



Rethinking Political Leadership and Neo-colonialism in Africa: Interrogating Nigerian Civil War and Global Politics

By

Udeoji, Ebele PhD

Department of Political Science,

National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria.

Email Address: ebeleudeoji@yahoo.com, uebele@noun.edu.ng

&

Ugo P. Onumonu PhD

Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Email Address: ugopason2007@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Given the political atmosphere around the globe in the 1960s, the early post-colonial Africa was engulfed with the euphoria of African political thought. African leaders demonstrated the spirit of Pan-Africanism with high hope. However, due to lack of enduring sense of visionary leadership rooted in African indigenous knowledge, the former colonial masters began to explore the instrumentality of neo-colonialism which made African countries subservient to the global West. In this regard, the western world, during the period of Nigeria's turbulence in 1966 which led to the civil war of 1967 to 1970, exploited the political misunderstanding in Nigeria. Countries like Britain, France, USSR and a host of others intervened in the crisis with their national interest firmly rooted in the crude oil discovered in Nigeria. The world Super Powers influenced the leadership of Nigeria negatively before and during the war. The pattern of influence of the western countries over Africa has been the same since the emergence of post-colonial era. This study, seeks to examine the influence of the western world on Africa through neo-colonialism with particular interest on Nigeria. Nigeria is yet to recover from such global politics, yet existing literature largely exclude this sub set of Nigerian civil war discourse. The study deploys historical-analytical method in interpreting secondary and primary sources. It is imperative, therefore, to begin to rethink neo-colonialism and African leadership. The study argues that the role of the western countries changed the entire political equation of Nigeria.

Keywords: Africa, Neo-colonialism, Nigerian civil war, Leadership, Post-colonialism.

Introduction

The era of African independence in the 1960s came with much excitement and fantasy for Africans. With the caliber of African nationalists within and outside the shores of Africa, it was assumed that Africa would rise from the ashes of colonialism with high hope and clear chances of building a virile continent in all spheres (Parker & Rathbone 2007). Be that as it may, as soon as most African nations gained their political independence, the hope of building a virile continent started fading away. Ironically, the socio-economic realities of post-colonial Africa, coupled with the ugly political developments that have characterized the continent since the 1960s till date have consistently kept Africa on a spot.

It is apparently evident that Africa's backwardness became a generic fashion since the early years of post-colonialism as a result of the type of leaders produced in Africa. The past and emerging leaders of Africa are set back to development of the continent. (Meredith 2006) Africans had barely recovered from the effects of the festivities marking formally the end of colonial rule, when they realized that the post-colonial state multiplex was a replica of its



colonial progenitor. This was because the political class to whom the European colonialists and imperialists had transferred political power failed to design the modalities exigent for the transformation of the colonial state order. Consequently, from the outset of the post-colonial era, African states became collectively plagued with multifaceted crises of cultural, economic, political and social underdevelopment. (Kieh 2002)

Amidst the inability of the African political class to address the problem of state failure, several states degenerated into civil war. For example, by the end of the first decade of the post-independence era, more than thirty wars had been fought in Africa. During the 1980s, Africa was torn by nine wars, numerous other instances of large-scale violent conflicts, and coups and demonstrations. The end of the Cold War witnessed the eruption of new civil wars in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone etc. (Kieh 2002) Victor Davies provides the following stark assessment of the civil war problematic confronting Africa:

Despite the end of the Cold War which increased the prospects for world peace, Africa continues to be bedeviled by gruesome violent conflicts. The balkanization of Somalia, the implosion of Sierra Leone ethnic genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, and the regionalization of the rebellion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are but few of the wars that have bedeviled Africa since the 1990s.

In line with the foregoing, Nigeria had a bitter experience of civil war in the immediate post-colonial era. Six years after Nigerian's independence, the civil war erupted which claimed an estimated three million lives. (Achebe 2012)The lack of visionary leadership on the continent of Africa as demonstrated by African leaders has been one of the greatest problems of Africa. Ironically, the imperialists in their constant habit of exploiting Africa through neo-colonialism,only capitalize on the weakness of leadership in Africa, unlike most countries in Asia that have woken up to the responsibility of building and protecting their countries from the force of neo-colonialism.Apart from one or two current African presidents who have demonstrated visionary leadership, like Paul Kagame of Rwanda in recent time, one would find it extremely difficult to figure out outstanding exemplary and visionary leaders on the continent of Africa.

It is indeed a problem staring Africa in the 21st century, yet discourses on African leadership are not given well deserving attention even in the academia. Without gainsaying the fact, leadership crisis in Africa is, therefore, one of the reasons for the misfortunes wreaking havoc on the entire continent of Africa. Africa is considered across the globe as the weeping child despised by other continents. As it is being argued in some quarters, Africa is better imagined in terms of negative news like; civil wars, riots, ethnic cleansing, farmers/herders' clashes, terrorism, armed robbery, witchcraft, poverty, carnages, untimely death, political crisis, famine, hunger, collapsed economy, mutual distrust among ethnic groups, diseases, unemployment and a host of other vices. This perception has now become a global debate, and the vices stated above are no doubt being exaggerated in western media. In some cases, however, such ugly realities aptly represent the Africanexperience occasioned by leadership challenge in Africa.

The horrific stories of African migrants crossingAtlantic ocean orSahara desert as the case may be, to Europe in search of greener pasture, at a high risk epitomizes the height of



African leadership crisis affecting Africans, especially the youths. This paper, therefore, examines African political leadership and how neo-colonial powers have negatively influenced leadership in Africa, using the Nigerian civil war as a case study, with a view to considering how the continent could move forward after many years of backwardness.

A Peep into History: Historicizing Leadership in Africa since the Pre-colonial Era

Africa is indisputably the cradle of civilization. This historical fact is born out of the involvement of human race and their existence which had resulted in chains of developments across different areas of human endeavor. Since the pre-colonial era, Africa had at different time demonstrated sufficient knowledge in arts, science/technology, education, politics, political science and political leadership. Across Africa before the introduction of modern system of government by the former colonial masters of Africans, African leaders, through their indigenous knowledge and initiative governed their people in their own style. Within this period, empires and kingdoms flourished which at the same time created opportunities for interactions and inter-group relations for Africans. (Ogbogbo 1999)

In his book *The Golden Bough*, Malcom Fraser has enumerated in details the criteria for the emergence of leaders in various societies at different times. In the pre-colonial Africa, most leaders of communities and states emerged after having solved a major societal problem. The story of Oranmiyan with reference to the establishment of the Eweka dynasty in Benin, or the Bayajjida story of his overcoming the terror python in Daura, exemplifies this claim. Yet there were several outstanding warrior leaders such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Ewuare the Great of Benin Empire, Sobhuza of Swaziland and a host of others in the pre-colonial African political terrain who epitomized the group essence by offering their people the requisite security, law and order within the state system that they either built or sustained. (Ogbogbo 2011) As demonstrated above, the pre-colonial Africa could be regarded as an organised society wherein leaders were highly committed to the yearnings and aspirations of their people. Their drive in leadership could also be seen as sincere selflessness geared towards solving societal needs. These features are, however, conspicuously lacking in the post-colonial Africa, especially among most of the current 'rulers' of Africa.

The coming of colonialism created new political structures and aggregation of peoples in new states. A major casualty of colonial imposition in Africa was the decapitation of the traditional leaders, the concept of leadership and the basis of their legitimacy. Unlike their pre-colonial counterparts, the new political players were rulers. There was a major disconnect between them and the ruled. They were initially Europeans whose allegiance was to the metropolitan power that they faced, they were soon to incorporate the traditional political elite into the new political system that gained the appellation indirect rule. It is therefore the case that colonialism laid the foundation for the transformation of leaders into rulers. Since the new states created did cut across traditional political boundaries and produced multinational states, it necessarily posted the challenge of producing a leader that will be acceptable to the various nationalities that constitute the new states.

Therefore, the distortion of African leadership could be traced to the colonial era when the colonial masters disorganized the pattern of leadership across Africa to fit into their own western style of administration with different appellation across African continent. (Ogbogbo 2011) This was the beginning of the leadership crisis in Africa. Thus, the exercise



in itself cost Africans their true identity in terms of exploring their indigenous initiative in leadership. It is, therefore, on this basis Africans must begin to rethink political leadership in consonant with their historical realities and cultural heritage. After many years of independence, Africa has remained a laughing stock due to the crisis and poverty of leadership. The Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970 which claimed an estimated three million lives was basically as a result of failure of African leadership. The Nigerian civil war carnage has been hunting Nigeria since the end of the war and at the same time rendered her political structure 'lamed' owing to the political '*abracadabra*' performed at the twilight of the civil war with the aim of weakening the erstwhile Biafra (Alabi-Isama 2013). *Abracadabra* means manipulation in one of Nigeria's languages. The current challenges grappled by Nigeria in all facets cannot be separated from the factor of neo-colonialism and leadership examined by this paper. As the most populous black nation of the world with enormous potentials, the socio-political challenges of Nigeria are no doubt robbing on Africa as a continent.

Nigeria and British Politics in Perspective

The attainment of Nigeria's independence on the 1st October 1960 came with mixed feelings among Nigerians. This was particularly because of the political atmosphere of Nigeria prior to her independence. At independence, a good number of Nigerians had already lost faith in the union-Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo, who later became the Premier of Western Region in the first Republic proclaimed that, "Nigeria is a mere geographical expression". In the same light, Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of Northern Region equally asserted that "Nigeria is an impossible experiment carried out by the British" (Kirk-Greene 1971).

Such expressions later affirmed the observation of Obaro Ikime in the later years of post-colonial era, who constantly said: "Nigeria exists without Nigerians". (Ikime 2006) During his active days at the University of Nigeria as a lecturer, he kept on asking "where were Nigerians" at different intellectual fora, a rhetorical question born out of a sincere concern on the loss of faith on Nigeria by Nigerians. (Ikime 2006) His expression alongside the ones made by Ahmadu Bello and Obafemi Awolowo, aptly demonstrate lack of commitment by Nigerians to nationhood as a result of the faulty foundation laid by the British that has become a stumbling block to the growth of Nigeria. Be that as it may, despite the faulty lines created by the British, it is expected that after over 50 years of Nigerian independence, Nigerians should have remedied the faulty foundation and forge ahead. This observation strongly indicts Nigerian leaders for not living up to expectation on leadership affairs.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate post-colonial Nigeria was engulfed by palpable tension, confusion, crises, ethnic mutual suspicion and highly manipulative politics. This situation was so because of the political arrangement put together by the British and handed over to Nigerians in 1960. (Kirk-Greene 1971) Since the era of Berlin conference of 15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885, the area now called Nigeria has been identified as an important field for imperialists for a number of reasons. (Khanna 2008) Perhaps, towering other reasons for the much attention paid to Nigeria by the imperialists is no doubt the enormous resources of the area in form of; oil/gas, tin, iron, gold, agricultural produces among other things considered key to the sustenance and boosting of the economy of western powers in the 19th and 20th centuries. (Peel 2010) Above all, the human population and their resourcefulness attracted the western powers to the area now called Nigeria. (Bourne 2016)



Furthermore, the origin of the Nigerian civil war has been linked to the 1914 amalgamation of Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria by the British government. While it made administrative sense to manage Northern and Southern Nigeria together, it did not appear to make practical sense. This was so because despite their proximity, their peoples, religion and culture were different. One of the main reasons for the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 by the colonial government was to reduce its subsidy to the Colony of Northern Nigeria by using the surpluses from Southern Nigeria. When, in 1906, Southern Nigeria and Lagos became one administrative entity, the financial resources of the South increased subsequently. This, however, was not the case with Northern Nigeria. The region, with its meager resources mainly from direct taxation, found it difficult to balance its budget. It therefore, relied heavily on grants from the colonial government to function. Amalgamation thus became a means to reduce the dependence of Northern Nigeria on British tax payers. (Uche 2008)

Moreover, because of the vast differences between the northern and southern regions, the Nigerian state that Lugard constructed was one with strong regional governments and weak center. This was how it was from the beginning. And this effectively ensured that the North was protected from Southern influences. In 1946, the British colonial government further divided Southern Nigeria into two regions: East and West. The North, which was not affected, retained its position as the dominant region both in population and landmass. The construction of the state, the revenue-sharing formula was critical to the creation of strong regions. Not surprisingly, the concept of sharing revenue based largely on the derivation principle reigned supreme.

This, however, changed in 1958 when oil was discovered in commercial quantities in the Eastern part of the country. Up till then, royalties from minerals fully belonged to the region of origin. The discovery of oil in the Eastern region coincided with the need to review the existing revenue allocation scheme. This was a fall out of the 1957/8 constitutional conference and the imminence of political independence. The colonial government subsequently set up a commission headed by Sir Raisman and Professor Ronald Tress to review the federal fiscal structure. (Uche, 2008)

Perhaps the most significant proposal of the Commission was the recommendation that the then current practice of returning mining rents and royalties to the regions should be discontinued. Such revenue was now to be shared throughout the Distributable Pools Account (DPA), with the region of origin getting 50 percent, the Federal government 20 percent, and the other regions 30 percent. The discovery of oil in the Eastern Region was therefore a turning point in the history of Nigeria and marked the beginning of the dilution of the powers of the regions to the benefit of the national government. All this did was to increase the struggle for control of national revenue rather than encourage the regions to take advantage of their social and economic circumstances and design appropriate revenue generation schemes.

In the struggle over the national wealth, control depended on who dominated the government at the center. (Uche, 2008) This historical reality is the reason behind most of the conflicts of interest in Nigeria's politics till date. Nigeria's political space is one of the most heated political spaces in the world due to the struggle for the control of the center (federal government) where the national wealth lies. Given this reason, Nigeria's elections are always considered as 'do or die affair'. Thus, no wonder Nigeria's elections are full of violence as



aspirants see political positions as ‘gold mine’ they must take possession of by all possible means whether dead or alive. Nelson Mandela of South Africa once made a remarked that Nigeria’s election is conducted in a manner of war.

With Southern Nigeria intentionally split into two by the British in line with their policy of divide and rule and in order to make North stronger and more united against South, North, which was by far the largest region, had the upper hand over the south. British colonial officers also encouraged it to promote the philosophy of one North in order to maintain its political control. In those early days of Nigeria’s independence, the popular slogan or motto of the Northern region of Nigeria was ‘One north one destiny’ (Ige 1995)

In view of the foregoing, the manipulation of Nigerian political structure in favor of Northern Nigeria by the colonial masters at independence further designed Nigeria for failure and endless conflict which has consistently been part of Nigerian society since 1960. In the same vein, the British colonial officers have been accused of manipulating census, elections and proceedings of political meetings among various ethnic nationalities, before and after Nigeria’s independence in favor of Northern Nigeria. (Osaghae 2002) It is, therefore, this political atmosphere that promoted disagreements among various ethnic nationalities of Nigeria which led to coups and crises that metamorphosed into the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970.

Western Powers and the Politics of Oil

Oil was the major factor behind the support Britain gave Nigeria throughout the period of the Nigerian civil war. Britain was deeply involved in the oil politics and put so much effort in protecting her economic interest invested on shell-BP in the Nigerian oil sector. Based on her political antecedents during and after Nigeria’s independence, it was apparent that a dysfunctional Nigeria driven by weak leadership will aid British interest in terms of exploiting Nigeria in line with their neo-colonial agenda. Although Nigerian crude oil export to the United Kingdom, at the onset of the war, was worth only £47 million, representing 10.3 per cent of the volume of UK’s crude oil imports, it had great potential and was increasingly becoming vital to the UK’s economy. This simply signifies that oil was increasingly becoming important in the UK’s economy and they had to protect their economic interest in Nigeria by throwing their support to the Federal Government of Nigeria controlled by Northern Nigeria during and after the war. Again, this became very crucial because the June 1967 Middle East Six Day War, which resulted in the blockade of the Suez Canal, extensively disrupted the supply of Middle East Oil to Europe. The action triggered by the Middle East Six Day War further attracted international interest on the oil factor during the Nigerian civil war, which in a way deepened the globalization of the war. (Uche 2008)

Given the global politics on oil during that period as seen above, the action of owners of oil in the Middle East had a far reaching negative impact on both the delivery time and cost of Middle East oil supplies to Western Europe. The ban on oil sales to the United Kingdom by several Arab countries also did not help matters. For the British government therefore, the continued production of Nigerian oil was important in order to mitigate the precarious oil supply position in the United Kingdom at the time, supporting Nigeria was considered its safest bet in order to achieve its objective. (Uche 2008) In other words, all other reasons, such as diplomatic and political reasons given by the British were just mere



façade. Their main target was therefore to secure their grip over the Nigerian oil. Having considered the points being made here, one will begin to seriously wonder the intelligence level of leaders involved in the war from both sides- Biafra and Nigeria.

The manner of execution of the war in terms of destruction of lives and properties as a result of the deadly and sophisticated weapons supplied by Britain, France USSR and other European nations shows that the leaders (of both warring parties) did not have a clear understanding of the extent of the Super Powers' interest on the oil. Their interest was basically on their economic interest and not on how to resolve the conflict quickly. It therefore explains why they kept on supplying those deadly weapons in order to achieve their economic interest. It has been identified that some of the weapons supplied were used during the Second World War of 1939 to 1945. Given this reality, one would then begin to marvel at the level of intellectual capacity of African leaders who demonstrated their poor leadership acumen during those dark days of the war. If Nigerian leaders had had the understanding of the global politics driven by oil factor, the war would have been averted and the carnage recorded would not have been part of African history. Sadly, the destructions of the war are still hunting Nigerian peoples after over 50 years of the war.

As stated earlier, apart from Britain which happened to be the major western power involved in the Nigerian oil politics before and during the Nigerian civil war, other western countries also played part in the oil politics in Nigeria. Such countries were United States of America, Soviet Union and France. Prior to the official commencement of the war, these countries in one way or the other have shown interest in the oil economy of Nigeria and had established their firms on the Nigerian soil. For example, American company was involved in the exploration of oil in Nigeria but its activity was not as intensive as British oil companies. Therefore, before the war, it was Britain that was more actively engaged in the exploration of oil in Nigeria as the past colonist of Nigeria.

During the war, this very factor played out which Britain seriously capitalized on. Britain played a major role by organizing and leading other western countries that offered support to the Federal Government of Nigeria. For example, the United States of America aligned herself with the ideology and interest of Britain all through the war as she considered British colonial officers as the traditional ex-colonial masters of Nigeria. In the face of chaos that ensued in Nigeria during the war, the United States of America looked away and kept insisting that the British should rather intervene, (Melbourne 1968) hence the war prolonged for good 30 months while lives and properties were wasted on an account of their own national interest and diplomacy. (Davis 1973) This was the extent to which the global oil politics defined the Nigerian civil war.

On the part of the Soviet Union, though she shared different ideology-communism, completely different from the rest of other western countries involved in the oil politics, she gave her support to the Federal Government of Nigeria just like Britain and United States of America (Stent 1973). All through those periods, Britain was understandably in control of the oil politics, but the Soviet Union, however considered her support to Nigeria as an opportunity and a venue to penetrate into Nigerian space for the purpose of establishing her economic interest also. It should be noted that before the war, the USSR did not have influence over Nigeria nor had any foothold on her space. Suddenly, the USSR realized that she could penetrate into Nigeria by offering her a support during the war.



This move was, therefore, not taken for granted by the British as they did not want to lose their foothold on Nigerian oil politics. The implication of this western politics no doubt, had a far reaching negative effect on the Nigerian civil war, as Nigeria became a dumping ground for sophisticated arms and ammunition by the Super Powers of the world. Apart from supplying such deadly weapons and machines, they also sent their mercenaries who aided both parties, especially the Federal Government of Nigeria. (Neogy & Achebe 1997) Thus, the interest of the western powers during the war aptly demonstrates the influence of neo-colonialism in Africa as identified in this paper.

The interests of France during the war were clearly in two folds; economic and political. While other countries' interests were largely hinged on economic gains, France also had her eyes on the political benefit of her involvement in the Nigerian civil war. Be that as it may, economic interest was the core interest of France. Like Soviet Union and Britain, France vigorously pursued her economic interest by rooting for Biafra in the Eastern Nigeria (Achebe 2012) The involvement of France by way of supporting the seceding side (Biafra, the defunct Eastern Nigeria), shows the complexity of the oil politics during the war. The global dimension of the war underscores the vested interest of the Super Powers of the West in African affairs. Interestingly, the role of the western powers aggravated the political misunderstanding between the defunct Eastern Region and the rest of Nigeria.

This reason made the war most bloody at the detriment of millions of Nigerians who lost their lives and properties, especially in the Eastern Region where people died of starvation or killed by sophisticated weapons supplied by the Super Powers of the West. (Okocha 2012) It should be noted that the Nigerian civil war took place in the defunct Eastern Region and the former Mid-West Region now Aniomaa area of today Delta State of Nigeria. Due to the extent of the brutality of the war, Emmanuel Okocha described the atrocity of the war as "blood on the Niger" in his book. (Okocha 2012) In other words, the avoidable carnage and wastefulness experienced during the war are serious indictments on African leadership which goes a long way to demonstrate lack of political will and failure of leadership.

Furthermore, having established the major interest of Nigeria's supporters from the West, it is pertinent to reiterate that France's major interest was on Biafra and its oil at the same time. It therefore denotes that France had a combination of political and economic interest in Biafra during the war. In this regard, oil facilities were at the time, being developed through Societe Anonyme Francaise de Recherches et d' Exploitation Petrolieres (SAFRAP) Nigeria Limited. Specifically, when the Nigerian civil war broke out, the company controlled only 7 percent of oil production in Nigeria. SAFRAP was formed in 1962 and was a subsidiary of French State-owned oil company Enterprise de Recherches et d' Activities Petrolieres (ERAP). Its President, M. PerreGuillaumat, was General de Gaulle's Minister of Armed Forces from 1958 to 1960. The company, based mainly in the Eastern Region, had six exploration permits covering 24, 178 square metres. It found oil on dry land, which is much cheaper to exploit, north of Port Harcourt. Also important was the fact, unlike the other oil companies operating in Nigeria, most of its oil reserves lay inside the newly created East Central State, which was the core Igbo region. It was, therefore, not surprising that, from the onset of the crisis, SAFRAP supported the Biafran side.



Apart from the peculiar characteristics of its oil locations, there was also a chance that, in event of a successful secession, it could inherit the assets of Shell-BP, which was considered by Biafra as backing the Nigerian cause. Again, unsurprisingly, the company agreed to pay the £100,000 demanded by the Biafrans as royalty in June 1967. (Uche 2008) Considering the economic dimension of the war globally, it is evidently apparent that the Nigerian civil war eventually became a war for the Super Powers with battle grounds at the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria. Since the independence of African countries, such kinds of interventions have consistently characterized the relationship of African nations with the formal colonial masters and other countries of the Western world. Due to the lack of quality leadership required in Africa, African nations have ignorantly surrendered the will of their nations at the foot of their formal colonial masters who have in many occasions exploited African nations. A good number of the civil wars recorded in Africa are regrettably attributed to this very prevalent factor.

Africa, Neo-colonialism and the Nigerian Civil War

African nations were forged from the conglomeration of many ethnic nationalities by the Western powers. These ethnic nationalities have varied as well as similar traditional political institutions. Some are feudal while some are non-feudal. Thus, some forms of political institutions are prone to hierarchical despotic forms of government whereas others are basically democratic and republican in nature. Where there are combinations of these conflicting institutional set ups, conflicts are bound to occur because the degree of receptivity to modern change among the different political members of the varied political institutions might vary. The case of Nigeria and Biafra (defunct Eastern Region) illustrates this aptly. (Nzimiro 1968) 'Biafrans' are majorly found in the present Southeastern Nigeria. They were brought back into the Federation (Nigeria) at the end of the war upon their defeat. They are from one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria called Igbo. The Igbo are traditionally democratic and republican in nature which clearly reflects in their institutional set up. This political feature of the Igbo distinguishes them from other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

The internal structural instability of the new states in Africa is aggravated by tribal ideology exploited by the political class for their own interest. This divisive ideology of hatred tends to break down the growth of national sentiment needed for the unity of the nation against foreign neo-colonial forces. Added to the two internal factors that make for weakness is the growing factor of class division within each state. Some of the ideological class divisions are hidden in the so-called tribal differences, and an analysis of the tribal politics reveals that the leaders came from a class of people quite separate from the class of the masses they pretend to represent. These factors as examined here, lead to the general weakness of many African nations. Under conditions like this, the neo-colonial agents take advantage of the weakness of the leaders of these states to dictate their political and economic conditions. Centuries of economic exploitation of Africa by her former colonial masters has left the economy of the new nations weak. Because of the ideological backwardness of some of the leaders they lack the dynamic spirit of accepting the challenge of a new society, and still depend on the metropolitan countries for their political and economic destiny. (Nzimiro 1968)

Political corruption by the neo-colonial forces takes the form of exploiting the internal political weakness of the states to divide their leaders. The emergence of Biafra negated the



agenda of the neo-colonialists of the west. Considering the signs of a potential prosperous and virile nation demonstrated by Biafra from its inception, the imperialists were alarmed and decided to crush Biafra at all cost. This particular factor explains the reason Soviet Union and Britain hurriedly ignored their ideological struggles and jointly supported the Federal Government of Nigeria, all in a bid to prevent the emergence of Biafra in Africa. Abandoning of the ideological struggles by the Super Powers at the time of the war for the purpose of defeating Biafra, highly demonstrates the level of value the imperialists have in Nigeria which made them to ensure the union was kept one in order to serve their economic interest. This is possibly in tandem with their arrangement and agreement at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 (Perkins 2004). Sadly, African leaders seem to be ignorant of such imperialistic missions. Based on neo-colonial tendencies, it could be argued that the emergence of Biafra would have spelt doom and drastically curtail the overbearing dominance of the Western powers on Africa. Most likely, Biafra would have inspired other African nations to greatness and ensured a complete shattering of the long-aged neo-colonial shackles placed on Africa. Stanley Diamond argued that "Africa, as a continent, would have benefited from the Biafran sovereignty, as a result of its human and material resources". (Nzimiro 1968) In a more succinct manner, Emeffena Ezeani captures the implication of Biafra's defeat to Africa thus:

The implications of the Biafra war and its outcome go beyond the 2 million or so dead. Biafra was, by chance, that spark of African modern technological ingenuity and inventiveness that might have, if allowed, taken African development on a different course today. Biafra was the home of the "can do" attitude forced upon the Biafrans by the necessity of war and crystallized in their culture of enterprise and ingenuity. Biafrans in a space of two years and under intolerable war conditions, mined oil, refined petroleum in refineries locally fabricated and kept their vehicles moving despite a total blockade. At a time when 20th century rocket science was only a few decades old Biafrans, Africans, fabricated their own rockets, powered it with their own refined rocket fuel and launched them with devastating effects on the Nigerian army. The killing of Biafra was not only a tragedy for the Biafrans, but unbeknownst to many, ultimately a tragedy for the rest of Africa. How? Firstly, by sending off two million to their grave by starvation, bullets, bombs and by organized massacres, the Nigerian responsible- especially the army officers and rampaging mobs in the North got off very lightly. No one was tried or convicted for murder, genocide or war crimes. The signal was therefore sent that Africans can be killed or done to death in such number with impunity. Other tragedies and blood fest wars were to follow as history tells us- Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Congo, Southern Sudan, Darfur and Liberia. The other implication of killing Biafra was akin to killing the Industrial Revolution in Britain or imagining the state of the far East without the emergence of Japanese technological trailblazing. Biafra was potentially Africa's Japan or the seat of Africa's scientific and industrial revolution, but she was killed in infancy and Africans confined to the consumer pattern of life that suited British and western commercial interest and export. Why would they want another Japan to emerge to increase the pressure on their market dominance? (Ezeani 2013)



In line with the argument of this paper, the African leadership represented by OAU during the war could be described as colossal failure. The inability of OAU to manage the crises gave the imperial powers the opportunity to chase into the conflict. Despite the exploitation of Africa during the war by the global West, African leaders rather demonstrated lack of courage, wisdom and purposeful leadership for the continent. Various leaders in Africa, who were supposed to intervene in the Nigeria-Biafra crisis through the OAU, rather became tools in the hands of the neo-colonialists. Throughout the period of the war, the neo-colonial powers kept dictating and influencing decisions among African leaders.

This approach, therefore, prolonged the war to 30 months. Apart from few countries like; Tanzania, Gabon, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, who gave moral support to Biafra, the rest of the continent were on the side of Nigeria. It should be noted too that a very insignificant number of countries in Africa appeared neutral while large number visibly offered their support to the federal government of Nigeria through OAU. The OAU through their operations in the course of the war demonstrated total dependency on the western powers for initiative. In view of this fact, it could be asserted that the accusation regarding the dominance of neo-colonial ideology in Africa is not false. It is pertinent to affirm that during the war, OAU abducted some of the principles of the character and applied some- particularly those with respect to the preservation of territorial integrity with disregard to humanitarian consideration. While this could be a standard international practice across the globe, it is also important to state that all these diplomatic nuances related to modern international relations are alien to indigenous African people, since the creation of boundary itself was a creation of the Western powers and not by African peoples or their leaders.

Conclusion

African traditional society since the pre-colonial period had demonstrated sufficient knowledge on the act of governance. The leaders built various kingdoms and empires wherein African indigenous political systems and institutions flourished. However, African started losing its values in political culture and heritage due to the influence of colonialism and neo-colonialism. With the drastic changes in her pattern of governance, African society never remained the same. The series of war experienced in Africa have been consistently traced to failure of leadership in the post-colonial era. Due to the failure of leadership also, Africa has now become a laughing stock in the comity of nations around the world. On this basis, therefore, there is every need for Africans to rethink neo-colonialism with a view to changing the existing narratives on Africa. It is also important for Africans to start rethinking leadership patterned after the distinctiveness of African society, or at worst, modifies the existing structure to fit into their current political realities.

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