

DIMENSIONS OF FRATRICIDAL AND GENOCIDAL KILLINGS: REFLECTION ON THE NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR, 1967-1970

Udeagwu, C. Okechukwu

Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State
Email: co.udeagwu@unizik.edu.ng

&

Ozoemenam, M. Ugochukwu

Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State
Email: mo.ugochukwu@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Many scholars have contributed extensively to the literature on the Nigeria-Biafra War. Most of the major arguments center on whether the Nigeria-Biafra War demonstrated generally acceptable ingredients and evidence to be considered as fratricide and genocide. Some scholars understand the War as complete fratricide and genocide, while others do not. This paper focuses on the dimensions of fratricidal and genocidal killing. This paper adopts secondary sources of data and it is presented with the historical method of analysis. The paper argues that convincing evidence of fratricide and genocide in Biafra abounds on the life pictures of millions of children, women and young people starved to death, the bombardment of market places, churches, schools, and hospitals with their attendant consequences. This paper finds that there is an outright lack of major powers' acceptance of fratricide and genocide atrocities committed against innocent Biafra civilians by the Federal Government of Nigeria due to interests. The paper concludes that with different numbers of civilian death tolls recorded in the course of the war, the nature and manner the war was prosecuted indubitably signifies fratricidal and genocidal dimensions on Biafrans.

Keynotes: Nigeria, Biafra, Fratricidal, Genocidal and Civilians

Introduction

Nigeria had its independence on October 1, 1960 and became a republic on October 1, 1963. Following independence, Nigeria entered a phase of turbulent politics that was marked by violent leadership transitions and regional tensions, many of which corresponded to ethnic cleavages. This tumultuous context set the stage for organized violence against Igbos, which occurred in unimaginable form and shape, and led to civil war. The Nigeria-Biafra War eventually started in 1967 and ended in 1970 despite all efforts to forestall the outbreak of the war. The war brought a devastating impact and its record cannot be forgotten in haste by Nigerians and beyond. It was a war of identity and self-determination on the side of Biafrans which they considered optimally imperative to achieve while to Nigerians, it was a war for the territorial and sovereign integrity of Nigeria – a war for the maintenance of the corporate existence of Nigeria as an indivisible and indissoluble entity called and known as Nigeria.

Before formal declaration of Biafra by Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu and the commencement of the war as declared by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria as well as the attendant consequences of the war, the pogroms amongst other issues against the Igbos of the Eastern Region perpetrated by the Northerners has become widely unimaginable and featured on the frontline of almost all the national newspapers. Stemming from this, the fratricidal and genocidal atrocities recorded in the land of Biafra may have explained the resolve-capability and resoluteness on the side of Biafrans. Thus, this paper considers the

ongoing introduction, the conceptual analysis of fratricide and genocide, the origin and causes of the war, the fratricidal and genocidal dimensions of the war, and the conclusion.

Conceptual Analysis of Fratricide and Genocide

The Nigeria-Biafra War has been engaged in a plethora of literature as fratricidal and genocidal. Many scholars such as Chinua Achebe, Lasse Heerten, A. Dirk Moses, Wole Soyinka, Chimanda Ngozi Adiche, Diezani Emefena, and others - pointed to the fact that fratricide and genocide were pragmatically committed against Biafrans by the Nigerian federal government.¹ The question therefore is what do fratricidal and genocidal mean? Etymologically speaking, fratricidal is derived from the Latin noun fratricide, which means “killer of a brother”, the term “fratricide” is used in two contexts: as an individual action, “if someone commits fratricide, they kill their brother”, or as a social phenomenon “a fratricidal war or conflict is one in which people kill members of their own society or social group”² Therefore, since all the ethnic groups and minorities in Nigeria are recognized as indivisible and indissoluble one Nigeria, it is right to say all are brothers and members of same the society.

The term “genocide”, according to Robert S. Leventhal as quoted by Chinua Achebe comes from the Latin word “genos” which connotes race, and tribe while “cide” refers to killing, and means the killing or murder of an entire tribe or people. It entails “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national or ethnic groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves”.³

By genocide, the understanding is the deliberate and systematic extermination of ethnic and national groups. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide from 1948, observes that there are psychical and physical elements of genocide. Both elements must be present for a crime to be described as genocide. The psychical element is the intention to destroy (completely or partially) a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such. The physical element comprises five types of actions which include: **1.** killing of the members of the group (of a certain nation); **2.** causing severe physical or psychical damage to the members of the group; **3.** intentional exposure of the group to such life conditions that lead to its complete or partial destruction; **4.** establishing of measures to prevent new births in the group; **5.** forcibly transferring children from one group to another. The destruction of groups, which is the aim of genocide, therefore does not mean only killing, but also the destruction of the life conditions or factors of the group on economic, political, territorial, cultural, and other levels or areas. Furthermore, the convention enumerates five types of criminal actions: **1.** genocide, **2.** a plan for the execution of genocide; **3.** direct and public promotion of the execution of genocide; **4.** an attempt of genocide; **5.** participation in genocide.⁴

Irrespective of the above definitional position of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of *Genocide* in 1948, David Moshman posits that mass killings, cultural exterminations, ethnic cleansings, political disappearances, religious inquisitions, chattel slavery, and other catastrophic violations of human rights are defined within the lens of genocide.⁵ Moshman elaboratively put forward that:

Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim ... Genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group,

*as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator ... Genocide in the generic sense is the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims means the destruction, entirely or in part, of any racial, ethnic, national, religious, cultural, linguistic, political, economic, gender, or other human group, however such groups maybe defined by the perpetrator.*⁶

It is important to state that one of the goals of the perpetrator of the crime of genocide is not only to harm an individual; but also, to cause damage to the collectivity to which the latter belongs. Crimes of this type bring harm not only to human rights; but also, and most especially they undermine the fundamental basis of the social order of the victim. Such acts included massacres, pogroms, actions undertaken to ruin the economic existence of the members of a collectivity, and all sorts of brutalities which attack the dignity of the individual in cases where these acts of humiliation have their source in a campaign of extermination directed against the collectivity in which the victim is a member.' Individually, they violated the criminal codes of civilized nations, but taken together they endangered 'the entire social order' and therefore 'shook the very basis of harmony in social relations between particular collectivities'.⁷

Hence, the conception of Genocide as presented by David Moshman and the definition given by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide captured both in character and nature of the atrocities committed against Biafrans. However, Bojan Žalec argues that the definition of genocide from the UN Convention was deficient and insufficient considering how the political, economic, and cultural genocides were not adequately and exhaustively treated. He observes especially that political groups are not on the list of those groups that are protected, since political differences are one of the most important reasons for genocides outside racial, national, ethnical or religious. However, he asserts that genocides against racial, national, ethnical and religious groups are most often, pursuit upon the results of political conflicts or its attendant closely related or connected issues.⁸

As quoted by Bojan Žalec, Lemkin defined the term genocide as denoting: 'a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves'. Under this definition, there is a shape difference between Lemkin's definition of genocide and that of the United Nations Convention: Unlike the convention, Lemkin does not understand genocide as consisting in any of a set of enumerable acts, each of which might have the intent to destroy a group "in whole or in part." Rather, Lemkin understands genocide as an overarching plan, and it is to the plan, rather than the specific kinds of action taken to implement it, that the requisite intent attaches. If the plan and its implementation are collective, so is the relevant intent... Activities that further such a plan take their genocidal character from that of the plan to which they contribute.⁹ Thus, the comprehensive economic blockades meted against Biafra by the Federal Government of Nigeria depict 'intent to destroy a group ...' as stated by the UN Convention and its implementational plan denotes Lemkin's understanding of genocide.

It has been argued that genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; and the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after the removal of the population and the control of the area by the oppressor's nationals.¹⁰ However, there are several forms or techniques of genocide which

comprise classicide, democide, ecocide, eliticide, ethnocide, femicide/feminicide, fratricide, gendecide, judeocide, linguicide, memoricide, omnicide, politicide, poorcide and urbicide.¹¹

A. Dirk Moses thus explains:

*Political techniques refer to the cessation of self-government and local rule, and their replacement by that of the occupier. Social techniques entail attacking the intelligentsia, 'because this group largely provides the national leadership and organizes resistance ... The point of such attacks is to 'weaken the national, spiritual resources'. Cultural techniques ban the use of native language in education and inculcate youth with propaganda. Economic techniques shift economic resources from the occupied to the occupier. Biological techniques decrease the birth rate of occupied people.' Physical techniques mean the rationing of food, endangering of health, and mass killing in order to accomplish the 'physical debilitation and even annihilation of national groups in occupied countries'. Religious techniques try to disrupt the national and religious influences of the occupied people. Moral techniques are policies 'to weaken the spiritual resistance of the national group ...'*¹²

From the foregoing conceptual analysis, it is indubitably crystal clear that Biafrans were total victims of fratricide and genocide in the hands of the Nigerian Federal Military Government with whatever criteria of measurement, predispositions, and characteristics tendencies equitable to the war.

Brief Origin and Causes of the War

The Nigerian-Biafran War, also known as the Nigerian Civil War, was a three-year bloody conflict with a death toll numbering more than one million people, having commenced seven years after Nigeria gained her independence from Britain, began with the secession of the Southeastern region of Nigeria on May 30, 1967, when the region declared itself the independent Republic of Biafra. The ensuing battles with its publicized human suffering prompted international outrage and intervention. The origin of the war can be traced to the creation of Nigeria whereby the British were politically and economically pragmatic in their decision and merged the different groups without due consideration of their socio- economic and political unity.¹³

Falode A. James posits that the emergence of the Nigerian Civil War could be situated in the complexity of factors ranging from the remote which involves the military coups de-tat of January 15, and July 29, 1966. He further argues that other remote factors began from the regional election crisis that took place in Western Nigeria in 1965; the Tiv riots of 1964; the Federal elections of 1964; the killing of Igbos living in the Northern part of Nigeria, from May to September 1966; the structural imbalance of the Nigeria Federation; and most significantly, the lopsided distribution of power among the various ethnic and geographical groups.¹⁴ Supporting the above position, Oyeleye Oyediran includes north-south and ethnic conflict, minority group politics, the structural dilemma of the Nigerian army, the census controversy ...¹⁵

The reality of the Nigeria-Biafra war was a struggle for political control in which the northern party sought to maximize its power by encouraging competition between the two smaller southern parties who could only hope for a role as minority partners in running the federal government. John J. Stremlau observes that:

when a thirty-One-years-old lieutenant colonel named Yakubu Gowon succeeded Major General Irosni as head of state following the collapse of the first military government on July 29, 1966, his first address to the world was one of low-key desperation. To “all true sincere lover of Nigeria and Nigerian unity both at home and abroad,” ... putting all consideration at test politically, economically and socially, the base for unity is not there ..., not only once but several times ... while one military governor, thirty-one-year-old Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, refused to recognize Gowon as head of state and adopted a position of de facto secession in behalf of the predominantly Ibo eastern region.¹⁶

Despite the aforementioned causes of the war, Udeagwu, C. Okechukwu asserts that the configuration of pre-independence and post-independence crises, manifested in the geographically divided nature of Nigeria prompted Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu’s declaration of the state of Biafra on May 30, 1967. This declaration automatically detached the Eastern part of Nigeria from the federation. Under these circumstances, the effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria to truncate the east’s secession from the federation and Ojukwu’s desire to ensure the survival of Biafra, however, started the Nigerian civil war. Ojukwu’s order and Gowon’s counter order plunged Nigeria into disorder, and which further brought untold hardship to the Nigerian populace was the immediate factor/cause responsible for the war.¹⁷ The declaration of Biafra stemmed from the conscious conviction by Ojukwu that Nigeria had failed to protect the lives and interests of easterners, and especially Igbos, resident elsewhere in the Nigerian federation. Nigeria was not willing to let Biafra go. Gowon initiated a “police action” on July 6, 1967, to reclaim the east, which quickly escalated into a full-fledged war between the Federal Military Government of Nigeria and the Republic of Biafra.¹⁸

Fratricidal and Genocidal Dimension of the War Against Biafra

The fratricidal and genocidal dimension of the Nigeria-Biafra war is categorically captured by the atrocities committed against Biafrans before and during the war by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. Repeated outbursts of violence between June and October 1966 peaked in massacres against Igbos living in the Sabon Gari, the ‘foreigners quarters’ of Northern Nigerian towns and other areas. According to estimates, these riots claimed the lives of tens of thousands between 8,000 and 30,000 Igbos and Easterners for no morally justified crimes of offence. Whether representatives of the Nigerian state systematically organized the killings or not was not the matter. At the very least, the Nigerian government failed to halt the riots. This massacre drove a stream of more than a million refugees to the Eastern Region, the ‘homeland’ of the Igbos’ diasporic community.¹⁹ It was argued that the massacres were one of the key events in the unfolding of the civil war.

In the course of the war, the Federal Military Government troops surrounded Biafra, and captured coastal oil facilities and the city of Port Harcourt. A blockade was imposed as a deliberate policy during the ensuing stalemate which led to mass starvation. During the two and half years of the war, there were about 100,000 overall military casualties, while between 500,000 and 2 million Biafran civilians died of starvation.²⁰ The Federal Military Government’s position of argument and statement regarding to mass starvation of Biafrans through her Commissioner of Information, Chief Anthony Enahoro stated, “Starvation is a legitimate weapon of war, and we have every intention of using it against the rebels.²¹ He further argues “ I don’t see why we should feed our enemies fat for them to fight harder”.²²

Confirming the negative consequences of the philosophical policy of starvation by Nigeria against Biafra, Emeffiena Ezeani asserts that the number of Biafrans who died of starvation during the war was more than two million people and 70 percent of them were children under the age of five. Young people and women under this condition were also starved to death.²³ Referring to American historian, social and political analyst, Arthur M. Schlesinger's observation in Biafra as quoted by Chinua Achebe has this to say:

*The terrible tragedy of the people of Biafra has now assumed catastrophic dimension. Starvation is daily claiming the lives of an estimated 6,000 Igbo tribesmen, most of them children. If adequate food is not delivered to the people in the immediate future hundreds of thousands of human beings will die of hunger.*²⁴

The alarm of genocide by starvation attracted international agencies which made available logistics such as ships, planes, helicopters, trucks, vans and technical personnel to provide enough food supplies to the needy people. yet, more than five hundred thousand children, pregnant women and nursing mothers were recorded to lose their lives through malnutrition, starvation and their inevitable attendant diseases. Nigerian Army officers were accused of obstruction because of their attitudes against the technical personnel of the international agencies to achieve their goal effectively. Most often, a ship was commandeered and diverted, a plane requisitioned, and relief foods off-loaded to make way for arms, men and ammunition. Many sacks of relief foods were seized by the Nigerian Army and sold in the black market. All these made the relief personnel protest and resign.²⁵

The fratricidal and genocidal atrocities committed by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria against Biafra in the course of the can only be imagined as total extermination. The famous Asaba massacre where many defenceless civilian Igbo men and boys the Nigerian Army could found, titled Igbo chiefs and common folk alike, and their dead bodies were deposited and abandoned in mass graves without regard to the wishes of the families and the town, in general, can never be forgotten in a haste. Frederick Forsyth observes that the widespread killing of Igbo inhabitants of this Midwest State was incontrovertibly witnessed by many foreign residents of the Midwestern town concerned, and it was also largely reported in the international press. Forsyth therefore accounts that:

*New York Review, December 21, 1967, ...at Benin and midwestern Region, Ibos were killed by local people with aid of the Federal forces, about 1,000 Ibo civilians perished at Benin ... Washington Morning Post, September 27, 1967, ... Northern troops killed about 500 Ibo civilians in Benin after a house-to-house search. London Observer, January 21, 1968, the great massacre occurred in the Ibo town of Asaba where 700 Ibo males were lined up and shot, New York Times, January 10, 1968, ... in clearing the Midwest State of Biafra forces, Federal Troops were reported to have killed, or stood by while mobs killed more than 5,000 Ibos in Benin, Wari, Sapele, Agbor and Asaba.*²⁶

In Oji River, on August 2, 1968, the Nigerian troops deliberately opened fire and murdered fourteen (14) nurses and patients in the wards. Uyo and Okigwe experienced more loss of innocent lives brutally killed in the hand of the blood lust of the Nigerian Armies. The Niger River Delta City of Port-Harcourt after several weeks of air, land and sea bombardments by Nigeria's military atrocities suffered heavy looting, rape of female folks etc. In Calabar, the Federal forces were recorded to shoot at least 1,000 and possibly 2,000 Ibos. Even in Efik tribe,

one of the minority groups whose allegiance the Federal Government maintained was for the federal government not for secession, however, most of the civilians there were murdered.²⁷ Minorities in Biafra suffered atrocities at the hands of the Federal Government, although, fratricide and genocide were indiscriminately directed against the people from Eastern Nigeria. The Federal troops were equally culpable of the crime of extrajudicial killing in other places. In the Rivers area, ethnic minorities sympathetic to Biafra were killed in the hundreds by federal troops. In Calabar, some 2000 Efiks were also killed by Federal troops. The most excruciating aspect of it all in this area was the killing of community leaders. A report had it that teachers, chiefs and elders in a wide variety of locations were executed, partly because the Igbos did not wait behind anticipating mercy from their killers or the area from the bulk of the overrun territories. Civilian communities such as Ikot Ekpene, Uyo and Annang (Ibibio areas); Degema, Brass and Bonny (Rivers areas; the Kings of Bonny, Opobo and Kalabari became refugees with Colonel Ojukwu); Calabar (Efik and Calabar areas); Ugep, Itigide and Ndiba (Ekoi, Igbo and South Ogoja areas); and Ogoni and Ikwerra, in the area inhabited by people of the same name experienced mass killings. It was alleged that villagers were herded into the main square and executed publicly.²⁸

The carnage against the non-combatant Biafra's civilians continued unabated as several casualties were recorded at the Capital of Biafra, Umuahia. Luke Nnaemeka Aneke's account in his book titled, "The Untold Story of the Nigeria-Biafra War explains that a Nigerian air raid killed at least 43 people within an hour on December 21, 1968, in Umuahia. He further observes that more than 300 people were injured in what was considered one of the worst raids of the 18-month old Nigeria-Biafra war whereby rockets and cannon fire attacks, involving two planes at a time annihilated over 60 civilians within two days of air raids by Nigeria on Umuahia.²⁹ It is also on record that more than 500 civilians, mainly women and children at Ozu Abam market, 17 miles east of Umuahia were killed in one of the bombing raids atrocities committed against Biafra.³⁰ Afor Umuohiagu market bombing where the International Red Cross witnessed the death toll of 312 and several wounded people (brought to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Umuahia, Biafra wartime Capital, 22 miles west of Ozu-abam), according to Luke Nnaemeka, were also mostly women and small children.³¹ Confirming the Afo Umuohiagu bombardment Emeffiana Ezeani asserts that:

... amorphous Nigerian bomber aircraft with a white pilot which comfortably flew very low on Afo Umuohiagu market in 1969 destroyed more than 3,000 lives, 90 per cent were women who went to market to find some food for their children. One Captain commanding the Engineering Squadron said that he supervised the mass burial of the victims of this heavy murder and gave order that the caterpillar assigned to erect obstacles along Aba-Owerri road be used first to bury these dead bodies.³²

Nigeria's jet fighters and bombers intentionally hovered within the market places, churches and hospitals, and subsequently descended their deadly weapons on the innocent civilians. The Ozalla raid towards the end of 1967 experienced two aircraft descending too low at the Ozalla road junction and shelled civilians. Bombed markets at Ozuitem and Otuocho located at the Northern area of Biafra estimated the death toll of more than 500 civilians mostly women and children.³³ The manner and method unarmed Biafrans were murdered gruesomely, indeed, captured both the content and context of fratricide and genocide in all ramifications. Therefore, stating most of the gruesome atrocities committed against the people (Biafrans) by the Nigerian Army, Emeffiana Ezeani points:

*... all the men in a town were shot and the whole town set on ablaze. Civilians were asked to dig their own graves. Thousands of civilians who gathered to welcome the Nigerian soldiers as one Nigeria were killed after performing their native dances for them. One survivor of the incident said, as we were going in the night we came to one area called Ogbeosowa we saw thousands of dead bodies, and those were the people who went to dance.*³⁴

Supporting the above information, Frederick Forsyth explains that targets of a strategic nature such as bridges, rail yards, barracks, etc. in Biafra were scarcely hit or aimed at by Nigeria's army, however, most of the air war was conducted against the civilian population; ... highly prized targets occurred on hospitals, facilities of Red Cross like Relief Airport at Obilagu, close-packed townships, churches on Sundays and market places at midday... at Awgu market on February 17, 1968, a bomber jet killed 103 people in less than a minute, and at Aguleri market, 510 people lost their lives in October of the same year, estimated death toll topped 5000, with countless raids and several thousand extremely maimed for life.³⁵

Despite all the flagrant destruction of lives of the innocent and unarmed civilian population in Biafra's territory and all that happened, the major powers even the United Nations that would have been objective disregarded the incidents of fratricidal and genocidal massacre of civilian Biafrans. The major powers across the world, due to their interest and the international politics of the time (Cold War) deviated and pretended to understand the definitional meaning of fratricide and genocide in the case of Biafra. But, the Jewish Holocaust and Rwanda's genocide where numbers of civilians murdered were limited in comparison with Biafra's massacre are today officially recorded in reputable genocidal materials.

Presentation of Un-representational Facts of Fratricide and Genocide in Biafra

According to an international observer, teams are sent to investigate accusations of genocide if Nigeria stands falsely accused. The team constituting international state representations and UN officials were invited by the Nigerian government in 1968 with British support to oversee Nigeria's wartime conduct. By September 1968 and January 1970, the team was said to have inspected displaced peoples' camps, villages captured by the Nigerian military and prisoner-of-war camps. Eventually and most unfortunately, the team concluded that 'no evidence had been found demonstrating any intent by the Federal troops to destroy the Igbo people or their property'. Essentially, the team took a position that Biafra had no genocide claim.³⁶

Contrary to the above position of the observer teams, Daniel Tarantola in his article titled: "Unforgotten Biafra 50years Later" argues that the Biafra-Nigeria War that broke out in May 1967- January 1970, caused more than One million civilian deaths, most among starving children and the elderly and more than 100, 000 deaths among military forces on both sides was by 1967 for the first time, the massive impact of warfare on a civilian population witnessed almost in real time on televisions worldwide, often during viewers' dinnertime. The media played images of starving and dying children who were bloated with kwashiorkor while others were suffering from nutritional marasmus and were referred to as "shrimp babies or Biafra babies were neglected by the observer teams. These images which played an important role in shifting global public opinion and creating widespread empathy for the victims where these atrocities were unfolding merely a few decades following the World War 11 genocide which was fresh in people's minds and should never again happen deniably presented by the observer teams.³⁷

The Nigerian blockade created a famine, which affected millions of people, killing a very large number of Biafrans and inflicting permanent damage on many who survived. Hunger was recorded on bodies and in names; a woman who gave birth in the final months of the war named her child Nwaohia (child of the wilderness), and another christened a malnourished daughter, Aguru (hunger). Photographs of starving Biafran children became emblems of human suffering; yet these images, which entreated the viewer to see Biafra as an incomprehensible disaster, may have ironically done a disservice to the observer teams to buttress there was no claim of genocide in Biafra.³⁸

Biafra's government made the case to the outside world that Nigeria's conduct was genocidal, which rested on two separate but related lines of argumentation. One was that the pogroms of 1966 in the north constituted genocide because they had been orchestrated by government officials in some towns and cities. The second was that the war itself, especially the blockade policy that created a vast famine, was an attempt to exterminate the Igbo people. The former Western Region Premier Obafemi Awolowo who was the chief architect of the blockade demonstrated his fiery intent by the manner and way the policy was prosecuted. It showed starving Biafrans out of existence and this was taken as evidence that the Nigerian government's intent in the war was not only to defeat Biafra but to destroy the Igbo people race.³⁹

There was ample proof of glaring genocide found in Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Adekunle's statement when he famously told a foreign reporter that if he marched into an Igbo village, "we shoot everything that moves" and that "in the sector of the front which I command, and that is the whole of the south front from Lagos to the Cameroon border, I will not (do not want to) see any Red Cross, any Caritas, any World Council of Churches, Pope, missionary, or U.N. delegation."⁴⁰ Were these statements never as evidence that the reoccupation of the East Central State was part of a genocidal plan by Nigeria?

The observer teams recorded that there was no claim of fratricide and genocide in Biafra, however, the question is what the pogrom of 1966 against Biafrans in the North represents. How do we classify the great massacre that occurred in the Igbo town of Asaba where 700 Igbo males were lined up and shot at once? What happened about the bombardment, killings and raid of civilian markets, hospitals, churches and even the Red Cross facilities where millions of people were intentionally murdered and property destroyed? It was obvious that genocide took place in Biafra – the revolutionary role of media and technology during the Nigeria-Biafra war brought out the horror of the warfare and its consequences, creating as a result the world's first televised war. It is therefore on this aforementioned basis that it can be argued that the observer teams gave an account of the presentation of Un-representational facts of fratricide and genocide in Biafra.

Conclusion

The evidence for the meticulously planned and implemented political project of exterminating the Igbo ethnic group in northern Nigeria before the war in other parts of Nigeria and during the war demonstrated the experiences of Biafran refugees, famine, starvation and death, in relationship with the conditions in Biafra left no doubt that there was a well-organized and systematic attempt of fratricide and genocide. By the invocation of the Nazi's analogy: 'the war was indeed a Nigerian variant of what the Nazis called the final solution to the Jewish problem'. It should be noted that the purpose of the genocide concept is to eliminate a particular ethnic group. In reality, genocide usually occurs during military conflict but against non-combatants. Therefore, Biafra was a victim of both fratricidal and genocidal attacks. In other

words, the intention to defeat a nation militarily works to destroy a group's social power and ability to resist, indeed, destroying it as a group points to genocide. Existing evidence suggests that the targeting of Igbos was not necessarily part of a broader genocidal plan to eliminate the entire population. Instead, local-level targeting and killing accompanied a broader political struggle over the unity of the Nigerian federal state.

Extrapolating from the definitional meaning of 'fratricidal and genocidal' above, if a fratricidal war or conflict is one in which people kill members of their own society or social group, it means therefore that the killing of Biafrans by Nigerians (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba etc) in a country or society where everybody co-exists as citizens signifies brother killing brother. Based on this, it can be argued that the federal government of Nigeria's action against Biafra is fratricidal.

Since the UN definition of genocide pointed to physical destruction or injuries in whole or in part which can be called 'total and partial' genocide (or genocide in part), Biafra's case was both total and partial, meaning the aim was to coerce, alter a group identity or collectivity, social status and destruction of the life conditions or factors of the group on economic, political, territorial, cultural and other levels or areas ... For it was acknowledged that over a million Biafrans were starved to death as a result of deliberate Nigeria's policy of blockade and disruption of agricultural life.⁴¹ The 1966 massacres in the North before the civil war and famine that followed were genocidal. The centrality of the state for genocidal perpetration also connotes where there is actualized intention, successfully carried out and to physically destroy an entire group reflected the assumption of fratricidal and genocidal dimension. Although, Igbo were not killed for ideological reasons, but, basically for identity and because they were party to a secessionist civil war. Thus, fratricidal and genocidal crime was committed against Biafrans by Federal Military Government of Nigeria.

Endnotes

1. See Lasse Heerten and A. Dirk Moses, "The Nigeria–Biafra War: Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide" *Journal of Genocide Research* Volume 16, Issue 2-3, 2014. Also See Bernard Dickson C. and Kinggeorge Okoro Preye, "History, Memory and the Politics of National Unity in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Achebe's *There was a Country*" *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* Volume 2, Issue 5, May 2014, pp. 81-89
2. Sangar Eric, "Fratricide" <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/fratricide.html> (Assessed on 15-02-2022).
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