute.

1Adetoro, op. cit., p. 118.
CHAPTER III

AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE BIAFRAN-NIGERIAN WAR

This chapter discusses the reasons underlining American response to the Nigerian Civil War. A substantial number of Americans were sympathetic to the plight of the Biafrans. An American informant, Harriet Simon, attributed this to America's traditional support of the underdog.

Afro-Americans whose views were known about the war saw the situation in racial terms. They, therefore, questioned the motives of American or other whites who were sympathetic to Biafra; they regarded such sympathy as contributing to the disintegration of Nigeria.

American investors supported Nigeria because the preservation of the federation contributed to the continuation of their investments. They, therefore, exerted pressure on United States officials to pursue a policy which they considered conducive to their business interests.

The American News Media

Even though the Nigerian Civil War started in 1967, it was not until 1968 that the news media carried the report of a United States medical representative who had predicted that 1.5 million Biafrans
would die of starvation before the end of August, 1968.\(^1\) Another report, apparently published with little questioning or qualification, estimated that 1 to 6 million Biafrans would die of kwashiorkor, a nutritional disease affecting infants and children.

Observers wondered about such scanty coverage of the war. Connor Cruise O'Brien, writing in the *New York Review of Books* on December 21, 1967, said that one answer was the timing of the war. Specifically, "Vietnam was in every mind, and an African conflict waged between Africans for indigenous reasons seemed a distant, buzzing irrelevance."\(^2\)

Among the things that hindered the early reporting of the war was the inability of Biafra to publicize its existence as a nation-state. Biafra soon countered this problem when it employed the New York public relations firm of Ruder and Finn on February 14, 1967 for $5,500 a month.\(^3\) The task of Ruder and Finn was to publicize Biafra emphasizing two main points: 1) that the 1966 killings in the Northern Region had been a form of genocide against the Ibos, and 2) that Biafra never had shared a similar culture or history with the rest of Nigeria.\(^4\) However, Biafra dismissed Ruder and Finn for lack of money in December 1967.\(^5\)

\(^1\)Karen Rothmyer, "What Really Happened in Biafra?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, 8-9 (Fall 1970), 43-44.

\(^2\)ibid.

\(^3\)ibid.

\(^4\)ibid.

\(^5\)ibid.
In January 1968, Biafra hired Markpress, Ltd., a Geneva, Switzerland, public relations firm run by an American, William H. Bernhardt. The function of Markpress was to supply 400 organizations, including 100 newspapers, with news of incidents taking place inside Biafra. Bernhardt also told the Philadelphia Inquirer that it was part of his agency's job to decide whether or not to alter stories transmitted on telex in order to ensure Biafra's interests.

The work of the above public relations firms soon filtered into The New York Times, the New Republic, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, and radio and television broadcasts. News reporters soon highlighted the war in their news reports, emphasizing the suffering of the Biafrans. For example, the New Republic reported in its issue of February 10, 1968 that Nigeria was spending $3 million a day to kill a daily average of 1,000 Biafrans, most of whom were Ibo tribesmen. Newsweek's version of the war was that it was a conflict second to the Vietnam war. It estimated that 100,000 Biafrans, many of them women and children, had died. The U.S. News and World Report of July 22, 1968 reported that a million people and possibly as many as 3 million might have lost their lives from mass warfare and starvation. It quoted the International Red Cross officials' daily death toll as in the thousands, and added that 3 million dead was the

1loc. cit., p. 45.

final count by Catholic missionary sources. On July 23, 1968, The New York Times correspondent, George Thompson, referred to British Lord Hunt's figure of Biafran daily deaths as 200 to 300. Another issue of The New York Times, appearing on August 20, 1968, stated that over 2,000 Ibo villagers were massacred in one day. The confirmation of this figure was said to have been given by fleeing refugees. On August 24, 1968 this newspaper reported a daily death toll of starvation among Biafrans as 5,000 to 6,000. These reports characterized numerous issues of The New York Times and other periodicals.

While the American news media was at first pre-occupied with the wars in Indochina and the Middle East, it soon became interested in the one in Nigeria. The task of the news media was facilitated by the work of public relations firms such as Ruder and Finn, and Markpress. Although the media informed the American public of the Biafran-Nigeria conflict, its portrayal of the war was "balanced" in favor of Biafra.

These press reports, however, had a substantial impact on the American public. Americans believed millions of Biafrans were starving and many offered their help to relief agencies. From detailed discussions with numerous Americans, the author learned

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3See, for example, Newsweek, 71 (June 3, 1968), 46c and U.S. News and World Report, 65, No. 1-14 (July 22, 1968), 38.
their reactions to the war were emotional and based on the impressions gained from the media.

American Responses to Starvation in Biafra

Response to trouble in Biafra was seen in Maryland, where students initiated a campaign to send money to Biafra. Specifically, in Pikesville, Maryland, a group of high school students raised $290 by selling baked products. On many college campuses, such as Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts (where the author did her undergraduate studies), the students gave up several meals in order to help feed the starving Biafrans. Angered by the indifference of the world leaders, especially those in the United States, Phillip Whitten, a graduate student at Harvard University, was among some American volunteers offering to help distribute donated food and other relief supplies to the afflicted Biafrans.

One group of Americans, largely former Peace Corps volunteers in Nigeria and Biafra, formed the American Committee to Keep Biafra Alive. The Committee sought to apprise the American people of the starvation in Biafra through advertisements and public demonstrations. One such advertisement read:

Today. 12:30 this afternoon. Let's not eat lunch. Go to the United Nations and let the world know that no

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1"Left and Right, Young and Old," Newsweek, 73 (March 24, 1969), 56. Hereafter referred to as Newsweek, 73 (March 24, 1969).


3Hereafter referred to as Committee.
American will ever say: "But we didn't know"
Today. 5:30 this evening. Let's not go to dinner. Stand before the United Nations. Let the world know that you protest the fact that your world is once again witnessing the extinction of an entire people.
Today. 8:30 P.M. Let's not go to the movies. Let's move the United Nations. Light a candle for the world to see. A candle that says that you demand a lifeline for Biafra.¹

On August 16, 1968, the Committee staged a demonstration which drew some 2,500 supporters in New York City. In the course of the demonstration, the Committee collected an unspecified amount of money for Biafran relief by selling pins entitled "Keep Biafra Alive."² In yet another move to draw Americans' attention to the starvation in Biafra, the Committee urged President Richard M. Nixon through an advertisement in The New York Times of January 21, 1969 to reexamine this country's policy in the Nigerian Civil War.

Another group in sympathy with the Biafrans was the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief, hereafter referred to as the AJEEBR. Comprised mainly of Jews, often working in cooperation with other individuals and groups, this group used tactics similar to those of the American Committee to keep Biafra Alive. On August 8, 1968, the AJEEBR published the picture of a sick-looking child in The New York Times with the inscription: "...chances are, this child of Biafra is already dead of starvation. Millions more seem doomed to follow."³

²"Demonstration," New Yorker, 44 (August 17, 1968), 22.
The desire to help starving Biafrans and to assess the magnitude of the suffering motivated some Americans to visit Biafra; among them were the artists Herbert Gold, Leslie Fiedler, Diana Davies and Miriam Reik.¹ The four Americans visited the area under the auspices of The Committee for Biafran Writers and Artists. On their arrival, Gold, Fiedler, Davies and Reik were driven to join an audience who were attentively listening to a speech by Odumegwu Ojukwu, Biafra's head of state. According to the four visitors, the speech was long, complicated and somewhat pedantic; he was full of promises and predicted victory over Nigeria.² Ojukwu also mourned the dead while at the same time "invoking elements of black nationalism, Christianity," and demanding individual self-determination for his fellow Biafrans.³ Traveling around to see as much of Biafra as possible was difficult under the constant artillery fire but the American visitors had conclusive impressions; their first-hand observation of distressed starving Biafrans reinforced their sympathy. They were, therefore, determined to help alleviate human suffering and on their return to the United States, wasted no time in sponsoring chartered planes to fly donated food and relief supplies to Biafra. They also sent telegrams to their respective representatives in Congress and to President Nixon urging a change in the United States' Nigerian policy.⁴

²loc. cit., p. 22.
³ibid.
⁴loc. cit., p. 38.
Organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross of which the American Red Cross is part, assist victims of war or national disasters. Joined by the World Council of Churches (U.S.A.) and Joint Church Aid (U.S.A.), the Red Cross extended its renowned humanitarian services to Biafra. It provided food, medicine (most of which had been donated by the above mentioned groups and individuals), and helped rehabilitate war-affected Biafrans. The American Red Cross is reported to have fed one-third of Biafra's population of 9,000,000.¹

To provide relief to war victims is one of the expected services of the American Red Cross. Even though this humanitarian organization fulfilled its obligation, controversy marked its role in the war. This is due to the fact that: "Mr. Hank Wharton, an American who flew in Biafra's relief, was also flying in some quantities of ammunition."² In addition, when a Red Cross plane was shot down by the Nigerian Air Force it continued to explode for 4 days and the federal government knew that it carried something more than food and drugs.³ The involvement of the American Red Cross in these two incidents detracted from what the author regards as its proper role

¹U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Relief Problems in Nigeria: hearings before the subcommittee to investigate problems connected with refugees and escapees, 91st Congress, 1st session, July 15, 1969, p. 81. Hereafter referred to as Relief Problems in Nigeria-Biafra.


³The Red Cross were to blame for these incidents. No other scapegoats were involved.
in helping to save lives.\(^1\) These incidents also led to the federal government's control of foreign relief supplies, a move which slowed down relief distribution. Ultimately, bureaucratic delays contributed to the death of untold numbers of Biafrans whom the American Red Cross had set out to assist.

The World Council of Churches (U.S.A.) and Joint Church Aid (U.S.A.) cooperated with the American Red Cross to supply Biafra with relief materials. But the two groups also had a religious interest in the Nigerian Civil War.\(^2\) They felt it was their duty to help their fellow "persecuted" Biafran Christians against the Muslim Fulani-Hausas. While there was a religious element in the conflict, the war resulted primarily from an ethnic and political struggle for federal power by the Fulani-Hausas and the Ibos. Nigeria's Head of State, Yakubu Gowon, was and still is a Northern Christian, and the "Christian" Biafrans were secular in outlook.\(^3\)

Other American groups were not moved by the media to support Biafra. In *Africa and United States Policy*, Rupert Emerson contends that Afro-Americans were more concerned about racial discrimination and related problems in their immediate environment than with their role in affecting African-American relations.\(^4\) Emerson further points out that indifference and lack of knowledge about Africa also

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\(^1\) *Relief Problems in Nigeria-Biafra*, pp. 39-44.

\(^2\) *ibid.*

\(^3\) Cronje, *op. cit.*., p. 42.

\(^4\) Emerson, *op. cit.*., p. 52.
prevented American blacks from taking more than a minimal interest in African affairs. It was, however, clear that most Afro-Americans who did take a position in the war favored the preservation of one Nigeria. Some black militants were skeptical about America's sudden humanitarian feeling toward blacks in Biafra. According to James Meredith, American espousal of the Biafran cause was simply "racism in disguise of humanitarianism."  

In American society, where racism is a way of life, Afro-Americans must struggle extra hard to survive. They had little or no knowledge about Africa, and few seem interested in acquiring any because they believe themselves to be superior to Africans generally. Although these facts inhibited Afro-Americans from influencing American-African relations, in the course of the Biafran-Nigerian war many expressed their support for one side or the other.

Business Investors Supported Nigeria

In addition to oil which is discussed below, Nigeria produces and exports groundnuts, palm oil, cocoa, rubber, plywood, and timber. With this wealth of minerals and agricultural crops the country's major development was linked with its natural resources. Industrial development has been a major objective of Nigerian policy, and foreign investment was essential. Nigeria was anxious to encourage investors by offering incentives. It therefore, announced that, with the exception of certain public utilities, "overseas capital

\[^1\text{Newsweek, 73 (March 24, 1969), 56.}\]
and skill will be encouraged in every form of industrial enter-
prise.\textsuperscript{1} The most important or favorable areas of enterprise were:
canning of foodstuffs, manufacture of bricks, milling of guinea corn
and wheat flour, and oilseed processing. Moreover, tax legislation
was passed to help meet the costs of investment and contribute to
the nation's development costs.

After passage of this legislation, discoveries of oil increased
at a greater rate and output grew from 70,000 barrels per day in
1963 to 110,000 in 1964, and stood at 460,000 barrels in early 1967.\textsuperscript{2}
At this time, though Britain was still a great force in Nigeria,
American investors were already in the lead, taking advantage of tax
breaks and Nigerian government assurances. In the areas of petro-
leum, Texaco, Standard Oil of California, and Gulf Oil Company were
dominant. On the whole, United States investment, which stood at
$54 million in 1962, had tripled by 1965 to $162 million.\textsuperscript{3} Hence
at the outbreak of the war in 1967, American private investment in
Nigeria alone stood at $200 million. Even during the war in 1969,
American oil companies doubled their investment. In part this
increase was due to the encouragement given by the Nigerian govern-
ment.

But the war nearly brought everything to a standstill. The most
affected of all the United States business investments were the oil

\textsuperscript{1}Mummery, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{2}ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Cronje, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 225.
companies. Nigerian oil output, which had climbed to an average of 594,000 barrels per day during April 1967, was down to 517,000 barrels per day during May of the same year. The situation grew worse when the Swedish mercenary, Robert Scott, flew bombing missions aimed primarily at oil installations. There seemed little that the Nigerians could do to stop these raids. The Biafrans were using Scott to accomplish one major goal: to disrupt the oil business and thereby cut off Nigeria's major means of financing the war. In June 1969, the Gulf Oil center at Ughelli was struck and bombs hit two vertical bulk tanks as well as equipment on the ground.\(^1\) The big Imo River oil-wells, which accounted for a fifth of the country's total output, were seized by the Biafran army in 1969 and temporarily put out of production. The output of the Midwest, in particular that of the greater Ughelli area, which stood at 120,000 barrels per day in April 1969 was halted temporarily. While the British Petroleum Company was badly affected by these raids, the United States Gulf, Mobil and Texaco Companies were also victims of Ojukwu's disruptive military strategy of oil installation bombing.

The oil companies also had to tolerate Ojukwu's imposition of a $20 million payment of oil royalties following Biafra's secession. Since the payment of additional royalties decreases profits, it was no surprise that American oil investors became active supporters of Nigeria. They were also anti-Biafra because they preferred to deal with the federation as a single large market rather than with

\(^{1}\)loc. cit., p. 153.
several smaller entities. In their opinion, the new states would be too small to offer attractive markets to Western capital. Expressed differently, such mini-markets were sometimes too small to warrant the establishment of highly expensive modern plants which could only be run economically at full capacity.¹

The preservation of the Nigerian federation was economically advantageous to American investors. Fearing an erosion of profits and political instability in their business deals with Biafra, American investors favored Nigeria.

¹loc. cit., p. 120.
CHAPTER IV

UNITED STATES POLICY IN THE NIGERIAN WAR

Chapter III described how U.S. public opinion perceived the civil war in Nigeria. When the United States government denied Nigeria's request for export permits to buy ammunition from commercial manufacturers,¹ most Nigerians, this writer included, believed the United States favored Biafra in the Nigerian Civil War. This perception was partially incorrect. The United States supported the unity of Nigeria but refused it military support. This policy was formulated by President Johnson and continued by President Nixon. American officials believed the Nigerian federation provided the largest single market in Africa and thus was economically advantageous to American business interests (Chapters II and III). The fact that America's close ally, namely Britain, supported Nigeria may also have contributed to the decision of the United States to sustain its relations with the federal government.² On the other hand, the pro-Nigerian policy of the United States in the Biafran-Nigerian war was unacceptable to those Congressmen sympathetic with the Biafran struggle and they wanted the government to help reduce the suffering. Put differently, this chapter examines the respective


²Ibid.
roles of Presidents Johnson and Nixon, and other American personalities who were active in the formulation of United States policy during the Nigerian Civil War.

The State Department and United States Policy in the Nigerian Civil War

Officially designated the foreign policy-experts, U.S. State Department officials contributed to the general support received by the federal government of Nigeria in the Biafran-Nigerian conflict. Following Ojukwu's call for a weak, central government but strong regional governments at Aburi, Ghana in January 1967, officials in the United States Embassy in Lagos were moved to help the British save Nigeria from disintegration.¹ And as Joseph Palmer 2d, former United States Ambassador to Nigeria and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs put it in June 1967: "The only solution favored by the State Department was one which maintained the unity of one Nigeria."²

In the course of Palmer's tour of Africa in July 1968, he told Yakubu Gowon that "it was the wish of the American Government that Nigeria's federal republic of twelve states remained a united indivisible country."³ This statement is reported to have infuriated the Biafrans who had seen Palmer's tour of Africa as an attempt to turn the opinions of African leaders against them. Relief workers

¹Cronje, op. cit., p. 227.
²ibid.
³ibid.
expressed similar viewpoints and said that "the airfield in Cameroon was no longer available to them for mercy flights because it had been Palmerized" during a visit paid by the United States Assistant Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{1} The relief workers believed Palmer encouraged the Government of Cameroon not to allow use of its airfields for fear it would anger the Nigerian Government.\textsuperscript{2}

While efforts and statements of State Department officials seemed to support Nigeria in the Biafran-Nigerian conflict, most Nigerians were unconvinced, given American-made planes that Biafra employed on its bombing raids.\textsuperscript{3} Members of the federal military government who were also victims of these raids expressed Nigeria's concern. These official statements and expressions of anger by the Nigerian Government reportedly drove "Ambassador Elbert Mathews and his staff into issuing statements more openly in support of Lagos than Washington's stance of neutrality would have dictated."\textsuperscript{4}

The pro-Nigerian statements of Mathews and his staff did not, however, differ from those of Joseph Palmer, and other United States officials in Washington.\textsuperscript{5} Testifying before the United States Senate subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees on July 15, 1969, Undersecretary of State Elliott Richardson "reaffirmed the prior

\begin{enumerate}
\item ibid.
\item ibid.
\item Chris Idisi, eyewitness.
\item Cronje, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 228.
\item \textit{loc. cit.}, pp. 229, 235.
\end{enumerate}
administration's policy of neutrality on arms-supply and endorsed an early negotiated end to the conflict. Richardson indicated that the United States was concerned about relief for Nigerian war victims and added that arrangements for relief flights were being made with Biafra and Nigeria. He noted that the United States would continue to give support and encouragement to any effort that might lead to constructive talks between Nigeria and Biafra which would end the war. While Richardson sounded a note of neutrality in this testimony, the United States' support of one Nigeria was clear in his concluding remarks:

The Nixon administration does not contemplate either support for or recognition of the secessionist activities. We regard a peaceful and just reconciliation of Nigeria as in the best interests of Africa and all those like the United States who wished her well.

The Change of administration brought a new United States Ambassador to Nigeria. In May 1969 William Trueheart succeeded Elbert Mathews as the American Ambassador in Nigeria. Trueheart's appointment coincided with the announcement of new oil discoveries in Nigeria. In the remote possibility that Trueheart was not aware that United States' investments especially in oil heavily influenced the pro-Nigerian policy of the United States, American business investors made certain that he did. Trueheart's remarks that he

1 loc. cit., p. 235.
2 ibid.
3 ibid.
4 ibid.
5 ibid.
had been "...more thoroughly briefed on the financial stakes of oil companies than on the life-saving activities of the relief agencies" indicated the extent to which American investors attempted to persuade Trueheart of the advantages of the continuation of a pro-Nigerian policy, a policy keeping Nigeria the largest single African market for business enterprise.¹

Other State Department officials were not so pro-Nigerian. These officials criticized both Biafra and Nigeria, especially when there was intransigence or obstruction of relief supplies. One of the outspoken persons in this regard was Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenback. On December 3, 1968, Katzenback delivered a speech at Brown University in which he warned that unless the Nigerian Civil War was ended, "millions would die of starvation."² He criticized both sides "for being willing to subordinate the lives of innocent persons to the political struggle and to frustrate relief efforts to make a political point or to gain tactical advantage."³ He added that "a solution must provide for Nigerian unity which also gave ample guarantees for Ibo safety."⁴ Similarly, on July 2, 1969, Secretary of State William P. Rogers deplored Nigeria's relief blockade and he sought alternative means of dealing with the problem. For example, Rogers met with the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea to

¹ibid.
³ibid.
⁴ibid.
seek his cooperation in re-opening negotiations between the International Committee of the Red Cross and his government over the use of the island of Fernando Po as a base for Biafran relief flights.

Congress and United States Policy in the Nigerian Civil War

A substantial number of United States Congressmen saw the Biafran-Nigerian conflict from the viewpoint of human suffering and the widely publicized starvation in Biafra. They were, therefore, concerned with how relief could be obtained and made available to the starving Biafrans. This often amounted to sharp criticism of United States policy in the Nigerian Civil War. The foremost critic of the United States in this regard was Senator Edward Kennedy. Kennedy felt it was inappropriate for the United States to follow Britain's lead. In an article published in the May 1969 issue of Reader's Digest, Kennedy argued that the United States was forsaking a substantial number of the American people who were concerned with the starvation in Biafra. He said the United States had done little or nothing to feed the starving Biafrans or end the war. He described the United States role as passive and called for a more active policy. Kennedy believed the United States had the unique opportunity to help bring the war to an end as it was neutral in the area of supplying military aid. He noted that if the suffering and starvation of the Biafrans were not in the interest of the foreign policy of the United States, it was in the interest of American
"conscience and history."¹

Kennedy suggested ways in which the United States could help resolve the conflict: (1) the United States should use every necessary diplomatic means to bring peace to Nigeria; (2) the United States must speed up support for relief efforts to the starving and suffering Biafrans, and (3) the United States must cooperate with other countries and international organizations, especially the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, to help resolve the conflict. He concluded by calling on the United States Government not to allow six million Biafrans to starve to death. Kennedy's presentations did influence the United States decision to make relief contributions to the Nigerian war victims.²

Former United States Senator Charles Goodell was one of the most active of Congressional critics of American policy in the Nigerian Civil War. In January 1969, Goodell successfully organized a relief donation program in New York City in behalf of starving Biafrans. Thousands of New Yorkers reportedly contributed food to fill a ship known as the "Biafran Christian Ship."³ Among persons who also participated in this relief effort for Biafra were Mrs. Richard M. Nixon, Archbishop Terence Cooke, Senator Jacob Javits and Mayor John Lindsay.

²Newsweek, 73 (March 24, 1969), 56.
Goodell learned from his participation in this program that "a substantial segment of the public felt deeply about the need to stop starvation in Biafra."¹ As a result, Goodell sought to identify more effective ways to deal with relief for Biafra by meeting with State Department officials, representatives of Biafra, and officials of the Nigerian Embassy and with other Senators and Congressmen.² Dissatisfied, Goodell looked for the correct information on starvation and relief distribution in Biafra.³

In February 1969, Goodell visited Biafra and Nigeria with a team of experts in the fields of nutrition, tropical medicine, agriculture, and African affairs.⁴ They wished to assess the magnitude of starvation in Biafra. Goodell learned firsthand that some 1,000,000 Biafrans had died of starvation from August, 1968 to February, 1969.⁵ He was, therefore, convinced that dramatic action was needed to reverse the tide of starvation in Biafra. One method Goodell adopted was to publicize the findings of his visit.

In "Biafra and the American Conscience," an article published in

¹ibid.
²ibid.
³ibid.
⁴Specifically, the visiting team of experts were Jean Mayer, Harvard University nutritionist; George Axinn, professor of agriculture at Michigan State University; Dr. Roy Brown, associate professor of preventive medicine and pediatrics at Tufts University; George Orick, a former consultant to the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund; and Dr. Charles Dunn, Goodell's administrative assistant.

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the April 12, 1969 edition of the *Saturday Review*, Goodell criticized and advocated a change of United States policy in the Nigerian Civil War. He argued the gap between ideas and action in Biafra was reminiscent of the crisis of conscience associated with United States involvement in Southeast Asia. He believed that although the United States might have had good intentions in its policies in Indochina and Nigeria, they were contributing to human suffering in both countries. Goodell criticized the United States policy of neutrality and its consequent advantage to the Nigerian side. He found it difficult to understand State Department officials who were doubtful of published reports of starvation in Biafra. He criticized the Johnson administration for sending only a pittance of relief to Biafra while more than a million deaths by starvation had been reported.\(^1\) He believed the American people were responsive to the plight of the Biafrans. This was not the case with the United States Government and he suggested ways by which it could increase its role in helping to alleviate the problem of starvation in Biafra, i.e., coordinating relief efforts, supplying better transport equipment for relief purposes and using diplomatic influence to press for a cease-fire.\(^2\) Goodell personally received the assurance of increased United States relief efforts for the Nigerian war victims in the course of his meetings with William P. Rogers, Elliot Richardson and other State Department officials on his return from Nigeria and

\(^1\) *ibid.*

\(^2\) *loc. cit.*, p. 102.
Biafra in mid-February, 1969. Goodell also claimed credit for President Nixon's appointment of Clarence Ferguson, professor of law at Rutgers University, as Special Coordinator on relief on February 22, 1969.

Senator Eugene McCarthy was also critical of United States policy. Like Goodell and Kennedy, McCarthy believed the American people had made significant relief contributions to the Biafrans. But in McCarthy's opinion, official United States contributions were not enough to mitigate a fraction of the one million yearly Biafran deaths resulting from starvation. He, therefore, called on the United States to re-examine its policy, a policy resulting "in our accepting the death of a million people as the price for preserving a nation that never existed." McCarthy traced the error of the one Nigerian policy to political preconceptions keeping the United States from a more realistic examination of the Biafran-Nigerian conflict. He pinpointed Joseph Palmer as the braintrust behind the pro-Nigeria policy of the United States. McCarthy refused to compare the Biafran secession with that of the American Confederacy. Nigeria, unlike America "was not unified by a common language, culture, and historical tradition and had no background of stable government." He believed that the United States was neutral only in the supply of arms, as it accepted the official Nigerian

\[1\text{Kirk-Greene, op. cit., p. 401.}
\[2\text{ibid.}
\[3\text{loc. cit., p. 403.}

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explanation of the situation. The United States, according to McCarthy, had also influenced other African countries to accept its viewpoint. He disagreed with the unity solution and called on the United States to act on the following recommendation: (1) call for an arms embargo; (2) seek a truce; (3) use good offices to promote negotiations for resolving the differences between Biafra and Nigeria; (4) press for a de-escalation of great power involvement in the Nigerian Civil War; (5) form a multi-national effort to provide the logistic support required for an adequate relief effort, and (6) accept Biafra's right to a separate national existence and look to a possible early recognition of Biafra.¹

Representative Donald Lukens of Ohio's fourth district wanted the United States to issue an official statement in support of Biafra's moral right to be heard in her struggle for self-determination.² Lukens felt this was essential as he believed it would save the lives of starving Biafrans and also end the war. He was critical of the State Department for United States policy in the Biafran conflict:

Our diplomats have from the beginning followed Britain, the former colonial ruler of Nigeria, like a bunch of sheep. The British have a quick-kill policy for ending Biafra's misery. They do not call it that—they describe it as a one Nigeria policy—but it adds up to the same thing.³

¹ibid.


³ibid.
Without the United States initiatives, Lukens believed that millions of Biafrans would die. He recommended a United States policy independent of Britain's. In Lukens' judgment, such a policy should be oriented towards finding a peaceful solution to the war and it should be formulated as soon as possible. He added that the United States should send massive amounts of food to save the remaining Biafrans and those Nigerians who were in the same predicament. The United States sent surplus food to victims of the Nigerian Civil War possibly as a result of Lukens' criticisms and suggestions.¹

Taking advantage of the new Nixon administration, Representative Charles Diggs of Michigan's 13th district and an Afro-American reasoned in February 1969 that it was time for the United States to seek new initiatives aimed at ending the Nigerian Civil War. In Diggs' opinion, the Nixon administration was new and had no policy of its own as yet in the Nigerian Civil War. He, therefore, believed that early 1969 was the right time to review United States diplomatic initiatives to help end the Biafran-Nigerian war.

The desire to contribute to the new United States role prompted Diggs to head a fact-finding mission to Biafra and Nigeria on February 7, 1969.² In the Diggs Report printed for the United


²Other members of the fact-finding mission included Representative Herbert Burke of Florida's 12th district; Representative Lester Wolf of New York's 6th district, and Melvin Benson, staff consultant to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
States Committee on Foreign Affairs no new role is recommended for the United States in the Nigerian Civil War. Instead, it endorses the previous administration's policy: the study mission believed that the posture of the United States concerning the Federal Military Government of Nigeria was correct in recognizing it as the only legal government of that country.\footnote{Report of Special Fact-Finding Mission to Nigeria February 7-20, 1969, by Charles C. Diggs, Jr., Chairman. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 1.} The Diggs Report went on to commend the United States for not involving itself in arms-supply as did Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. It said that resolving the Biafran-Nigerian conflict was the responsibility of the Organization of African Unity and not that of the United States. The mission did not want to see the United States Government become directly involved either through operating an airlift or having the United States Government coordinate the local distribution of food to the starving Biafrans or Nigerians.\footnote{loc. cit., p. 2.}

It, however, wanted the United States to seek initiatives aimed at preventing further arms shipments to Biafra and Nigeria by the previously mentioned countries.

The Diggs Mission's support of United States policy in the Nigerian Civil War was curious when compared with the criticism directed against it by Kennedy, Goodell, McCarthy and Lukens. However, Afro-Americans who expressed their positions on the Biafran-Nigerian war generally supported Nigeria as has been noted in Chapter

III and this may have influenced the fact-finding mission's report.

Congressional critics of United States policy in the Nigerian Civil War sought ways to learn what the Government was doing to help ease the problem of starvation in Biafra. On July 23, 1968, Joseph Palmer was to deliver a report on his recent trip to Africa, but he was bombarded with questions about United States policy in the Biafran-Nigerian conflict. Palmer rejected the contention of Frances Bolton, United States Representative from Ohio's 22nd district, that this country was the last nation to send food to the starving Biafrans. On the contrary, Palmer explained that the United States was among the first countries to send food to Biafra via private relief agencies. He pointed out that the Nigerian Government was concerned with the suffering of innocent Biafrans and was trying to minimize it under difficult circumstances. Palmer also disagreed with Senator John Tunney, from California, who characterized the conflict as one involving self-determination and therefore, deserving United States support. Although Palmer was defensive of both Nigeria and United States policies in the Biafran-Nigerian War, most members on the United States subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs expressed concern about United States government relief efforts for Biafra.

In September, 1968, Senators Edward Kennedy, Charles Goodell, George McGovern, Eugene McCarthy, and William Proxmire introduced a resolution in the United States Senate calling for a larger American relief contribution. Goodell and Kennedy also lobbied for a Senate Committee hearing on the relief situation in Biafra and Nigeria.
They were successful, and a committee was formed with Kennedy as chairman. Hearings at this committee were like battle-grounds. On the one side were the pro-Biafra supporters, such as Goodell and Kennedy, while on the other side were United States officials, who tried to be neutral but were clearly supportive of Nigeria. Hence, while Kennedy urged a more active role for the United States as regards relief supplies, Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson explained that "relief questions were inextricably bound to the political and military issues of the civil strife." Richardson's explanation appeared to be an indirect or polite rejection of Kennedy's proposal. All the same the landlocked Ibos were made the recipients of increased relief contributions and the Kennedy forces did win a minor victory.

The Executive Branch and the Nigerian Civil War

Even though the role of the President in foreign policy-making is constantly debated, he remains the nation's spokesman in this area. And the United States policy in the Nigerian Civil War was no exception to this rule. Presidents Johnson and Nixon formulated the policy which supported Nigeria in the Biafran-Nigerian conflict with the assistance of State Department officials. But both

1Relief Problems in Nigeria-Biafra, p. 15.

presidents also modified this policy to at least accommodate the American people and Congressional critics who were sympathetic to the Biafrans. To do this, President Johnson appointed an emergency task force to review United States policy on relief to Nigerian war victims.\(^1\) In November 1968, President Johnson authorized a $2.5 million contribution to the International Committee of the Red Cross to aid victims of the Nigerian Civil War.\(^2\) This contribution was in addition to the $10 million in money, food, and equipment that the United States had already given and the more than $4.3 million given by American voluntary agencies.\(^3\) The Johnson administration also sold four transport planes to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to Joint Church Aid (U.S.A.) in December, 1968. Moreover, large amounts of surplus food were made available to both warring groups.\(^4\) But time and again, President Johnson made it clear that the United States relief contributions should not be equated with any shift in this country's policy of military neutrality and diplomatic support for Nigeria.

On September 9, 1968, presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon characterized Nigeria's military campaign against Biafra as genocidal.\(^5\) In this statement, Nixon was either dissatisfied with


\(^2\)President Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 543-544.

\(^3\)ibid., p. 544.

\(^4\)ibid.

President Johnson's policy on military supply to Biafra and Nigeria or he actually meant to evolve a pro-Biafra policy when elected president. The second interpretation seemed more correct as such initiatives were reportedly thwarted by American investors: "...the combined force of the bureaucracy in the African Bureau and U.S. private economic interests in Nigeria, particularly Gulf and Mobil Oil, have blocked any significant change in policy."\(^1\) Nevertheless, Nixon ordered a presidential review of United States efforts to aid the Nigerian war victims on January 24, 1969. In February the President appointed Clarence Ferguson, Professor of Law at Rutgers University, as Special Coordinator for Biafran relief. Essentially, Professor Ferguson was charged "with assuring that U.S. contributions to the international relief effort are responsive to increased needs to the maximum extent possible and that they are effectively utilized."\(^2\) Professor Ferguson's appointment was considered significant because he was not associated with the State Department's Africa Desk which has been identified with the previous administration's policy.

Ironically, on May 22, 1969, the State Department announced an additional Nigerian relief contribution of $6 million to be disbursed through the International Committee of the Red Cross.\(^3\) President Nixon explained that the aim behind this relief contribution was completely humanitarian and that the United States policy "would

\(^1\)Smock, op. cit., p. 26.

\(^2\)Goodell, op. cit., pp. 27, 102.

make a sharp distinction between carrying out our moral obligations to respond effectively to humanitarian needs and involving ourselves in the political affairs of others."¹ In other words, Nixon continued Johnson's policy.
CHAPTER V

REASONS FOR UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

In the 1967-1970 Biafran-Nigerian conflict, the United States government refused military support to Nigeria on the grounds that the war was an internal matter. But the United States did give diplomatic support to Nigeria. The attempts of the American Ambassador to Nigeria, Elbert Mathews, to encourage the preservation of the Nigerian federation and the continuation of United States aid assistance to Nigeria during the war appeared to be indications of such support. The United States also pursued a policy favoring Nigeria because such a policy protected American investment in Nigeria. United States policy also coincided with that of an ally, Britain, as well as the Organization of African Unity. Moreover, it appeared to somewhat neutralize the effectiveness of the Soviet Union in the region. This chapter examines the reasons why the United States pursued a non-military but otherwise stable diplomatic policy favoring the federal government in the Biafran-Nigerian conflict.

Factors Indicating United States Support of Nigeria

Shortly after the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, Secretary of State Dean Rusk told a joint hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees that the United States had
denied the Nigerian request for export permits to buy arms from commercial manufacturers because it regarded the situation as a purely internal matter.\(^1\) To a large extent, the Biafran-Nigerian conflict could be characterized as the domestic problem of the Nigerians. Indeed, the Organization of African Unity whose role in the conflict will be described below, and Yakubu Gowon regarded the war as an internal matter for Nigeria.\(^2\) However, the refusal of the United States to supply arms to Nigeria was motivated by the desire of the former to see a continuation or preservation of the Nigerian federation. Hence, after the second coup of July 29, 1966 when the Northern Region threatened to secede, United States Ambassador to Nigeria Elbert Mathews advised Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon to keep Nigeria as one, united nation.\(^3\) Mathews reportedly presented Gowon with the same advice after the Aburi meeting in January 1967 where the system of confederation had been discussed as a possible solution for Nigeria's problems.\(^4\) In The World and Nigeria, Suzanne Cronje stated that Mathews assured "Gowon of American support in his refusal to implement the essential conditions of the agreement..."\(^5\)

The United States program of aid to Nigeria which started before

\(^1\) *Africa Report*, 12 (October 1967), 55.

\(^2\) *Cervenka*, *op. cit.*., p. 98.


\(^4\) *loc. cit.*, p. 66.

\(^5\) Cronje, *op. cit.*., p. 238.
the war continued during the hostilities. The Agency for International Development had committed $200 million to the financing of Nigeria's 1962-1968 Development Plan, but by 1967 only $110 million of this sum had been spent with $90 million still outstanding for the financing of other projects.\(^1\) A slow-down in United States aid to Nigeria was caused by the war and the program was actually suspended in 1967. The United States, apparently, did not want to block aid to Nigeria but the suspension gave the Biafrans the impression that the United States was not contributing to Nigeria's war effort. Later, it was discovered that most of Nigeria's development programs continued during the war under the direction of the World Bank, various foundations, corporations as well as the Agency for International Development.\(^2\) In any event the suspension of United States aid to Nigeria was short-lived. In 1968, not long after the suspension, Ambassador Mathews promised Lagos that "the United States Government would examine long-term loans to Nigeria; such agreements would create more confidence in foreign investors and other nations wishing to give technical aid."\(^3\) President Johnson substantiated this statement when he promised the Nigerian Ambassador that more aid would be sent to Nigeria. The President also pledged American support for post-war reconstruction.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) *loc. cit.*, pp. 242-243.

\(^2\) *loc. cit.*, p. 244.

\(^3\) *loc. cit.*, p. 243.

\(^4\) ibid.
Even though the United States briefly suspended its aid programs to Nigeria during part of the war, their subsequent continuation was tantamount to diplomatic support of Nigeria. The suspension of United States aid to Nigeria only distracted Biafra. Thus, while the United States was not militarily involved in the war, it supported Nigeria by making its dollars available for the 1962-1968 Development Plan and by helping rebuild the post-war economy.

The United States Supports Nigeria to Protect Its Investments

The United States was optimistic about the success of parliamentary democracy in Nigeria. Unlike most other African states, Nigeria was large and had moderate, responsible leaders who were regarded as capable of thrusting it into a leadership role in Africa.\(^1\) The United States also believed that Nigeria was not as crisis-prone as many new states and even if it were, Nigeria was more capable of resolving such crises. "For several years, Nigeria was upheld as the most promising of the new nations of black Africa," and it was frequently described as the "show-case of western democracy."\(^2\) Ambassador Joseph Palmer 2d, believed the United States had a lot to gain from a "united" Nigeria, and the creation of Biafra would negate this opportunity.

It should, however, be pointed out that the United States had an incorrect perception of Nigeria. Nigeria was never really as

\(^1\) *Briefing on Africa*, p. 34.

promising as it seemed.\(^1\) The war was an illustration of the mistaken view of the situation in Nigeria. But having had this concept of Nigeria, the United States refrained from changing its perceptions during the war. As a result, the United States offered its diplomatic support to Nigeria rather than change its viewpoints and policies.

Nigeria has tremendous economic resources and a growing economy. It is a large exporter of palm oil as well as crude oil.\(^2\) American private investors in Nigeria and American official representatives, especially Elbert Mathews and Joseph Palmer, were aware of this and both men made certain that the United States pursued a policy which they regarded as beneficial to American interests. The pro-Nigerian statements of Palmer and Mathews were concerned with preserving the unity of the Federal Republic. In similar fashion, the representatives of the Gulf Oil Company reportedly exerted pressure on State Department officials to safeguard their oil investments in Nigeria.\(^3\) They argued that a fragmented Nigeria would not provide an attractive market for large American equipment or investments.

Therefore, United States support for Nigeria arose primarily from American economic interests and this was made clear by President

\(^1\)Sterling, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 39.


\(^3\)Cronje, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 120.
Nixon when he allegedly said that "he had sympathized with Biafra but it was against American interests to put any obstacles in Nigeria's road to victory."\(^1\) The American interest he was alluding to was the multi-million dollar investments by the oil companies.\(^2\) Gulf Oil's pre-war output of 57,000 barrels per day had reached the 200,000 barrel mark by April 1969 when the investments in Nigeria were more than $200 million.\(^3\) Clearly, the survival of an undivided Nigeria was important for the realization of American economic interests and they received considerable United States government support.

Britain and America Collaborated to Support Nigeria

At first, Britain refrained from a policy which would supply arms to Nigeria as it viewed the conflict as an internal problem. But Biafra's successful invasion and occupation of the Midwest State in August 1967 precipitated a change in Britain's non-military policy in the Nigerian Civil War. In *The Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970* Zdenek Cervenka reported that it was not difficult for Britain to find justification to supply Nigeria with arms. Nigeria was heavily dependent on Britain for weapons prior to the war, and it would only be a continuation of the process. It was also believed that the British supply of arms to Nigeria would help to end the war quickly.

\(^1\) *loc. cit.*, p. 250.

\(^2\) *ibid.*

\(^3\) *ibid.*
Thus, the British provided military assistance to Nigeria throughout the war. Nevertheless, they were proved wrong in their estimated duration of the war.

Britain had economic interests in and other ties with Nigeria. In 1965 the Central Bank of Nigeria estimated the total investment of British companies in Nigeria at $568 million, and this was 53 per cent of all foreign investment. Britain was also dependent on Nigerian oil: Shell-BP's production of oil in Nigeria (almost 85 per cent of the market) represented some 9.5 per cent of all British crude imports in 1967. With the continuing tension in the Middle East, Nigerian oil was assuming more and strategic importance for Great Britain. Moreover, it did not drain the British foreign exchange reserves as it came from a Commonwealth country. Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart linked the economic interests of Britain to the supply of arms to Nigeria in his speech to the House of Commons on March 13, 1969. Parliamentary Undersecretary to the Foreign Office, Maurice Foley, also defended the British policy in the Nigerian Civil War. Foley alluded to the fact that Nigeria had been a British colony, and the investments and trade between the two countries had been beneficial to both. In this context, Foley did not see a more suitable policy for Britain than the continued supply of arms to Nigeria.

Cervenka also points out that Soviet support of Nigeria (which is discussed below) contributed to the British decision to assist the

\[\text{loc. cit.}, \ p. \ 115.\]
federal government. "The argument was that the Soviet Union, which was already supplying Nigeria with jet planes and small arms would probably be ready to step into any breach left by a British withdrawal."¹ Cervenka asserts that the decision of Nigeria to seek military assistance from the Soviet Union was significant. The British policy in the Nigerian Civil War was also effected by a letter dated June 2, 1968 and sent to some Members of the British Parliament by Chief Anthony Enahoro, Nigeria's Commissioner of Labor and Information. Enahoro warned that Britain's refusal to supply arms to Nigeria would be equated with the promotion of Nigeria's disintegration. But while Nigerians like Enahoro saw the British supply of arms to Nigeria as logical and necessary to keep the country intact, it was a hotly debated issue in the Parliament, news media and the Commonwealth association. The Times of London's editorial of November 9, 1969 denounced the policy of Britain to supply arms to Nigeria and called for its reversal. As a result of these criticisms and the secrecy that usually surrounds the export of arms, officials were not specific about the size or magnitude of British supplies to Nigeria. Nevertheless, Stewart is reported as saying that the supply included ammunition, a small number of armoured cars, anti-aircraft equipment and spare parts.²

On December 9, 1969 British policy in the Nigerian Civil War was made the subject of debate in Parliament. One hundred fifty

¹loc. cit., p. 105.
²loc. cit., p. 107.
Members of Parliament signed a motion calling for a change of British policy. The Members of Parliament also called on the government to take initiatives designed to stop all arms shipments to Nigeria and Biafra. Prime Minister Harold Wilson rejected these suggestions and asked the Members of Parliament to support the government's policy which, according to him, was the most practicable. Wilson contended from his meetings with United Nations Secretary, U Thant, that an arms embargo through the United Nations would not succeed as it would be opposed by the Soviet Union in the Security Council as well as independent African states in the General Assembly. Even though officials tried to minimize the significant impact of British military assistance to Nigeria it apparently contributed to the success of Nigeria in quelling the rebellion.¹

The United States expressed its approval of British policy in the Nigerian Civil War. After the American refusal to supply arms to Nigeria, Secretary of State Dean Rusk stated that Nigeria was "a British responsibility."² This has been interpreted to mean that the United States regarded Nigeria within Britain's sphere of influence. Suzanne Cronje contends Britain's decision to supply arms to Nigeria met with the approval of the United States. There were, according to Cronje, frequent exchanges between the two allies regarding the Nigerian crisis. This observation seems justified given activities of Joseph Palmer who conferred with his British

¹loc. cit., p. 109.
²Africa Report, 12 (October 1967), 55.
counterpart in Lagos. In July 1968, for instance, Palmer announced that an airlift could not carry enough food to cope with the reported starvation in Biafra, and he said that the State Department had urged Biafra to accept a land corridor. The same line was being plugged in London.¹ Cronje further explains that Britain persuaded the United States not to take an independent line of policy in the Nigerian Civil War. Moreover, Cronje argues that "Nixon's promise of continued support of British policy in Nigeria was given in exchange for continued British support of America in Vietnam."² The United States was reportedly "confident" that Britain would hold the Western line against Communist infiltration in Nigeria.³

The pro-Nigerian Position of the Organization of African Unity Affected American Policy

The decision of the United States to support Nigeria could have been influenced by African opinion. Apart from Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and the Ivory Coast which recognized Biafra, thirty-three other members of the Organization of African Unity supported Nigeria. They regarded the conflict as a domestic problem and frowned on secession. Katanga's attempt to secede in 1960 was a grim vivid reminder of the implications of secession, i.e., big power interference, economic

¹loc. cit., p. 69.
²ibid.
³De St. Jorre, op. cit., p. 181.
exploitation and white mercenaries.\textsuperscript{1} They also did not want to encourage potential secessions by the Eritreans in Ethiopia, the Mau Mau in Kenya or Southern Sudanese.

Therefore, in its September 1967 meeting at Kinshasa, Congo, the Organization of African Unity "reaffirmed respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states, condemned secession, and accepted that the solution of the crisis was primarily the responsibility of the Nigerians themselves."\textsuperscript{2} This resolution was presented to Yakubu Gowon in Lagos on November 22-23, 1967 by the Consultative Committee on Nigeria whose chairman was Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. The Organization of African Unity unsuccessfully held "peace talks" in Addis Ababa, Niamey, Kampala, Algiers and Monrovia and all were aimed at helping to resolve the Biafran-Nigerian conflict in the context of one Nigeria. In 1968 President Johnson sent a message of support to the Organization of African Unity and offered to help find a solution to the Nigerian crisis. The American support of the Organization of African Unity indicated that African opinion could influence United States diplomatic support for Nigeria.

\textbf{American Policy Neutralized the Role of the Soviet Union in the Nigerian Civil War}

There had been little in the way of relations between Nigeria and the Soviet Union prior to the civil war and this was primarily

\textsuperscript{1}loc. cit., p. 191.

\textsuperscript{2}ibid.
attributed to the pro-Western government of Balewa. The Soviet Union is reported to have welcomed the Ironsi regime, however, and an economic and cultural agreement between Nigeria and the Soviet Union was signed between the two governments. The coup of July 29, 1966 made Gowon Nigeria's Head of State and this brought uncertainty to the Russians about what was still their "new" relations with Nigeria. They were apprehensive because Gowon was a Northerner and had British and American support. The Soviet press is reported to have shown sympathy for the suffering of the Ibos. But this was tactical as the Soviet Union also supported Nigerian unity. Accordingly, a Soviet technical aid delegation spent three months in Nigeria in early 1967. Various loans and an iron and steel complex were first discussed with the federal government.¹

Soviet-Nigerian relations took a new turn after June 1967. The unsuccessful attempt of Nigeria to procure arms from either Britain or the United States in the initial phase of the war forced Nigeria to seek military assistance from the Soviet Union. Chief Enahoro visited Moscow in behalf of his government in June and July 1967 to discuss the possibility of Nigeria's purchase of Soviet arms. The West's refusal to supply arms to Nigeria and the Organization of African Unity's characterization of the war as a domestic problem apparently affected the decision of the Soviet Union to grant Nigeria's request.² The Soviets were optimistic about the success

¹loc. cit., p. 182.
²ibid.
of their decision.

But the Soviets were reportedly cautious in the sending of military supplies. First they sent a few old planes which, according to John de St. Jorre, author of The Nigerian Civil War, was meant to dilute possible criticism and opposition from the Organization of African Unity which feared escalation of the war, and outside military intervention. The Soviet Union did not want to ruin an opportunity to extend its influence in Nigeria and Africa generally. The Soviet Union pursued a bolder military policy when the Nigerian government expressed its appreciation. In mid-August 1967, Nigeria received 12 Soviet transport aircraft and 20 crated MIG-15 fighter trainers, at Kano Airport. Two hundred Soviet technicians soon followed to assemble and test the aircraft. By the end of August 1967, the jets were in the air piloted by Egyptians.¹ The Soviet Union is reported to have added MIG-17 fighters, Ilyushin bombers, heavy artillery, vehicles and small arms to its list of military supplies to Nigeria.²

The Soviet Union demonstrated its support for Nigeria throughout the war. In the "Test of Africa's Maturity," an article published in Izvestia on October 11, 1968 the Soviet Union reaffirmed its support for Nigeria. On November 21, 1968, the Soviet Union and Nigeria concluded what was described as a general agreement in Lagos. Various interpretations have been given to the agreement. According

¹loc. cit., p. 181.
²Ibid.

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to Cervenka the agreement provided for the exchange of experts, probationers and trainees in various fields and for an extension of credit to finance survey and development projects.¹ De St. Jorre notes the agreement provided for the construction of Nigeria's first iron and steel mill by Russian technicians and with a Russian loan of $180 million.²

On March 6, 1969, Soviet warships visited Nigeria. They included a squadron consisting of two destroyers, a submarine, and an oil tanker. Although the head of the Nigerian Navy, Rear-Admiral R.E.A. Wey, described the visit as "routine" Radio Nigeria noted on March 7, 1969, that the visit was designed "to demonstrate the Russian support for one Nigeria."³ On March 10, 1969, Radio Nigeria made a broadcast showing appreciation for Soviet support of Nigeria in the conflict. It also expressed cynicism about the countries which had refused Nigeria military assistance.

The Soviet Union expressed satisfaction at Nigeria's victory over Biafra on January 12, 1970.⁴ The Soviet Union indicated that Nigeria should not allow "the imperialist forces to interfere in any way in Nigeria's internal affairs."⁵ The comment of Radio Moscow on

¹Cervenka, op. cit., p. 120.
²De St. Jorre, op. cit., p. 182.
³Cervenka, op. cit., p. 120.
⁴ibid.
⁵ibid.
January 15, 1970, lauded its own role as well as those of other countries which had contributed to Nigeria's victory. Radio Moscow also indicated that "young national states who were defending their sovereignty and independence could, always rely upon aid from the socialist countries." 1

Even though the Soviet Union rejected the view that it had sought an opportunity to expand its influence in Nigeria, this writer believes otherwise. The conclusion of several agreements between the two nations during the war is partial evidence. Articles and statements aimed at supporting Nigeria appeared to be geared towards the Soviet Union displacing the West in Nigeria.

The country which is usually preoccupied with Soviet activities, namely, the United States, however, saw the situation differently. On August 21, 1967, a State Department spokesman, Carl Bartch, explained that the United States was not militarily involved in the civil strife in Nigeria because "to have done so would have risked deepening the conflict and risking an element of great-power competition in the internal affairs of a friendly state." 2 Former United States Ambassador to Nigeria Joseph Palmer put the position this way: the United States non-military involvement was based on "the desire to avoid any risk of deepening the conflict." 3 He also hoped that

1 loc. cit., p. 121.


3 Cronje, op. cit., p. 238.
"by taking such a self-restraining position the Soviet Union would be encouraged to do likewise."¹

United States' noninvolvement in the war may have been linked to fear of deepening the conflict but this is not totally convincing. Granted, the Soviet Union was pro-Nigeria, and if the United States was considering a pro-Biafran involvement, confrontation between the two super-powers would have been inevitable. This, however, would not have been the first time for such a confrontation. In Berlin, South Vietnam, and indirectly in the Middle East, the United States engaged in military activities aimed at containing the Soviet Union. The United States was not unaware of the possible consequences of those confrontations and to make the Biafran-Nigerian war an exception is unsatisfying.

The United States may have thought that its own non-military role would discourage Russia from taking an active part in the Nigerian Civil War. The Soviet Union, however, gave Nigeria weapons throughout the war and by so doing, it acquired what was described by Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson "as a major political interest in the conflict."² But, while the United States witnessed this Soviet activity it did not conclude that its own military intervention was warranted. As Suzanne Cronje put it, "...the Soviet presence in West Africa did not present any immediate

¹Palmer, op. cit., p. 16.
²Cronje, op. cit., p. 238.
challenge." Moreover, the United States like the U.S.S.R. wanted the federal government to terminate the Biafran rebellion as quickly as possible.

In its assessment of Soviet influence the United States was confident that it could retain the friendship of the Nigerian elite. Nigeria's Head of State, Yakubu Gowon, is generally regarded as moderate, sincere and pro-Western. Addressing a group from the American press corps, Gowon explained Russia's arms sale to Nigeria: "Going to the Soviet Union, I assure you, was just a way of dealing with Ojukwu's threat...Even Abraham Lincoln went to Russia for help to win his own civil war." Other components of the Nigerian leadership share views similar to those of Gowon. Most of them have been trained either in Britain or in the United States, and they are more interested in maintaining close ties with the United States which is not a threat politically and of great benefit economically. The United States believed Nigeria would not be drawn into Soviet sphere so long as Gowon and the ruling elite of Nigeria remained intact.

1loc. cit., p. 239.
2ibid.
3ibid.
4loc. cit., p. 241.
5On July 28, 1975, Gowon was ousted in an apparently bloodless coup by Lt.-Col. Joseph Namdon Durban.
EPILOGUE

It is estimated that between 600,000 and a million people died in the Nigerian Civil War.\(^1\) The difficulty of nation-building is not unique in Nigeria. The United States, too, waged a civil war in the course of its attempt to achieve national integration. But the possibility that the civil war in America contributed to national integration may not necessarily suggest the identical results in Nigeria. The recent military Nigerian coup d'etat of July 28, 1975 may provoke still other coups, countercoups and even civil wars. There are always power-hungry personalities whose ambitions are to control the federal Nigerian government. Lt.-Cols. Hassan Katsina, Commissioner of the Ministry of Establishment, and Samuel Ogbemudia, Governor of the Midwest state are two such individuals. Nigeria's oil riches also make it somewhat unstable at the present time. Such countries as the United States and Great Britain are concerned that future Nigerian regimes do nothing to prevent their acquisition of this vital resource. Hence these two countries will continue to have an interest in Nigeria's internal affairs. By the same token, the Soviet Union is not destined to sit idly by. Thus, the author is less certain about the positive effects of the 1967-70 civil war on the process of nation-building in Nigeria. Nevertheless, she believes national integration is attainable. However,

\(^1\)De St. Jorre, op. cit., p. 412.
much depends on how Nigerian leaders at the federal level restrict
their personal political appetite and guarantee a distribution of
power among the present 12 Nigerian states.

As a multi-national state, Nigeria is also not alone. For
element, the Croats and the Serbs who have different cultures
and speak different languages identify with a greater Yugoslavian
state. But whereas the Yugoslav groups may be cosmopolitan in their
outlooks, this is not the case with the Fulani-Hausas, Ibos and
Yorubas of Nigeria whose perceptions do not transcend tribal kin-
ship. An absence of accommodation best describes the relationship
of the Nigerian tribes. They were in constant conflict with each
other prior to the British creation of Nigeria and that legacy
makes it difficult for them to co-exist in peace in one nation-state.
The possibility of a recurrence of inter-tribal conflict and war is
present in Nigeria. And as Joseph Frankel aptly notes, any compari-
son of the Croats and Serbs of Yugoslavia with the Fulani-
Hausas, Ibos and Yorubas of Nigeria requires important modifica-
tions.¹ Perhaps, scholars in the Western World could gain better
insight into the problems of a country like Nigeria by drawing their
comparisons from the country itself rather than by comparing Nigeria
with Yugoslavia.

Self-determination or the right of people to seek separate
national existence is acceptable to many political thinkers in,

¹Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy. London: Oxford
among others, France and the United States. In Africa, self-determination is believed appropriate only in the attainment of self-rule from a colonial ruler. Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and the Ivory Coast did not recognize Biafra on the basis of self-determination.¹ Tanzania and Zambia preferred a peaceful solution rather than a military one for the preservation of the Nigerian federation. The two countries felt the recognition of Biafra would contribute to the success of the 1968 Kampala Peace Talks, one of several efforts initiated by the OAU to resolve the conflict in the context of one Nigeria.² Gabon and the Ivory Coast were coerced by France to recognize Biafra; it was not their own decision.³ The four African countries were also moved by the much-publicized human suffering caused by the war. The fact they did not establish diplomatic relations with Biafra indicates their different interpretation of the recognition question, i.e., to maintain the unity of Nigeria through peaceful means.

On July 31, 1968, the French Minister of Information, Joel de Theule, announced in Paris that the bloodshed and suffering endured by the Biafrans for over a year had shown their will to assert themselves as a people. "...the French Government believes, as a result, the present conflict should be settled on the basis of the right of the people to self-determination."⁴ On September 9, 1968,

¹Cervenka, op. cit., p. 166; De St. Jorre, op. cit., pp. 193-199.
²De St. Jorre, p. 198.
³loc. cit., p. 213.
President Charles de Gaulle endorsed Theule's statement by his own statement in which he condemned federations such as that existing in Canada, Cyprus, Malaysia, Rhodesia and, of course, Nigeria. These federations forced people of different cultures to live in one nation-state. Curiously, prior to these official statements, France was supplying Biafra with arms and mercenaries.¹

The author believes self-determination was only a cover for the French support of Biafra. De Gaulle regarded the size, population and unity of Nigeria as a threat to French interests and patronage of its former colonies especially those in West Africa. The French General also has no love for federations and favors a patchwork of small states grouped together in a loose confederal relationship as embodied in the Organization de la Communaute Africaine et Malgache (O.C.A.M.). This organization provides a useful economic link between France and fourteen of Africa's francophone countries.²

De Gaulle is reported to have agreed to the break-up of France's own Western and Equatorial African Federations at the time of independence and had unsuccessfully worked for the same end in the Congo during the Katanga crisis in the early sixties.³ Balkanization has been the name of the game for French policy toward Africa. This was the reason why it supported Biafra, and not self-determination for the Biafrans.

¹loc. cit., p. 215.
²loc. cit., p. 212.
³loc. cit., p. 213.
France also supported Biafra because such policy asserted France's own independence from the Anglo-Saxons and Russians, all of whom supported Nigeria. De Gaulle rarely missed an opportunity to "have a go" at the British and Americans, and Biafra provided an excellent and not too risky opportunity. It was French national interest and pride characterized by de Gaulle that determine the pro-Biafra policy of France and not self-determination for the Ibos per se.

Although France denied its investment of about $153 million most of which was in oil and located in the minority regions of Biafra as contributing to the decision to support Biafra, the author feels this was a more significant factor than self-determination. There are reports and evidence illustrating this allegation. First, Biafra granted SAFRAP, a state-owned French oil company engaged in the exploration and production of Nigerian oil, the rights in an area capable of producing 2,000,000 tons of petroleum a year for the amount of $15 million. In July 1967, Biafra also concluded a similar transaction with the Rothschild Bank of France for $27 million. Specifically, Rothschild was granted "the exclusive rights of exploitation and extraction of all deposits of the columbite ore, uranium, coal, tin concentrates, natural oil and gold ore for the duration of 10 years."^4

^1_Imb_.
^2Loc. cit., p. 214.
^3Cervenka, op. cit., pp. 113, 114.
^4Loc. cit., p. 114.
In the United States, Senators Eugene McCarthy and John Tunney, among others, urged American support for Biafra on the basis of self-determination. And as the author has indicated, self-determination was not applicable to Biafra in the African's interpretation of the term. It was a camouflage for French policy.

Moreover, self-determination for the Ibos denied the same right to 5 million Efiks, Ibibios and Ijaws who had no desire to live in Biafra. Self-determination is one of those elastic terms which has many facets, and there is, in the opinion of the writer, no consensus on when and by whom it is most practicable.

Granted "the influence of public opinion is connected with the notion of democracy," the American public was quasi-ignorant about the Nigerian Civil War. The media's coverage of the conflict must bear some responsibility for this condition. It was too selective and therefore unreliable; but it is the major instrument through which the public is informed about domestic and world events, i.e.,

When a newspaper reporter totally unfamiliar with the Nigerian scene flies in from London or New York to cover the situation, and when he has less than twenty-four hours to file a report, the best he can devise is a story of what is most plausible and most obvious, which often may have nothing to do with reality.

Okpaku further points out that space-constraint makes the reporter to paraphrase or simplify his story and this task tends to eliminate the essence of a complex event such as the Nigerian Civil War.

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1Frankel, *op. cit.*, p. 72; see Chapter III also.

War. He believes the Nigerian crisis required more space, better insight, and greater knowledge to explain (1) that although Ibos ended up as the underdogs during the war, they were party to the federal government that immediately preceded the crisis; (2) that the Hausas, although in a majority, had always been discriminated against in the "Christian" South where there were special ghettos (Sabon garis) for them; (3) that behind it all, although the Ibos were mainly Christians and the Hausas mainly Muslims, there were at least two other states, both Christian and in the South, which were on the federal side; (4) and above all that all Nigerians, being human, were subject to the appeal of power and the complex dynamics of the conflict of generations as well as personal and regional interests.¹ The news media only emphasized the suffering of many Ibos in its coverage of the Nigerian Civil War, an approach which provoked public emotions but did not stimulate the intellect.

The Christian segment of the American public was also misled by the church. The emphasis here was on the fact that Muslim Fulani-Hausas were fighting the Christian Ibos. It should be abundantly clear that religion was only one aspect of the Nigerian Civil War.

The author believes the government and the news media where foreign affairs are concerned requires a better relationship and more understanding. The government has its foreign policy experts in the State Department and other agencies who have a responsibility

¹loc. cit., p. 11.
in providing accurate information for the general public. Meanwhile, the American people need to learn more about the world beyond the frontiers of the United States. Ultimately, it is a matter of the public being able to evaluate both media and government information. This capacity to evaluate more accurately will determine how the public contributes to the process of democratic decision-making in America.
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