THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR 1967-1970

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Denton, Texas
December, 1978
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The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the Nigeria/Biafra War, 1967-1970. A vast literature has been written on both the Organization of African Unity and the Nigerian civil war. By utilizing the available resources, this paper aims at explaining how the OAU handled the Nigerian conflict and other African conflicts before the Nigerian civil war and why the OAU has not been very successful in resolving African conflicts.

Basically, this thesis is divided into two parts. The first includes chapters one, two, and three, while part two includes chapters four and five. Chapter one gives an overview of the entire thesis, while chapters two and three give the historical background of the formation of the Organization of African Unity and the cause and nature of the Nigeria/Biafra War. Specifically, chapter two gives the background of the origin of and formation of the OAU, ideas behind the formation and OAU's treatment of African conflicts before the Nigerian civil war. In addition, this chapter examines the role of Nigeria in African politics before 1967.

Chapter three examines the cause and nature of the Nigeria/Biafra War, and OAU's initial handling of the
Nigerian conflict.

Chapter four deals with the attitudes and actions of the OAU during the war, while chapter five explains why the OAU was unsuccessful in the Nigeria/Biafra War. This chapter also tries to point out what should be expected of the OAU in the future if it is to carry out its responsibility as a peace maker in Africa.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970.

The working hypothesis of this thesis is that as a result of (1) conservatism of the OAU; (2) Article 3, paragraphs II and III of the OAU Charter; and (3) the influence of foreign powers on the OAU, the Organization has not been very successful in handling African conflicts.

The purposes of this study necessitated researching a wide array of literature on the Organization of African Unity, conflicts in Africa since 1963, and the Nigerian civil war.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The founding of the Organization of African Unity in May, 1963 ended the rivalry among short-lived African regional organizations best known by the cities in which they were established--Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia. But the Organization was to be menaced by tribal and territorial conflicts--the six wars among the OAU members, including the Algerian-Morroccan War, the Congo Uprising, the Sudanese Civil War, and the Nigerian Civil War, the Angola Crisis and the Somali-Ethiopian War.

Of all these wars, the Nigerian Civil War exposed the weakness of the Organization of African Unity as a peace solving organization and provided insight to the damage done to the Organization by maintaining a conservative attitude in the handling of African problems. It was in this war that the two main principles of the OAU Charter were put to test:

1The rivalry among the African countries which led to the formation of the three regional blocs mentioned above is significant in two ways. First, it portended the lukewarm attitude developed towards Pan Africanism by African leaders in the French Community. Second, it marked the beginning of open controversy on the approach towards African Unity.
1. The principle of noninterference in internal affairs (Article 3, Paragraph 2), constantly referred to by Nigeria,

2. Respect for the inalienable right to independence (Article 3, Paragraph 3), insisted upon by Biafra.²

The war between Nigeria and Biafra was from all points of view a catastrophic and protracted struggle. Few people who heard that on July 6, 1967, there had been clashes between Federal and Biafran troops near Ogoja imagined that the conflict would ultimately result in a war of international dimension. The war lasted for thirty hectic months and the exact number of Nigerians on both sides who died in the conflict is unknown. Neither side kept accurate records of the military casualties, and there are no reliable records of the civilian victims of the war, who far exceeded the number killed in military operations.

During the war, the federal government did everything to treat the war against Biafra as strictly an international affair, but despite this, four elements made it of great concern, not only to Africa, but also in the world.³

1. The supply of arms, including aircraft and heavy artillery, by the governments of the United Kingdom, the


³Ibid., p. 155.
Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the United Arab Republic to the federal government and undisclosed sources to Biafra. 4

2. The recognition of Biafra as an independent state, thus according it the status of a full member of the international community, by the governments of Tanzania (April 15, 1968), Gabon (May 8, 1968), Ivory Coast (May 14, 1968), and Zambia (May 20, 1968). 5

3. The conditions of Biafra's population, which was cut off from the sea and encircled by the federal troops, and thus became of great concern to the world. A worldwide campaign to save the starving women and children of Biafra was launched by the international Red Cross, the Church, and other international bodies. 6

4. The presence of a group of foreign military observers investigating Biafra's allegation of genocide. 7

But despite the world concern over the conflict in Nigeria, the OAU initially paid little or no attention to

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the deteriorating situation in Nigeria. That the time was ripe for some sort of discussion was not perceived by the OAU, and the Kampala peace talks arranged by Arnold Smith were a dismal failure. Even when Sekou Toure called for the summit meeting of the OAU to discuss African and Middle East problems, the Nigerian Civil War was not included in the agenda. But because the leaders did not want to provoke world criticism, had they dispersed without a word about the conflict, they decided to discuss it. Even then, the decision to discuss it proved difficult to the OAU because of Article 3, Paragraph 2 of the OAU Charter, which prohibits any intervention in the internal affairs of Nigeria. Instead of the Organization discussing the problems in Nigeria, they chose to send a six-man delegation to Nigeria for four months and when they visited, the mission had discussions only with General Yakubu Gowon. In a conflict that had already taken over one million lives by then, the African heads of state could not understand that it was necessary to bring the two parties together. From then on, the OAU developed a naive and inept approach towards resolution of the Nigerian conflict. It is with the same naivete and ineptness that the OAU approached other African conflicts.

8Yassine El-Ayouty, p. 156.
In summary, after examining the facts, this thesis is of the opinion that the following factors are responsible for the OAU's weakness and failure in handling the Nigerian Civil War. The first was that the OAU is, by design and institution, a conservative organization. It is anti-secessionist, anti-interventionist, and anti-border changes. Such an organization must face up to the question of change and destruction that the normal social process inevitably involves; that is, whether or not to recognize a change in a concrete situation and if not, what concerted action should be taken to frustrate the change.

The OAU decided not to recognize the change in the Nigerian situation inherent in Biafra's demand for secession. The Assembly of Heads of State and the government of the OAU, meeting in its Fourth Ordinary Session at Kinshasa in September, 1967, resolved to reaffirm "their adherence to the principle of respect for the Sovereignty and territorial integrity of Members" and to reiterate "their condemnation of secession in any member states."

The second weakness of the OAU with reference to the Nigerian situation was its inability to enforce its

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decisions on member states. The OAU could do nothing to prevent member states (Tanzania, Zambia, Ivory Coast, and Gabon) from recognizing Biafra. The OAU has no sanctions, except those of collective disapprobation of defaulting states, but even these, the OAU was unprepared to invoke against the four states. Thus, the Nigerian situation divided Africa on the central issue of secession and it became an open field for intervention—at least diplomatic intervention to either side of the Civil War.  

The third factor was the weakness of the OAU with respect to the outside world. Neither the OAU, nor any of its members, possess the power to insulate African problems from extra regional intervention. Nigeria thus became an open field for unilateral third party intervention by extra Africa states.  

The fourth factor that led to the OAU's weakness in resolving the Nigerian conflict was Article 3, Paragraphs ii and iii of the OAU Charter. Each of the parties in the conflict used Article 3 to support its case. The federal Nigerian government always referred to Paragraph ii of Article 3 to stop any intervention by the OAU—"The


principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of member states" while the Biafran government constantly referred to Paragraph III of Article 3 to support its stand--"Respect for the inalienable right to independence." 13

Because of all these factors, in the words of Joseph Okpaku, "In Nigerian Crisis the OAU's hand was tied with its conservative attitude and the article of noninterference as it was also tied in other conflicts. According to Jon Woronoff, because of conservativeness, "The Organization of African Unity has tended to remain on the sidelines, to avoid rather than deal with problems. It has lost its prestige because of timidity over Rhodesia and neglect of tragedy in Biafra." 14

13 Yassin El-Ayouty, p. 153.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FORMATION OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

. . . Our meeting henceforth proceed from solid accomplishments. Let us not put off, to later consideration and study, the single act, the one decision, which must emerge from this gathering if it is to have a real meaning. This conference cannot close without adopting a single African charter. We cannot leave here without having created a single African Organization. . . . If we fail in this, we will have shirked our responsibility to Africa and to the peoples we lead. If we succ-ed, then, and only then, will we have justified our presence here.\(^1\)

This is a part of a speech delivered by His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia when African heads of state and government met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to form, for the first time, an organization to unite Africa and portray African personality after many years of colonial exploitation.

But the concept of African unity did not start with the attainment of independence by African nations. To scholars of African politics, the concept of political independence for Africa emerged in the philosophies of Pan Africanism, the "African personality" and negritude,

Pan-Africanism started in Trinidad in 1900 under the sponsorship of Henry Sylvester Williams, who had been acting as advisor for the Bantus of South Africa and the Fantes of the Gold Coast to protect the customary tribal land from the greed of white settlers. He brought together a number of similarly minded Caribbean and American Negroes and Africans at a conference held in Westminster Hall, London, July 25-30, 1900. The main aim of this conference was to start a movement for securing to all African races living in civilized countries their full rights, and to promote their business interests. This spirit was quickly developed in the U.S.A., when Dr. W. E. B. Dubois, one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), articulated the concept of Negro Rights in the NAACP Journal, Crisis. Marcus Garvey, who established a journal called The Negro World, also founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA Declaration of Rights included the following statements:


We believe in the freedom of Africa for the Negro people of the world, and by the principle of Europe for the Europeans, and Asia for the Asiatics, we also demand Africa for the Africans both at home and abroad.

Garvey proclaimed the existence of a Negro empire, conceived a Black Parliament, and announced that he was the Provincial Resident of a Racial Empire of Africa. When his utopian empire failed, he began preaching Black Zionism, and his goal became a return to Africa. His Black Star Line, which was to transport the American Negroes to Africa, was a huge success in terms of financing. But all ended with Garvey's imprisonment for fraud in 1923.5

By 1919, the Pan-African spirit moved to France, where the Second Congress of the Pan-African Movement was held on February 19-21. In 1921, another Congress of Pan-Africanism was held in London, in which members passed resolutions calling for prevention of exploitation of Africa by foreign capitals, abolition of slavery and capital punishment, and for the right to education; finally, it insisted that "the natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the government as fast as their development permits." The Fourth Pan-African Congress was held in New York in 1927. At this time, there were more delegations from Africa. This

4 Ibid., p. 43.
Congress made doctrinal headway, sponsoring more explicit proposals on issues like self-government, education, labor, and world peace. But there was no means to obtain implementation, and with the 1929 Depression, the Congress ceased.\textsuperscript{6}

The impact of Pan-Africanism was not greatly felt in Africa until after the Depression when some African leaders who studied in the U.S.A. came back to Africa to generate the spirit of Pan-Africanism. The course of Pan-Africanism in Africa was championed by Professor Adeoye Deniga of Nigeria, Joseph Casely Hayford of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and Ladipo Solanke of Nigeria. These three men worked hard to put the idea of Pan-Africanism to Africans. Professor Deniga put his idea for African unity in a pamphlet entitled, "The Need for West African Federation." Although the circulation of this pamphlet was confined to West Africa at the time, its influence was felt all over Africa.\textsuperscript{7}

In October 1945, another Congress of Pan-Africanism was held at Charlton Town Hall, Manchester.\textsuperscript{8} This was the last Pan-African Congress to be held outside the continent of Africa, and a major point in the concept of Africa for

\textsuperscript{6}A. F. Addona, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{7}Adekunle Ajalla, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 10.
Africans. At this Congress, the African delegates listed grievances against colonial powers and indictment of their policy. The labeled both political and economic policies of the colonial powers as systematic exploitation. They called on the colonial powers to practice their own principles, those of Atlantic Charter and democracy (one man, one vote), and to redress the situation for the benefit of the peoples. They ended the Congress with the following slogans:

We are determined to be free. We want education. We want the right to earn a decent living, the right to express our thoughts and emotions, to adopt and create forms of beauty. We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this one World for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation. . . . We condemn the monopoly of capital and the rule of private wealth and industry for private profit alone. We welcome economic democracy as the only real democracy.  

The Struggle for Independence

The struggle for African independence was to be piloted by some African nationalists who used all available means to fight for African independence. The African leaders started to demand their rights. The two most prominent were Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (Ghana). When Dr. Azikiwe came back from the U.S.A. in 1937, he established his newspaper,  

The West African Pilot, in Ghana. As the editor of this paper, Dr. Azikiwe used the paper in his battle against colonialism in Africa. As a result of the publicity given to Pan-Africanism by The West African Pilot, Pan-Africanism became a mass movement of Africa for Africans. There were pressures everywhere against colonial powers. There was insurrection against French colonial rule in Madagascar (now Malagasy). Riots flared in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Bombings and shootings occurred in Algeria, and the terrorist Mau Mau Society in Kenya was organized against British rule.10

A significant meeting leading to the creation of the OAU was the First Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) in Accra, in April, 1958. At that time, only eight African states from the upper third of Africa were independent. To many, the Accra conference was an important step towards the birth of the OAU, for the conference proclaimed the Unity of the African nations.

The Second Conference of Independent African States was held in 1960. The Conference is important in two ways. First, it portended the lukewarm attitude developed towards Pan-Africanism by African leaders in the French community. Secondly, it marked the beginning of open

controversy on the approach towards African unity. The most significant pattern that developed during this period was the emergence of three power groups: the Brazzaville, Casablanca, and Monrovia blocs. The Brazzaville bloc got its name from the city where representatives from French-speaking African and Malagasy States met during December, 1960 to create the Union of African and Malagasy States (UAM). This bloc might be called the "French" family. The creation of the Brazzaville bloc caused dismay among some leaders of the radical African states, because the bloc's moderate policies were a great step forward towards a functional approach to African unity, as opposed to the more radical doctrine of political unity advocated by such states as Ghana, Guinea, etc. In an attempt to promote their views, the leaders of the radical group used the Algerian War and the Congo Crisis as reasons to convene a conference in Casablanca in early January, 1960, among Guinea, Mali, Morocco, the United Arab Republic, the Provisional Government of Algeria, Libya, and oddly, Ceylon. The most significant result of the Casablanca Conference was the enactment of the "African Charter of Casablanca." By April, 1961, it was clear that many African countries . . . and the two "blocs" . . . had similar desires for some sort of organization to achieve unity. Unity was not in dispute. It was the method by

11 Ajala Adekunle, p. 27.
which this unity could be achieved that was the dividing issue. In an attempt to resolve this issue, a conference was called in Monrovia, Liberia to bring the two blocs together. The radical Casablanca bloc declined to attend. Those who did attend became the third bloc—the Monrovia bloc.\textsuperscript{12} Although the Monrovia Conference has some significant achievements, African countries were still divided. Hence, another attempt was made to reconcile the views of the radical and moderate power groupings. To this effect, another conference was proposed this time in Lagos, Nigeria, at which all groups would be represented. At this time also, the Casablanca group decided not to attend the Lagos Conference on the grounds that the Provisional Government of Algeria was not invited. The two groups that attended the Lagos Conference (Brazzaville and Monrovia) accepted in principle a charter to create an Inter-African and Malagasy Advisory Organization containing in substance the principles discussed at the Monrovia Conference. The charter included provisions for a representative assembly, a council of ministers, and a general secretarial, among other things. It later became the basic document on which the OAU was created.\textsuperscript{13} The period following the close of


\textsuperscript{13}A. F. Adonna, p. 96.
the Lagos Conference was one of continent-wide lobbying. There was apprehension among some leaders that the Casablanca bloc, and others, might decline a conference of independent African states, and the attempt to create an Organization for Unity in Africa would again fail. Hence, Emperor Haile Selassie I sent out a delegation headed by Acting Foreign Minister Ketema Yifru and a team of foreign ministry officials, to urge, cajole, and induce leaders to attend a proposed Addis Ababa summit meeting to be held in May, 1963. The highly reputed Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa joined in the lobbying for an effective Addis Ababa Conference.

On May 23, 1963, African heads of state assembled in African Hall in Addis Ababa, all motivated with the spirit of African unity. Welcoming the members of the conference, the seventy-one year old Emperor Haile Selassie declared,

> What we still lack, despite the efforts of the past years, is the mechanism which will enable us to speak with one voice when we wish to do so, and to make important decisions on African problems when we are so minded. . . . The Commentators of 1963, speak, in discussing Africa, of the Monrovia States, the Brazzaville group, the Casablanca powers, of these and many more. Let us put an end to these terms. . . . What we require is a single African organization through which Africa's single voice may be heard and within which Africa's problem may be studied and resolved. . . . Let us at this Conference, create an institution to which we will all belong, based on principles to which we will all subscribe, confident that in its councils our voices will carry their proper weight, secure in the knowledge that the decisions
there will be dedicated by Africans and only by Africans and that they will take full account of all Africa's vital consideration. . . .14

After the Emperor's address, African leaders started to express their views on the type of unity Africa needed. It was their unanimous view that there should be an Organization of African Unity, but the nature of the unity became an issue of debate. The radical group of Casablanca, led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, proposed a Political Union of African States:

African unity is above all a political kingdom which can only be gained by political means. The social and economic development of Africa will come only within the political kingdom and not the other way. . . .

He proposed among other things, the following:

(a) A common market for Africa;
(b) An African currency;
(c) An African central bank.15

The Ghanian president received support for his ideas from Dr. Milton Obote of Uganda and Dr. Julius Nyere of Tanzania. However, the Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa assumed the role of spokesman for the signatories of the Lagos Charter. He presented what emerged as the majority opinion of the conference. He

14 SCIAS/GEN/INF/3, pp. 1-3. Also see Review of International Affairs (June 5, 1963), 1-3.

15 SCIAS/GEN/INF/36, p. 2.
proposed an African unity in which each African state shall be sovereign and autonomous:

Nigeria's stand is that, if we want unity in Africa, we must first agree to certain essential things. The first is that African states must respect one another. There must be acceptance of equality by all the states. No matter whether they are big or small, they are sovereign and their sovereignty is sovereignty.¹⁶

At the end of the debate the moderate group, led by the Nigerian Prime Minister, was victorious, and finally, African heads of state agreed to write a Charter of the Organization of African Unity.

The OAU Charter

After two and one-half days spent in general debate, the Conference went into closed session. Then followed a series of canvassing for the unanimous adoption of the Draft Charter which was to lay down the basis for an all-African Organization. With the "spirit of Addis Ababa" still high, Ghana and her Casablanca allies finally agreed to sign the Charter.

The Charter of the Organization of African Unity is made up of a preamble and an operative section of thirty-two articles.¹⁷ In contrast to the opening of the Preamble

¹⁶SCIAS/GEN/INF/33, p. 2. Also see SCIAS/GEN/INF/35, p. 2. Here Nigeria recognizes all the existing boundaries in Africa.

¹⁷For the full context of the Charter, see Appendix I.

The Preamble sets forth, in the first place, the principle of self-determination of peoples, which has been the leitmotif of the African peoples since World War I, and will remain a driving force until the whole of Africa has been completely liberated. It states the OAU's recognition of the general principle of freedom, equality, justice, and solidarity--principles that transcend ethnic and national divisions and appear in the constituent instruments of other regional and international organizations. The Preamble then proclaims the determination of the members of the OAU to "safeguard and consolidate the hard won independence as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our states and to fight against neo-colonialism in all its forms."\(^{18}\)

The Preamble also states the conviction of the heads of states and governments that

The charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the principles of which we reaffirm our adherence, provide a solid foundation for peaceful and positive cooperation among states.

The compatibility of the OAU and the United Nations is asserted again in paragraph 1e of article 11 of the

\(^{18}\)See Appendix I.
operational section of the Charter, which states the purpose of promoting "international cooperation, having due regard to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

The first six articles deal with the identification, purpose, principles, membership, rights, and duties of the participating states. In Article I of the Charter, the name of the organization is pronounced: "The high contracting parties do by the present Charter establish an Organization to be known as the Organization of African Unity." Article II contains the aims and purpose of the Charter while Article III outlines the fears, as well as the hopes of the participants. Paragraphs II and III emphasize "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and its inalienable right to existence," while paragraph IV centers on peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration. These three paragraphs of Article III (paragraphs II, III, IV) are very relevant in the examination of the OAU's role in the Nigerian crisis. Article III has often been referred to as both the builder and destroyer of African unity. It was the conservative and ambiguous nature of Article III that led to the ineffectiveness of the OAU in handling the Nigerian crisis. The federal government quoted Article

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19 See Appendix I, Article 1, no. 1.
III:2 to bloc mediation while Biafrans used Article III:3 to support their struggle. On the part of OAU members, Article III:4 was grossly mishandled. 20

Articles IV, V, and VI deal with membership, rights, and duties of the participants. The definition of responsibilities, composition, and procedure are outlined in Articles VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI. The above articles indicate that the assembly of the heads of state and governments shall be the policy making organ of the Organization while Articles XII, XIII, XIV, and XV, establish the functions of the Council of Ministers. Article XII enumerates the functions of the Council of Ministers which includes preparation of conferences for the Assembly, implementing decisions of the Assembly and coordinating inter-African cooperation in accordance with the Assembly's instructions within the concept of the OAU.

Articles XVI, XVII, and XVIII deal with the Secretariat. The power of the heads of state to appoint an Administrative Secretary General whose functions are to direct the affairs of the General Secretariat, is contained in Article XVI, while Article XVIII outlines the functions and responsibilities of the personnel of the Secretariat. In Article XIX, the members pledge themselves to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to this end, they established

20 For Article III, paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, see OAU Charter in Appendix.
a Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration.\textsuperscript{21} The Charter also called for the creation of a specialized commission in Articles XX, XXI, XXII.\textsuperscript{22}

The primary goal of the Addis Ababa Charter--the unity of the African continent--is eminently clear, as is the unanimous desire of African states for immediate freedom and subsequent unification.

Although the Charter does not go as far as to state explicitly its "non-acceptance of any leadership" it does in effect bar any single African state from playing the role of "leader," stressing the principle of absolute equality of all the states.

Recognizing the arbitrariness of the colonial boundaries, the heads of state who mostly were apprehensive of tribal dissension in their countries, spoke at length on the need to maintain the existing boundaries. President Tsiranara of Zanzibar declared,

\begin{quote}
It is no longer possible, nor desirable to modify the boundaries of nations, on the pretext of racial, religious or linguistic criteria ... should we take [these] as criteria for settling our boundaries, a few states in Africa would be blotted out from the map.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21}See Appendix.

\textsuperscript{22}For the rest of the OAU Charter Articles, see Appendix.

\textsuperscript{23}SCIAS/GEN/INF/14, p. 4.
The principle of maintaining the old colonial boundaries was not explicitly put in the Charter because they feared it would be opposed greatly by progressive elements in the continent and secondly, insertion of such principles in the Charter would mean an explicit ratification of the Treaty of Berlin.  

The Addis Ababa Charter raises no legal objection to the participation of African states in non-African international organization and makes no reference to the possible incompatibility of treaties concluded before or after its own entry into force. In practice, African states may exercise their *jus tractatus* outside the frontiers of Africa as they wish. No consideration was given even at Addis Ababa to the evolution of an organ responsible for supervising or authorizing political, military, or economic treaties between the OAU and the former colonial powers.  

The successful outcome of the summit meeting which culminated in the signing of the OAU Charter at Addis Ababa on May 26, 1963, was a decisive reply to those who were convinced that Pan-African unity was an ideal bound to disintegrate once it confronted the realities of the African situation.  

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24 In 1885 a conference of thirteen European states met in Berlin to delimit territorial claims in Africa.  

The formation of the OAU drew the world's attention. Congratulating the African heads of state for the successful formation of an organization that would work for peace and unity in Africa, President John F. Kennedy in his message to the Conference said, "Africa's continuing march toward independence, unity, and freedom, as a vital part of man's historic struggle for human dignity and self-realization" and added, "thanks to your actions the other nations of the world will find new roads toward mutual understanding."\(^{26}\)

A message sent by Chou En-lai, Prime Minister of China, is also of interest:

May this conference make new contributions towards friendship among the peoples of Africa and may it contribute toward their cooperation in the fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism and help them to obtain or retain their national independence, at the same time strengthening Afro-Asian solidarity and the defense of the peace in Asia and the world.\(^{27}\)

The acting chairman of the OAS, Rodolfo A. Weidmann, conveyed to the OAU the congratulations of the Council of the OAS and expressed good wishes "for the success of the new regional association with which the OAS hopes to establish and maintain cordial relations in a common pursuit of peace and progress for the peoples of their member states."\(^{28}\)


\(^{27}\)Ibid., pp. 5-6.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., p. 10.
By forming the Organization of African Unity, African states were consciously trying to appear more organized and powerful than they actually were. Before they left Addis Ababa on May 27, 1963, African heads of state were all proud and happy for their achievement and sense of oneness, but how long this pride was to last was to be determined by conflicts that were soon to erupt in different states in Africa.

Response of OAU to Conflict in Africa Prior to the Nigerian Civil War

The Organization of African Unity and its Charter were first put to test on October 8, 1963, when a war broke out between Algeria and Morocco over a boundary dispute that had been dragging on for some time. This conflict developed into a full-scale war and each side accused the other for starting the war. The gravity of the situation occurring at this time when the "Addis Ababa spirit" was still fresh, led African leaders to implore both parties to stop the fighting and settle their differences. On October 29, 1963, a summit meeting of the OAU met at Bamako. After a series of talks, agreement was reached that hostilities would cease by midnight between November 1 and 2, 1963. It was also agreed that a mixed commission, consisting of officers from Algeria, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Mali should be formed to determine the zone from which the troops would be withdrawn when the cease


should be discussed while Somalia argued that the treaties determining her borders were invalid since Somalia was a colony at the time they were signed. She therefore insisted that her wider territorial claims were not subject to negotiations. Despite these arguments, the OAU continued in its efforts to find a solution to the conflict. The OAU only succeeded in isolating the war, but failed to abate the conflict, could not do anything to stop fighting, and did not provide any settlement.33

In the same year, 1964, the continent witnessed another conflict. This time, it was in the Congo (Kinshasa). As early as 1960 the Congo had been thrown into a power conflict escalated by superpower intervention. The 1960-1962 Congo crisis almost tore the United Nations into pieces and was also responsible for the death of the United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold.34 As a result of United Nations intervention, the Congo conflict was halted, but the possibility of its resurrection was not remote. In 1964, Moise Tshombe, one of the principal participants in the 1960 conflict, became the Premier of the Congo. Many other African heads of state did not recognize him and condemned him because of his use of mercenaries. So he was prevented from attending the July Heads of State

34 Jon Woronoff, p. 64.
Conference in Cairo, but was allowed to attend a Special Council in Addis Ababa in September which appointed a ten-nation Congo Reconciliation Commission. Tshombe's request for African troops to replace the mercenaries was ignored (except for 400 Nigerian policemen).\(^3^5\) However, before the plan could be implemented, hostilities broke out again in Bukavu. This time the Congolese launched a powerful attack and the mercenaries had to fight for their lives. In the midst of this, on November 3, two more columns of mercenaries under Bob Denard invaded the Congo from Angola and headed towards Katanga bearing the effective threat that there would be new uprisings in the region and a border front against the government. This time the Congolese army managed to drive back the invaders in Katanga, while the mercenaries in Bukavu retreated to Rwanda on November 5, where they were disarmed and interned. In the Congo crisis, like other crises before it, the OAU failed to isolate the conflict. It did not help to end the fighting, nor did it abate the conflict; rather the OAU members became divided.

While the Congo crisis was still fresh, another conflict exploded in Burundi. The conflict between Rwanda and Burundi developed as a result of ethnic agitation in Rwanda in 1967, as a result of which 70,000 Rwandians fled to

\(^3^5\) Ajala Adekunle, p. 164.
Burundi. From Burundi, they attempted to overthrow the government of Rwanda. As a result of this, African heads of state met in Addis Ababa. They delegated President Mobutu to mediate. At a meeting between the two parties and President Mobutu, the conflict was resolved. In this conflict the OAU was successful. It helped to isolate the conflict; it abated the conflict for three years, and it provided settlement.37

In 1967, the OAU witnessed the Nigerian crisis. Before the Nigerian civil war in 1967, Nigeria had occupied a prominent role in the African continent. During the first Congo crisis in 1960-1962, Nigerian troops played a major role in preserving peace in the area. Nigeria provided the largest number of troops among the African nations in the United Nations peace force in the Congo. Second, during the military unrest in Tanganyika in 1964, Nigeria sent a battalion of 500 troops. Third, during the Niger-Dahomey border dispute in which many citizens of the Niger Republic were killed, it was Nigeria that arranged for peace talks between the two nations which led to immediate cessation of the dispute.38 Fourth, when in 1965 the African heads of state decided unanimously to sever diplomatic relations

36 Jon Woronoff, p. 382.
38 Ajala Adekunle, p. 160.
with Britain because of the Southern Rhodesia U.D.I., Nigeria campaigned against it because of her interest in the Commonwealth.

Unfortunately, in 1967, Nigeria, black Africa's most populous, richest, and strongest nation, plunged into a catastrophic civil war, a war that lasted for thirty months, caused the death of over two million people, and nearly led to the disintegration of the Organization of African Unity.
CHAPTER III

THE CAUSE AND NATURE OF THE NIGERIAN/BIAFRAN WAR,
1967-1970

Background

The crisis which finally led to the Nigerian/Biafran War in 1967 can be traced to the formation of political systems in Nigeria.

Gabriel Almond, in Politics of Developing Areas, defines a political system as

... the interaction to be found in all independent societies which perform the functions of integration and adaptation (both internally and vis-a-vis other societies) by means of the employment, or threat of employment, of more or less legitimate physical compulsion. The political system is the legitimate, order-maintaining or transforming system in the society.¹

There are many political systems, such as Angola's that are excluded by this definition where the question of legitimacy is the crucial political issue. Political systems threatened by revolution or war or colonial political systems where the functions of adaptation and integration are performed, even though the possession and the use of physical force by colonizing power is regarded as

illegitimate by the subjects, are other examples. Almond's definition can be applied to political parties in Nigeria.

Almond's definition is more comprehensive than Burke's definition of a party as "a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interests, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed."\(^2\)

The Burkean concept of the party assumes a national arena in which the national interest is known but in which groups differ as to means of achieving the ends. In accord with this concept, citizens may form parties because of agreement on certain means. As a party, they can propose programs to the electorate; and their failure to satisfy national needs may result in the loss of office. While in office, their duty is to carry out the national mandate faithfully.

Groups which at the moment are not in office because their proposals are only acceptable to the minority of the population (the opposition party), have to set themselves up as the people's watchdogs, pointing out where the means proposed have been inefficient and how the opposition's program will more efficiently further the national interest.

This role of the party best suits the parliamentary system of government with its opposition parties, cabinet, and parliamentary responsibility. With an enlightened

community, with efficient means of communicating national needs and carrying out national duties, with sensitivity to national problems, and with a consensual basis for accepting the rules of the game of politics assured, such a system will succeed, as it has in Britain.

The parliamentary system of government is essentially dependent for its success on the existence of parties whose representatives agree on a common policy, work together in a united front in Parliament. It is the party system which renders politics intelligible to the electorate.³

With the ends of society agreed upon, the test of the party's performance can only depend on the efficient execution of its programs. That is why it is important to have a united front in Parliament as an essential element in parliamentary government.

But when this concept of the party is transferred to a society still in flux, where the national interest is still in the process of definition, where the respect that a villager pays to the drumbeat of his locality or clan may be a more effective symbolization of his citizenship than a meaningless national anthem,⁴ there are bound to be conflicts about the nature of political goals and about the political means with which to achieve those

⁴Joseph Okpaku, p. 81.
goals. Political contest becomes a contest to define the goals to be sought by society. In the absence of moderation on the part of the political parties, conflicts may become total and dangerous, one party's victory annihilating the other parties. Parliamentary government becomes very difficult to operate when disciplined parties are devoted not to working out those means which are most conducive to an accepted national end, but to discovering the extent that the constitutional means can be used to further particular ends. The electorate cannot give a mandate acceptable to all parties because it is split into communities. The goals of the political parties are not understood by all in terms of a common language of advantage and/or disadvantage; meanings are ascribed from imputation of their sectional origins, and Parliament, rather than being the institution where the national logic or idea is abstracted from the numerous and partial organized demands, becomes the arena of power where the temporal majority superimpose their will upon the general will. 5

The history of the introduction of the Nigerian peoples into legislative politics supports this interpretation. 6 To this history of the political upheaval that led to the Nigeria/Biafra War we now turn.

5James Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley, 1963), p. 421.
6Joseph Okpaku, p. 16.
Nigeria had a rather short history as a unit. The British occupation only began in the 1860's, and it was not until 1900 that the various southern areas were included in a protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1914 the colony of Lagos and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria were amalgamated, thus creating a unified Nigeria under Lord Frederick Lugard, who remained the British governor until 1919. Despite the theoretical unity, the country was still administered under a system of indirect rule. Each area, and the tribal groupings within each area, continued to develop separately and went their own way. The British were so concerned with the idea of regional chiefs that where there were not any they tried to impose them. The Aba Riots of 1929 were partly caused by resentment against the "warrant chiefs," men imposed as chiefs by the British but whom the people refused to accept. The crucial and dominant personality in Nigeria of this period was Herbert Macaulay, founder of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). His supporters were the House of Docemo and the vociferous Lagos market women.

NNDP was parochial and its immediate goal was to win the Lagos election as a means of protecting the economic

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and political interest of the native traders and producers of Nigeria, to press for the Africanization of the civil service, and to promote the development of higher education and the introduction of compulsory education throughout the country. His preoccupation with championing the rights of the traditional ruler of Lagos against the colonial government, and the insulating effect on his party of the indirect rule which shielded the interior of Nigeria from the political influence of Lagos, prevented the NNDP from becoming truly national.

In 1938, the young, educated elite united to protest the standards applied to higher education, discrimination in civil service, and the issuing of licenses to African lorry owners. The protest became a movement and the movement soon outgrew its modest beginnings to become the first major attempt to build a political party on a national level. Branches of the party, the Nigerian Youth Movement, were opened in most of the larger towns and cities; leaders included men like Ernest Ikoli (Ijaw), Samuel Akinsanya (Ijebu), H. O. Davis, Dr. K. A. Abayomi, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Ibo), and Obafemi Awolowo (Yoruba). The tenor of the party's thinking was national; its reforms were directed toward the removal of particular abuses (indirect rule) which prevented the effective politicization of the masses, and the abolition of discriminatory practices against Africans both socially and economically. While it sought
greater African representation in the decision making bodies of the government, it still accepted the framework that the British system provided.

In 1941, the Ikoli-Akinsanya incident\(^8\) split the Movement and introduced the thorny issue of tribalism for the first time. A seat in the legislative council had become vacant with the resignation of Dr. K. A. Abayomi, President. Party protocol and precedent directed that this seat should be filled by Ikoli, next in command, but Akinsanya (Ijebu) chose to contest for the party nomination. After his bid for candidacy was thwarted, he and his backers, the Ijebus and the Ibos under Azikiwe, left the Movement, proclaiming that they had been victims of tribal discrimination. This might be called the most important political episode in the history of Nigeria because it set a precedent which has yet to be reversed. In 1944 a melange of improvement associations, clubs, labor unions, and tribal unions met at Glover Hall in Lagos to form the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon. The party's immediate goal was to secure the independence of a united Nigeria within the Commonwealth.\(^9\) The NCNC started as a national party which was reflected in the composition of its leadership: Herbert Macaulay (Yoruba),

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\(^{8}\)For a detailed explanation of this incident, see Coleman, *Nigeria Background to Nationalism*, p. 227.

\(^{9}\)Joseph Okpaku, p. 19.
President, and Azikiwe (Ibo), General Secretary. Its tour of the country in 1946-1947 to rouse the people against the projected Richards Constitution gave it a national aura which no subsequent party has managed to equal. However, between 1946 and 1948, the tribal tensions which had been initiated by the Ikoli-Akinsanya dispute of 1941, coupled with the dissatisfaction of the Yoruba elite, who felt that the NCNC was dominated by Azikiwe and the Ibos, culminated in the tribal cold war of 1948. The fulminations in the Zikist *West African Pilot* and the Yoruba organ, *Daily Service*, were catalysts which exacerbated an already explosive civil situation in Lagos. Threat of war almost turned into civil war as members of both tribes began to purchase weapons. The temper of the times can be understood from the alterations of men who had labored for decades on behalf of the national cause. Sir Adeyemo Alakija proclaimed that

> We were bunched together by the British who named us Nigeria. We never knew the Ibos but since we came to know them we have tried to be friendly and neighborly. Then came the arch devil to sow the seeds of distrust and hatred. . . . We have tolerated enough from a class of Ibos and addle-brained Yorubas who have mortaged their thinking caps to Azikiwe and his hirelings.\(^{10}\)

The NCNC became synonomous with the Ibo tribe and one could see the Ibo acting out what Azikiwe was to give

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national significance when he depicted the national destiny to conquer and rule the nation:

It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages. . . . The martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver. The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility.11

The Yoruba's specific answer to the threats of the Ibo represented by the NCNC and the Ibo State Union was the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (1948) and the Action Group (1951), a party deriving its initial energy from the Egbe. Although the membership of the Action Group (AG) was to be on an individual basis without any social, religious, or class discrimination, the founders of the party intended to concentrate on the Yoruba section of the Western Region with hopes of winning the election to be held under the new McPherson Constitution of 1951. The party was prepared to use modern political means, programs, party disciplines, and party manifestos to capture a parliamentary election, but realized that only with the support of the traditional leaders in the Egbe Omo Oduduwa could the party image be quickly and effectively propagated.

The emergence of a highly disciplined party in the Western Region, combined with the necessity to organize for

the elections taking place in all of the regions, had its political consequences in the North and in the East. The NCNC at its meeting in Jos in 1951 reorganized a party which had been almost moribund for three years, changed from organizational to individual membership, and launched a vigorous election campaign in the East and in the West. The NCNC meeting at Jos in 1951 was the first political development unfolded in the Northern Region.

Before 1947, northern Nigeria had been effectively screened from southern political influence, due to a joint effort of the traditional rulers and the colonial government, it now found it had to organize or see the North captured by southern political parties whose secular ideologies were inimical to the Islamic regimes of the Hausa Fulani emirates. In 1948 two cultural groups, the Bauchi General Improvement Union and the Youth Social Circle of Sokoto, both composed of young men interested in politics, amalgamated. Jamiyan Mutanen Arewa (Northern people's Congress or NPC) was the result of the merger. The traditional rulers were suspicious of the party and to convince them, members of this new party assured the traditional leaders that they were only interested in helping the traditional authority stave off the southern political invasion. In return, they asked for a measure of reform within the native authority system, stating that
Jamiyan does not intend to usurp the authority of natural rulers; on the contrary, it is our ardent desire to enhance such authority whenever and where ever possible. We want to help our national rulers in the proper discharge of their duties. . . . We want to help them in enlightening the Talakawa [the masses].

It was not until 1951, that the NPC officially received the endorsement of the traditional leaders in the North. Its leadership was drawn largely from the ranks of higher officials in the native administrations (emirates). Its programs included

1. Demands for regional autonomy within a united Nigeria,
2. Local government reform within a progressive emirate system,
3. The voice of the people to be heard in all councils of the North,
4. Retention of the traditional systems of appointing emirs with a wider representation of the electoral committee.
5. Drive throughout the North for education while retaining and increasing cultural influences,
6. Eventual self-government for Nigeria within the British Commonwealth, and

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7. One North, one people, irrespective of religion, tribe, or rank.¹³

The election of 1951 found all three parties victorious in their respective regions and set a pattern for the tribal politics that was to ruin the country. The NPC controlled the Northern Region, the Action Group the Western Region, and the NCNC the Eastern Region. The national and regional politics were monopolized by the three major tribal units.

It was found that the ethnic factor prevented the development of a national consciousness which could invest the national institution with a primary over other institutions. This ethnic factor coupled with the relative absence of class considerations, also led to the lack of development of common interests which cut across tribes, linguistic groups, or filial associations. The strengthening of the particularistic rather than the national values weakened whatever national community existed.

The constitutional review of 1953 in London, and of 1954 in Lagos, gave the formal structure of the Federation. At the center, however, a most curious but stable coalition sprang up between the Northern People's Congress and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons. The NPC accepted 50 per cent representation in the federal

¹³Joseph Okpaku, p. 56.
Parliament instead of seceding since it failed in its demand for confederation. This meant that it had to ally with one of the Southern parties in order to form a majority in the House.\textsuperscript{14} NCNC and NPC formed a coalition government to run the federal government with NCNC as the junior partner.

In 1962 the precarious balance was upset. The crisis in the AG leading to the schism in its leadership became a subject of national concern. The AG was in total disarray. From 1962 to 1963 there were signs that the coalition between the NPC and the NCNC was under severe strain. What tipped the bucket was the census of 1962, rejected and revised in 1963. The North was given a larger majority of the population than before. It had thirty million out of fifty million. A coalition with the East was not necessary. Political ties were established between Akintola's party in the West and NPC in the North. For the first time the progressive parties of the East and West (NCNC and Action Group) formed an alliance on political lines. Then came the two alliances vieing for the 1964 federal election--(a) the UPGA (United Progressive Grand Alliance) comprising the Action Group and the NCNC, and (b) NNA (Nigerian National Alliance) comprising the NPC and the NNDP.\textsuperscript{15} This

\textsuperscript{14}Joseph Okpaku, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{15}Jon Woronoff, p. 398.
was the first national election to be held in Nigeria since independence. Commenting before this election, Christopher Johnson, in the October 1 issue of the *London Financial Times*, said

> The federal elections which must be held before the end of the year have a two-fold significance for the rest of Africa. Both democratic forms of government and federal-type institutional structure will be on trial, and their future may depend on whether Nigeria continues to show that they are workable. The staying power of Nigerian democracy is dependent on that of Nigerian federation. . . . The problem of the Northern Regions preponderance will only be solved as other parties get a chance to make inroads into the Sarduana's still somewhat feudal support. The forthcoming elections will show to what extent this slow process is already taking place.16

That was precisely what was going to precipitate the crisis, for the other parties did not feel they were getting a chance to wage an unmolested campaign in the North. Reports of violent attacks by hired thugs on UPGA candidates filled the press. Headlines like the following were commonplace, and increased in frequency as the election campaign progressed: "The UPGA candidate for Akwanga constituency in the coming federal elections, Malamliiya Remi, was recently at the Lafia Alkali Court sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labor after being found guilty of unlawful assembly. The offense, according to the prosecution, was committed on September 24 . . ."17

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17 *Nigerian Outlook*, October 9, 1964.
With such irregularities, the UPGA demanded the delay of the elections until the irregularities have been regularized. The irregularities were not regularized, the elections were held and were boycotted in the South. There was violence and talk of secession. However, the final move was not made. At the last moment the President and the Prime Minister succeeded in working out a solution, necessary to allow tempers to simmer down. The election result would be accepted, national coalition government would be formed.

The problem of the troubled federal elections had hardly abated when the preparations went ahead for the November, 1965 elections in the Western Region. Here, Akintola was defending his premiership and the record of his government. It seemed very likely that if the elections were conducted fairly, UPGA--the opposition party--was going to win. This would have given the UPGA control of the East, the Midwest, the West and Lagos, a feat which would have entailed UPGA superiority in the Senate, even though the NNA alliance would have continued to control the Lower House. The roughness with which the Western election campaigns were conducted, was notable. People were burnt alive. UPGA candidates were detained, UPGA agents and other candidates were kept out of the counting.

\[18\textit{Time},\text{ January 8, 1965, p. 18.}\]
houses by a number of means, the mildest of which was a curfew selectively applied by the government-employed police. In short, the Western Nigerian election of 1965 was the signal for a complete breakdown of law and order. Rioting broke out across the Western Region. Murder, looting, arson, mayhem were rife. On the roads gangs of rival thugs cut down trees stopping motorists to ask for their political affiliations. The wrong answers brought robbery or death. Within a few weeks estimated deaths were between 1,000 to 2,000.19

In the face of this the federal government, which had been so fast to declare a state of emergency in 1962 because of an uproar in the Western House of Assembly, remained quiescent. Despite repeated appeals to the Prime Minister to declare an emergency, dissolve the Akintola government and order fresh elections, the prime minister declared he had "no power!"

The mighty federation was crumbling into ruin before the eyes of foreign observers who had only a few years before held Nigeria as the great hope of Africa. Despite the awkward situation in the nation, Abubakar invited a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference to meet in Lagos in the first week of January, 1966 to discuss the question of restoring law and order in rebellious Rhodesia. While

19 Frederick Forsyth, p. 33.
the conference was on, there were rumors of coups and counter coups, of military take-over and pre-emptive government strikes.

The conference ended, the delegates flew away, and Nigeria turned inward on itself again. In the federal Parliament the crisis in the Western Region rose like the phoenix, hot and angry from its ashes. "This country is on fire . . . we are sitting on a tinder box," warned one opposition member. From Kadoana, capitol of the Northern Region, the pro-government newspaper turned the coin over: "Only 153 people killed in the West," ran one laconic chilling headline. On Thursday, January 13, 1966, Balewa announced that the federal government was not going to intervene in the West despite the increasing chaos and the fact that such intervention was legitimate under the constitution and had, moreover, a precedent created by Balewa himself four years before. The following day the Premier of the Western Region, Chief Akintola, flew to Kadoana for urgent discussions with his political ally, the Sarduana of Sokoto, Premier of the North, Balewa's party boss and undisputed strong man of Nigeria. Simultaneously, a top level security conference was taking place in Lagos, attended by most of the country's senior army officers. Then the tempo slackened again: it was Ramadan and the

\[20\text{New Nigeria, January 15, 1966.}\]
Muslim sabbath. Akintola returned home to Ibadan and the soldiers in Lagos went off to a party. It was hot and it was a weekend.21

But old Nigeria was to die that weekend. In the small hours of the morning, the soldiers struck. The Federal Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and two Regional Premiers--Abmadu Bello of the North and Akintola of the West as well as the Federal Minister of Finance, Sir Sam Festus Obetie Eboh and many army officers were assassinated. The Premiers of the East and Midwest were not killed, however. The failure to assassinate the Premiers of the East and the Midwest, who were all Ibos, in a coup largely carried out by Ibo army officers, was responsible for branding the coup as being tribally based.

Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, who was the highest ranking officer and an Ibo man, assumed power and set up a provisional government. He appointed four military officers as military governors of the four regions. They were Lieutenant-Colonel Ojukwu (East), Lieutenant-Colonel Fajuji (West), Lieutenant-Colonel Ejoor (Midwest), and Major Katisna (North). Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon, the most senior surviving northerner in the forces, was appointed army chief of staff.

The coup was greeted by a wild outburst of rejoicing in the southern half of the country. In Lagos and other major southern towns there were popular demonstrations expressing support for Ironsi's military government. The press, the most outspoken and ebullient in Africa, indulged itself in an orgy of invention and high spirits. One of the best headlines of all, in West African pidgin English, ran "Bribe? E Done Die-O. Chop-Chop-E No Dey" (Bribery Is Dead. Corruption Is Not There).\(^2\)

In the North it was different. The loss of the region's two most important political leaders and virtually all its army officers was not received kindly nor had the fact that federal power, exercised continuously by the Northern leadership since independence five years earlier, had been torn from its grasp. There were no open hostilities initially, however, and the Northern press followed in calling for an end to corruption and nepotism in Nigeria. The traditional rulers, the emirs, also made public statements of loyalty to Ironsi. The radicals in the North, wholeheartedly welcomed the coup.

The "majors," or "January boys" coup--as it soon became known--was the first round of the Nigerian civil war, though it was neither intended, nor appeared to be so at the time. Both the coup itself and the legends, which

\(^2\)Morning Post (Lagos, January 27, 1966).
quickly grew round it like mushrooms in the rain, split Nigeria in two and sent it down the road to a fratricidal war. There are two questions about the coup that need explanation if the rest of the story is to make sense. Was it an Ibo coup? And was it, as later claimed, the prelude to an attempt by the Ibos to take over and "dominate" Nigeria? The answer to the two questions is "no."

The concept of a coup in Nigeria was not new. In the constitutional crisis of December 1964, several lieutenant-colonels had talked of military intervention but nothing had come of it and the army, true to its British traditions, kept out of politics. However, as the situation deteriorated, especially with the situation caused by Western Region elections, the young army officers decided to save the nation from collapsing completely. Although a majority of the officers who took part in the coup were Ibos and this tribal breakdown is a central plan of the "Ibo plot" theory, on closer examination it turns out to be an unsatisfactory one.23

Ironsi started well. His first problem was the army itself, which was still in a restive mood. He had chosen his regional military governors pragmatically--army seniority mattered less than ethnic and administrative compatibility--and he wisely appointed the former civilian

23John de St. Jorre, p. 44.
governors to act as advisers to the new men, thus ensuring a degree of continuity. Initially, it seemed that Ironsi and the military were going to hold the ring and assume the role of an impartial arbiter without prejudice. The major general stressed the temporary nature of the military government, its constitutional continuity and its cleansing mission. He appointed a plethora of commissions or study groups to inquire into practically everything, ranging from the constitution itself to the reform of the prison system. From the narrow but crucial viewpoint of tribal favoritism, Ironsi also created a good initial impression. His own atribalism was genuine and was reflected in his choice of personal staff—he appointed a Northerner ADC and a Northerner as a private secretary. The story of Ironsi's two hundred days in power is like that of a man on a raft caught in a sea of powerful and conflicting currents.

To avoid regional conflicts, Ironsi advocated a unitary form of government in which regional differences would not constitute a threat to the unity of the nation. As the move to form a unitary government was on, there were inflammatory movements going on in the North at a grassroots level in the vernacular press; a fairly typical instance was this editorial headline: "Discipline these insolent Ibos living in the North" which appeared near the
end of the month in the Hausa language daily. 24 In London, Northern students took to the streets demonstrating against a unitary system of government. Towards the end of May, Hassan Katisna, the Northern governor, returned to Kaduna from a Supreme Military Council meeting in Lagos and said to waiting reporters, "Tell the nation that the egg will be broken on Tuesday." It was a colorful and accurate way of describing what was about to happen.

The following weekend (May 29) riots broke out in the North. The trouble began in Kano with, significantly, a demonstration by Northern civil servants and students. Similar demonstrations took place in Kaduna, Zaria and other Northern towns and then flared into popular riots in which thousands of Ibos were killed.

The May riots rocked the government. The Northern governor, Katinsa, who was on tour of the provinces, rushed back to Kaduna and ordered troops to move into the town and shoot rioters at sight. But it was a case of locking the stable door after the horse had bolted. The surviving Ibos fled the Northern Region and came back to the East. In the subsequent mythology of the crisis, Ojukwu, the Governor of the East, called on the Ibos, fleeing from the North in the wake of the massacres, to return to their homes, only for them to be massacred in large

numbers the following September. In the middle of July, Ironsi announced a rotation of the military governors, a plan warmly welcomed by the Southern press but pointedly ignored by the North. Then on July 29, 1966, while Major General Ironsi was touring the country in a bid for unity, there was a mutiny of Northern soldiers. The major general and high ranking Ibo officers were killed. This time the Northerners set up the new government. The man they chose was Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner, but a Christian from a minority tribe. In his speech, Gowon declared, "Putting all considerations to the test--political, economic, as well as social . . . the base of unity is not there, or is badly rocked." The coup was felt as a blow against the Ibos. Commenting on the coup, the governor of the Eastern Region, Colonel Odumegu Ojukwu declared, "The brutal and planned annihilation of officers of Eastern Nigerian origin has cast serious doubt as to whether the people of Nigeria can ever seriously live together as members of the same nation. But the worst was yet to come. The coup was almost a signal for the

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27 Ibid.
Northerners to act. Rioting broke out and there were massacres of the Ibos. Over a million fled and as many as thirty thousand were killed.\textsuperscript{28}

With each day the federation crumbled further. The federal government could not accept secession. The Yorubas immediately utilized the chances in both federal civil service and commercial companies left vacant by the fleeing Ibo civil service cadre. On September 29, the Ibos were attacked again; this time, they were killed in all parts of the Northern Region, Lagos, and parts of the Western Region. The Ibos were no longer wanted in any other part of Nigeria except the Eastern Region.

In September 1966, Gowon formally abolished the Unification Decree and reinstated a federal system as it had existed before May 24, 1966.\textsuperscript{29} He then convinced an ad hoc constitutional conference for delegates from the four regions and urged them to find alternative forms of government:

1. a federal system with a strong central authority;
2. a federal system with a weak central authority;
3. confederation; or
4. an entire new arrangement which will be peculiar

\textsuperscript{28}Jon Woronoff, p. 401. Also see selected speeches and random thoughts of C. Odumegurn Ojukwu.

\textsuperscript{29}Federal Government of Nigeria, Decree No. 59, Supplementary to Official Gazette Extraordinary.
to Nigeria and which has not yet found its way into any political dictionary.\textsuperscript{30}

The Constitutional Conference in Lagos failed as the Eastern delegation withdrew as a result of renewed killing of the people of Ibo origin.

**Nigeria’s Military Leaders Meet in Ghana**

As conditions deteriorated following the violence in the North, Britain’s roving ambassador, Malcolm MacDonald, made several trips to Lagos, Enuga and Accra. A convenient site was being sought for the meeting of Nigerian military leaders to reconcile the Nigerian problems. The East would not accept London because of British government’s duplicity in the whole affair as the eastern government claimed and secondly, the East was suspicious of even flying in an HMS plane because of the incident of an Ibo leader who went aboard a British warship under safe conduct and was promptly deported to the West Indies in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{31} Joseph Ankrah, head of the Ghana government, agreed to host the meeting of Nigerian military leaders. The meeting was to be held in Aburi, Ghana. Aburi would be the last face-to-face encounter between Gowon and Ojukwu, as representatives of the two


factors in the Nigerian conflict. This was to be Nigeria's last chance. They agreed on the principle of collective rule on the basis of concurrence of all the military governors on decisions affecting their regions. As an international public relations exercise, the Aburi meeting must be considered an important victory for Ojukwu. "On Aburi we stand" became the diplomatic and propaganda battle cry of Biafra spokesmen throughout the ensuring civil war, and it seemed to strike a responsive chord in the world press. The political argument behind the slogan, briefly stated, held that at Aburi there had been unanimous renunciation of force to settle Nigeria's internal differences, and that there had also been unanimous approval of decentralization program which should have given each region full control over its internal affairs and a veto over any decisions taken by the central government in Lagos. The federal government, not surprisingly, interpreted the Aburi records differently.

The East demanded a full implementation of the Aburi decisions, but the federal government could not comply with it. On February 25, 1967, Ojukwu at the Consultative Assembly promised the easterners that he would not allow them to be slaughtered in their beds, that the East was militarily ready to resist any threat,

32 Aburi Meeting, final communique signed at Aburi on January 5, 1967.
and that unless the Aburi accord was implemented by the end of the fiscal year, March 31, 1967, the East would unilaterally withdraw from the prevailing federal arrangements.33

On March 31, 1967, Ojukwu signed a revenue collection edict directing that all revenues derived from the Eastern Region be paid into the Eastern Region's treasury. At the advice of the British diplomats, Lagos retaliated by suspending all Nigerian Airways flights to the east, halting postal and money order transactions, and cancelled the diplomatic passports of thirty prominent Ibos who were known to be lobbying against the federal government overseas.

Gowon later called a meeting of African diplomats in Lagos, reasserting his determination to use force if anyone tried to destroy the unity of the country, the Aburi renunciation of force notwithstanding, "In the event of any section of the country acting unilaterally . . . we will have to take the necessary police action."34 To counteract the Aburi agreements, Gowon issued Decree No. 8, a compromise between the Aburi agreements and the federal civil servants' criticisms. Three days later, Ojukwu invited the world's press to a news conference in Enugu and

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declared, "We have come to a line of no return and crossed it." 35

On May 26 Ojukwu addressed a joint meeting of chiefs and elders and Consultative Assembly. The Assembly to no one's surprise, endorsed independence the following day. Secession was at the lip of every person in the East. Instead of announcing the birth of Biafra on May 27, 1967, as demanded by the people of Eastern Nigeria, Ojukwu paused once again to see if the federal government would have a change of heart. Ojukwu overplayed his hand. Rather Gowon at a news conference, issued a constitutional decree that transformed the political system. The decree replaced the four regional governments with twelve states. 36 By announcing the creation of twelve states prior to Biafran secession, Gowon established first claim to minority loyalties in the former Eastern Region.

With the creation of the twelve states, the formal announcement of secession was an anti-climax. Shortly after midnight on May 30, 1967, Odumegwu Ojukwu and a crowd of Easterners gathered at the governor's mansion in Enugu to hear the following declaration:

35 Ministry of Information, P. R. No. 140/1967 (Enugu).

Fellow countrymen and women, you, the people of Eastern Nigeria . . . aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria. . . . Therefore I . . . do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known and called Eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf and territorial waters, shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of the Republic of Biafra.37

At 3 A.M. on May 30, Ojukwu summoned the Enugu diplomatic corps, which consisted of the American consul, Mr. Barnard, the British Deputy HighCommissioner, Mr. Parker, and the Cameronian Consul, Mr. Nikou, to inform them of his decision to declare Biafra an independent nation. Two hours later the message was relayed in a sixty-minute radio broadcast to the fourteen million Ibos, Efiks, Ijaws, and the Ibibios whose lives would soon be ravaged by one of the most violent conflicts in African history.38

After nearly a year of political maneuvering, the issue was finally engaged. Ojukwu, who had never recognized Gowon's sovereignty over the East, was at last prepared to test his own independence. Secession is a zero-sum proposition, and the likelihood that the East could be persuaded voluntarily to rejoin the federation diminished sharply with announcement of the twelve states structure.


On July 6, 1967, shots rang out along a dusty road in Eastern Nigeria. The Nigerian civil war had begun. The war began in a spirit of confidence on both sides. General Gowon told his people and the world he had undertaken "a short, surgical police action." Victory was forecast in days rather than weeks. Despite the military's promises, the troops made no headway. The Nigerian army had never been created for conventional warfare and certainly not on the scale suddenly required. After three weeks, Lagos suffered a defeat in the Midwest Region. Ibo led dissidents in the federal army, under a Yoruba Brigadier Victor Banjo, and captured Benin on August 9, 1967. Biafra seemed to be expanding westward. The move continued until it reached Ore in Western Nigeria, where it lost its momentum and reversed its direction.

While Biafran soldiers were busy on their westward movement, the Nigerian army was concentrating her attack on Biafra through Bonny, the oil loading terminal for the Shell-BP pipeline from Port Harcourt. From its brief and unexpected position of strength, Biafra proposed a compromise. On August 30, it offered to enter an "Association of States" with one or more Nigerian states. The federal government would accept peaceful negotiations only on the condition that Biafra would renounce its secession.

Biafra's strength, and resistance angered Britain and the British government decided to send modern weapons to the federal military government while the Soviet Union supplies her with aircraft, pilots, and technical advisers.

With the escalation of the Nigerian crisis it had become, more than ever, an African affair. Thus there were mounting pressures for action by the Organization of African Unity. Sharp comments were made in the press. Still the OAU did nothing. There was no extraordinary session. Even when Sekou Toure called for a meeting on problems arising from the Middle East and use of mercenaries, he forgot to include the civil war in Nigeria. The Secretary General showed little or no interest in a war that had taken one million lives or more by then. Despite months of battle and bloodshed, the Organization persistently ignored the situation. Nevertheless, it had been created to help maintain peace on the continent and it was being discredited by this refusal.

40 Jon Woronoff, p. 408.
CHAPTER IV

ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS OF OAU DURING THE WAR

The thirty months of war between Nigeria and Biafra were punctuated by peace conferences, all of which were abortive. Their failure surprised no one. The prerequisite of any successful peace conference is that both parties must be persuaded that the conflict is no longer susceptible to a military solution, and that a negotiated solution is not only desirable but in the long run inevitable.

Third parties wishing to see the conference successful, must do all in their power to bring both parties to that persuasion. For any party outside the conflict to profess a desire to see a peaceful solution on the one hand while providing one of the partners with a reason for failing to share that view is hypocrisy.

As violence in Nigeria increased, so did the level of diplomatic activity surrounding the conflict. Evidence of this appeared throughout Africa, where preparations were underway for the Fourth Annual Summit of the Organization of African Unity scheduled to convene in Kinshasa from September 10-14, 1967.
The Kinshasa Conference

During the Kinshasa Assembly, a debate was held on the civil war. However, the heads of state did not go very far in their deliberations and were not eager to impose their will on a fellow member. The heads of state and government were faced with repeated warnings by the federal government of Nigeria that the war was merely a matter for Nigeria.¹

When the OAU Assembly passed its resolution on the Nigerian Conflict, it was worded to avoid any suspicion of intervention in Nigerian affairs. Significantly, it began by reaffirming respect for the sovereignty of member states. In the resolution, the heads of state and government recognized the situation as "an internal affair, the solution of which is primarily the responsibility of the Nigerians themselves" and resolved to send a Consultative Mission of six heads of state (Cameron, Zaire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia and Niger) to the head of the federal government of Nigeria to assure him of the Assembly's desire for the territorial integrity, unity, and peace of Nigeria.²

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There was no discussion of Biafra's right to self-determination. Although this right was ardently supported for the colonial territories, it was just as staunchly desired in the already independent states. Nor were the African heads of state and government interested in the rights and wrongs, whether the Northerners had pushed the Easterners to secession, or whether the Easterners had unwisely withdrawn. This was of no consequence when it came to national unity. No matter how uncomfortable or unstable the co-existence of various ethnic or religious groups in one country, Africa could not approve secession, fearing it possible in any of the states. Thus, when it came to the question of principle, the heads of state quickly produced a resolution including a "condemnation of secession in any member state." But it can be argued that African leaders should have sought some means of settling it rapidly. The sooner an attempt was made to reconcile the parties or at least make them reflect whether both would not be destroyed by the war, the more chances there were for saving Nigeria. According to Dent Martin, "the conflicts in Nigeria were not irrepressible had OAU accepted its responsibility as a peace solving organization and acted immediately to bring the two parties together for a meaningful negotiation for the sake of that
same Nigeria unity that OAU professed she sought to maintain.\(^3\)

The African heads of state suggested no compromise and did not even wish for clarification. It merely decided to send a Consultative Committee to the head of the federal government of Nigeria "to assure him of the Assembly's desire for the territorial integrity, unity, and peace of Nigeria."

The Consultative Committee on Nigeria was by far the highest ranking body ever to represent the interest of the African community. Therefore it was hard to imagine that it would do nothing more than confer with General Gowon and assure him of the Assembly's support. For some time, Enugu had been appealing to the OAU to intervene and it claimed that the mission was coming to mediate. The members of the Consultative Committee found it difficult to agree on the time to visit Nigeria. The mission was originally scheduled to meet shortly after the Kinshasa Assembly. With the war raging heavily and no victory in sight for either side, the six heads of state could hardly have limited themselves to their restrictive and almost degrading functions. A compromise settlement might have seemed particularly reasonable. Or, at any rate, the Committee would have had strong arguments if it had urged

a rapid conclusion to hostilities. In fact, this would have been the best time to impose a cease-fire or to seek a peaceful settlement if any were to be found.

The OAU mission finally met in Lagos on November 23, 1967. Only four of the heads of state were able to come: Haile Selassie, Ahidjo, Ankrah and Diori. In a perceptibly stronger position now, the federal military government was not inclined to leave the Committee much leeway. The Emperor stressed that its main goal was to preserve the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria and urged a peaceful settlement. This might have meant a policy other than mere prosecution of war on the central government's terms. But General Gowon told the Committee clearly that "your mission is not here to mediate." He held out no hope for a cessation of military operations. Warning that failure to end the secession in Nigeria would encourage separatism elsewhere in Africa, he emphasized that "the most valuable contribution the mission can make in the present circumstances is to call on the rebel leaders to abandon secession."  

Eventually, after nine hours of discussion, Gowon had his way. The closing communiqué included no initiative by the mission. It merely reaffirmed that all secession attempts in Africa were dangerous and that any solution

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to the crisis must preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria. The Committee made no effort to stop the fighting. The only point that could be obtained was for the mission to enter into contact with the secessionists. General Ankrah was mandated to transmit the Kinshasa resolution and the mission's conclusions to Colonel Ojukwu. However, given the decisions, there was little hope his efforts would bear fruit. The message was not an offer of negotiations so much as conditions it could take or leave. This had been understood by Biafra, distinctly less happy about the outcome. It had been originally asked to cooperate with the Consultative Committee. Nothing could be expected and the OAU was attacked as an "instrument of the reactionaries." Radio Biafra announced that the mission was doomed to fail because it had consulted only one side in the dispute and had "condoned genocide and . . . proved itself a rubber stamp by merely endorsing Gowon's warning that their own countries would disintegrate if they did not rally to his support."\(^5\) As a result of OAU's peace mission's attitude in their Consultative Mission to Lagos, nationals of four African states--Ghana, Togo, Dahomey and Upper Volta--resident in Biafra protested and said that the decision of

the OAU delegation on the Nigeria-Biafra War has exposed the OAU to ridicule in the eyes of the world.\textsuperscript{6}

Although victory for Nigeria was already in sight it was still out of reach. The EAsterners fought desperately and progress was slow. Both leaders left open the possibility of negotiations. But the OAU failed to utilize the peace requests by the two leaders. Nigeria intensified its move to crush the rebellion. Towns and villages were bombed; schools, hospitals and markets were blown up. An important consequence of the civil war were the second thoughts in Africa. And the longer the bloodshed went on, the more obvious it became that the Easterners could no longer live in harmony with the other peoples of Nigeria. By fighting a year and bleeding themselves, the Biafrans had begun to convince Africa of their will for independence. This led to increasing disapproval of the prolongation of the war in influential circles in Black Africa, even to some approval of the Biafran cause. Once assured that this was a genuine effort for self-determination, and not a Katanga-like plot to make off with the oil revenue of Nigeria, countries like Tanzania and Zambia permitted discreet approval in the press. Those along the coast more openly deplored the destruction and death.

But the war was disregarded officially by Africa until Tanzania, on April 13, 1968, became the first country to recognize Biafra as "an independent sovereign entity." Only thus, a government spokesman explained, could Tanzania remain true to its conviction that the purpose of society was for service to man. The Easterners had been rejected by their Nigeria as had the Jews by Germany. After ten months fighting they had proven to the world that they were ready to struggle for themselves. Tanzania therefore felt "obliged to recognize this setback for African unity." The reasons given by President Nyerere for this unprecedented step were basically humanitarian. He believed that the purpose of the state was to serve the people and that if the people or a part thereof rejected the state, it had lost its justification. Although Tanzania regretted that the unity of Nigeria had been destroyed over the previous two years, he was convinced that unity could not be assured by force or conquest. A refusal to recognize the existence of Biafra would have meant tacit support for the war against the people of the Eastern Region in the name of unity. "Unity is for the living and not for the dead," he declared. This step was

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7The Herald Tribune, April 15, 1968.

immediately condemned by the Federal Military Government and regarded as a "declaration of war amounting to complete severance of relations."\textsuperscript{9} But no reprisals were envisaged.

Now that Tanzania had drawn attention to the war going on within the continent, it tried to press the point. Dar es Salaam warned Lagos that if the hostilities did not cease it would have to bring the matter before the OAU or the United Nations.

Tanzanian recognition of Biafra was immediately followed by Gabon on May 8, 1968; the Ivory Coast recognized Biafra on May 14; then came Zambia on May 20. Speaking to a press conference in Paris before according diplomatic recognition to Biafra, the Ivory Coast President Felix Houphouet-Boigny said, "I shout my indignation in the face of the inexplicable and culpable differences of the whole world over the massacres which have occurred in Biafra over the past ten months."\textsuperscript{10}

Tanzania's recognition of Biafra followed by Gabon, the Ivory Coast and Zambia, reawakened world consciousness in the Nigeria/Biafra war. But that time was ripe for some sort of discussions was not perceived by the OAU. Overtures were now made for peace from both sides.

\textsuperscript{9}The Herald Tribune, April 15, 1968.

Fortunately, the Commonwealth was more active in trying to bring the opponents together. Its Secretary-General Arnold Smith had carefully maintained his neutrality in the conflict. In London and in Lagos he met representatives of the federal government and it also proved possible to contact the Biafrans. Secret talks were initiated to find the possible place for location of the peace talks and possible agenda. After Biafra had turned down London and OAU headquarters and Nigeria objected to Dakar and Arusha, they came to an agreement on Kampala, the capital of Uganda.

The Kampala talks were off to a bad start and finally ended in dismal failure. The two sides had come no closer together. The only positive result was to show that negotiations were indeed possible and to remind the OAU of its responsibilities. For the Organization had forgotten that its primary duty was to maintain a presence and follow the situation closely so as to offer its services at the right time. Countless lives could be saved and Africa would show that it was capable to handle its own disputes. Now it was clear that there had been some willingness to seek a way out of the deadlock. The active concern of the Commonwealth should have been that of the OAU.

The Consultative Committee was not reconvened for another two months. It held its second session in Naimey,
from July 15-19, 1968. The assembled members of the mission first heard General Gowon on July 16, who told them that "the rebel leaders and their foreign backers are playing politics with the whole question of human sufferings to their diplomatic and military advantage." He added that "a unilateral ceasefire on humanitarian grounds would not, in any way, relieve the sufferings of the innocent victims of our tragic war."\(^{11}\)

On July 18, 1968, Colonel Ojukwu addressed the Consultative Mission. Although his speech was not made public, to judge by the press conference he held at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on July 21, 1968, he appeared to be impressed by the way the OAU dealt with the most important issues on the conflict. Before his departure for Naimey, he had spoken of the obstacles standing in the way of an honorable settlement on Nigeria--among those he cited was the "unrealistic attitude of the OAU." After the meeting at Naimey, he said, "Provided the spirit of sincerity and honesty which was so very evident in Naimey continues, provided Africa is left alone to grapple with the problems posed by our difficulties, I think there is hope. Judging from the way the conference started moving, I think there would be permanent peace or at least temporary peace."\(^{12}\)


\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 1124.
The OAU Consultative Mission on Nigeria, although continuing to support the federal government on the need for preserving Nigeria as an entity, adopted a resolution in which emphasis was put on the relief operations in the distressed areas of Biafra rather than on the reconciliation of the two parties. The parties were urgently requested to resume peace talks, under the auspices of the OAU in order "to achieve a final solution of the crisis prevailing in their country." The representatives of the federal government and Biafra met in Niamey on July 20, 1968 under the chairmanship of President Dioi of Niger and agreed on the following agenda for the Addis Ababa peace talks:

1. Arrangements for a permanent settlement;
2. Terms for the cessation of hostilities; and
3. Firm proposals for the transport of relief supplies to the civilian population.

The Addis Ababa Peace Negotiations in August-September, 1968

The second round of OAU peace talks on the Nigeria/Biafra war began in Addis Ababa on August 5, 1968. This phase was held under the chairmanship of Emperor Haile Selassie. Colonel Ojukwu came to represent Biafra. Unfortunately, Nigeria did not send General Gowon nor the fairly diplomatic Chief Awolowo, but the inflexible Chief
Enahoro. 13 This meant that there would be no dialogue between the only two men who could have reached a settlement. Nevertheless, Ojukwu addressed the Assembly. He began by what sounded like a plea for the Biafran people on humanitarian grounds. After four paragraphs, he revealed that he was quoting direct from the speech Haile Selassie had made to the League of Nations in 1936 over the rape of Abyssinia by the Fascists. 14 He concluded by saying,

Our survival cannot be separated from the sovereign independence of our State. No one who has studied the past contribution of our people to the cause of African freedom and unity can doubt our awareness of the need for the whole of Africa to unite. Nevertheless, we have learned from bitter experience that unity must come in stages through cooperation and mutual understanding. . . . In fulfillment of that purpose we offer to discuss with Nigeria the closest form of association which does not detract from our right to ensure security at home and abroad. 15

Once again, a war of words had been launched. The apparent agreement of Niamey vanished. Cheif Enahoro called the speech provocative and Colonel Ojukwu, unable to meet his counterpart, left Addis Ababa. The talks continued. Chief Enahoro outlined the federal government case and called for renunciation of secession by the rebel leaders. He concluded by saying, "The Ibos would be

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13 Jon Woronoff, p. 249.


absorbed again into the civil service, police and armed forces, and there would be a general and complete amnesty."\(^{16}\)

The Addis Ababa peace conference, like its predecessors, became lost in a quagmire of delays, stalling, intransigencies and ill-will. In all, it sat for over five weeks, but world attention, the only thing that might have given it stimulus, swung away to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. If the two sides were to be brought to an agreement, it was necessary for Africa to make a stronger effort. Haile Selassie, who represented the Committee and the OAU during these talks, felt the hope for peace had slipped out of his hands. A new start had to be made. The Emperor attempted to convene the full committee so that the six heads of state might try to obtain concessions on behalf of the whole of African Community. He also invited the attendance of General Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu, the two indispensable participants. Nigeria was asked to cease hostilities during the meeting. But none was held. Soon the time had run out. The Emperor turned to the only item on which some agreement might be attained—the initiation of relief operations. This had become increasingly urgent. The number of people dying each day had reached

serious proportions and world public opinion was indignant. Haile Selassie gave the matter top priority and he held numerous meetings with the delegations, now on a lower level, to urge them on. Twice, he made compromise proposals and twice they were examined and amended by the parties. The path was long and tortuous. Finally, after five weeks of meeting, the conference adjourned on September 8 without having found any solution. The whole world saw how the "peace talks" of Addis Ababa, loudly heralded by the OAU, had been futile. But one thing to remember is that the failure of the peace talk was the failure not so much of the Nigerian or Biafran front men, but the failure of the OAU to bring pressure to bear on both sides. The chance was there and it was thrown away.

The OAU Summit in Algiers in September, 1968

Soon all eyes were on the Heads of State Conference of the Organization of African Unity scheduled for September 14 in Algiers. From Lagos frantic messages went out to the Commander of the Third Division that Owerri must fall by then or the Uli airport. African states friendly to Biafra let her know that in preparation for Algiers, British and American diplomacy was working overtime behind the scenes to persuade Africa that Biafra was finished. Considerable pressure, not excluding
financial inducements, was repeatedly brought to bear. It worked. It was in this atmosphere that the Assembly opened in Algiers on September 13, 1968. It started very unauspiciously for Biafra. In the part of his speech on imperialist threats, President Houari Bouedienne of Algiers included an attack against the "machinations directed at Nigeria aiming to disintegrate that great African state, the unity and cohesion of which we were and are so proud." He blamed the crisis on a foreign conspiracy. Without putting his finger on the culprits, he linked Katanga's secession with the situation in Nigeria and claimed that the same states and organizations that supported Katanga were now aiding the Biafran secessionists. The speech led to a first clash. President Kaunda refused to accept a vice chairmancy because he had been lumped with the imperialists. In open session he declared, "I feel the whole issue has been pre-judged." Later the four states that had recognized Biafra explained their reasons for taking this step. They spoke out for a resolute and courageous people. They condemned the bloodshed in the country only in the name of unity. The debate lasted only a few hours. Once again, it was held in very general terms that contributed little or nothing to clarify the problem.

17 Frederick Forsyth, p. 250.
18 Jon Woronoff, p. 425.
Moreover, the concern with fundamental principles kept the conference from doing something about the lesser matters that could have been tackled. There was no serious thought of ending the hostilities, of bringing together the leaders on both sides and holding negotiations under stricter OAU control. There was no discussion of how to lessen the suffering by opening relief corridors. This was reflected in the rather inexplicit draft resolution of the Consultative Committee. It was limited to generalities and appeals. The Ivory Coast demanded a more specific resolution as well as one attuned to Biafran needs. It urged both parties to take steps towards an immediate ceasefire and a definite settlement and called upon all concerned to cooperate in delivering relief supplies. 19

These demands were turned down or else vague in the final resolution. Still, it very sketchily covered the various aspects of the problem. First, it appealed to the secessionist leaders to "cooperate with the Federal authorities in order to restore peace and unity in Nigeria." In this connection it proposed a cessation of hostilities, asked the Federal Military Government to declare a general amnesty and "cooperate with the OAU in ensuring the fiscal security of all Nigerians alike, until mutual confidence is restored." It asked all parties to cooperate in the

19 West Africa, September 21, 1968, p. 117.
speedy delivery of relief supplies to the needy. But it left out the indispensable details that could have given the resolution real significance. There was no deadline, no plan of implementation and no supervisory machinery for the ceasefire. It was not clear what role the OAU would play in ensuring security. And, despite weeks of discussion, no plan was recommended for providing relief. Once again, the Organization had avoided the shock and possible disintegration of a direct confrontation. Speakers from both sides carefully refrained from poisoning the atmosphere and the rather colorless resolution was adopted overwhelmingly (against four negative votes and two abstentions). But it papered over the crack rather than furthering a solution. For Nigeria, everything had gone smoothly and in the final session of the Summit, Chief Awolowo noted the conference's success in "staving off the threat of division." He thanked the states that voted with Nigeria for supporting the principle of territorial integrity and avoiding maneuvers that would split Africa. Henceforth every African state must be considered an "organic entity," all secession condemned, and the OAU respect existing governments. The analysis of Rashidi Mfaume Kwawa, Tanzania's Vice President, was different. Algiers was "one clear example in history where eminent leaders decided to evade the real issue by playing the Ostrich
game" and merely sided with the federal authorities.20

About this time the Nigerian government was convinced that the secessionist regime would soon collapse. Its army penetrated ever further into the redoubt. But the war continued unabated.

All the while Nigeria was being ruined. The death toll rose and the effort cost hundreds of millions of pounds. The country was troubled. Sacrifices were not always accepted and there were tax riots in the West. Sometimes there was political unrest. In the East, things were much worse. Fortunately, by then the humanitarian organizations had managed to curb the wave of starvation. Still from time to time, there was a flickering hope of peace. Colonel Ojukwu still continued to appeal for a negotiated settlement and demanded a ceasefire as a preliminary to serious negotiations. These appeals were echoed by others as Christmas 1968 approached. Various statesmen called for a truce as a step towards peace. The Emperor of Ethiopia urged that hostilities be suspended for a week, and his appeal was seconded by the Pope. General Gowon, who did not want Biafra to use this breathing spell to prepare its defense, finally agreed to a forty-eight hour truce. In the end, there

20Ibid., pp. 117, 1089.
were only twelve hours without combat. The pleas for a cessation of hostilities increasingly fell on deaf ears as the federal government decided it would have to "fight for peace" in the face of foreign intervention. Moreover, the OAU's past behavior indicated that in the event of negotiations it was not likely to take an independent stand or seek concessions. For some time, any proposals were more an article of propaganda than a sign of willingness to seek a compromise. Nevertheless, during the months of stalemate, both sides may have been prepared to save the country from collapse. This was uncertain. Still, there was one body created specifically to test this willingness. The OAU Consultative Committee had its mandate extended and expanded in Algiers. Yet it remained inactive for months. An African interest in a settlement was limited to brief initiatives or a few words of counsel. The four recognizing nations continued their support of Biafra and their appeals for negotiations were suspended. An OCAM plan worked out in January, 1969, did not get very far since that body was equally divided. President Senghor, a more neutral figure, also sought a solution. He recognized that "in this fratridical war, the Nigerians are not the only guilty ones." The Organization of African Unity and all Africans were guilty passively. First he requested

21OCAM. This stands for Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache. It was formed by French speaking nations in 1965.
an immediate ceasefire followed by negotiations. As for the aims, "Once the principle has been admitted of Nigeria's integrity . . . I do not say unity . . . the question of whether it shall be federal or confederal is not worth the life of a single person." 22

The OAU Mission on the Nigeria Meeting in Monrovia in April, 1969

The last meeting of the OAU Consultative Mission on Nigeria was held in Monrovia from April 17-20, 1969. The Mission ended its three day meeting on April 20, 1969 without breaking the deadlock in the war between the federal government and Biafra. In a statement issued on April 20, the Mission proposed that "the two parties of the Civil War accept in the supreme interest of, a united Nigeria, which ensures all forms of security and guarantee of equality of rights and principles to all its citizens." Once endorsed by both parties, it proposed a cessation of the fighting and the opening without delay of peace negotiations with the good offices of the OAU. This text was readily approved by the Nigerian delegation. But Biafra had not sent its representatives to surrender to Nigerian unity. And the declaration came to naught.

Unexpectedly, Biafra did not collapse. Colonel Ojukwu still continued with his appeal for peace. The Pope's

visit to Uganda in August, 1969 offered an excellent opportunity to resume discussions. Pope Paul called on both sides to end hostilities. He offered his services to bring both sides to a meeting ground. But in the end, there was no meeting. The efforts of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to find a compromise was rejected by the Federal Military Government. Nevertheless both sides were willing for a peace negotiation. If peace were to be attained it had to be imposed from outside. This could have been the mission of the OAU. Its committee had not met since Monrovia, but the summit in Addis Ababa might have been the ideal place to act. This time, the delegates recognizing Biafra, especially the Ivory Coast and Tanzania, insisted that the conflict be given top priority. During the Committee's session and the Assembly it was debated at length. General Gowon again reaffirmed his acceptance of a peaceful solution within the framework of a united Nigeria and the Biafran delegation, through its contacts behind the scenes, urged that negotiations begin immediately without prior conditions. Yet, few of the members pressed for direct negotiations, and most insisted that the earlier resolutions must form a basis for any talks. They came out strongly for a guarantee of the principle of unity. The prospects of secession worried them almost as much as Lagos, and
they did not want an independent Biafra. Thus the conclusion was deceiving.

The resolution of September 10, 1969 did call for a ceasefire, while reiterating its stand on secession. The resolution . . . appeals solemnly and urgently to the two parties involved in the civil war to agree to preserve, in the overriding interest of Africa, the unity of Nigeria and accept immediately a suspension of hostilities and the opening without delay of negotiations intended to preserve the unity of Nigeria and restore reconciliation and peace that will ensure for the population every form of security and every guarantee of equal rights, prerogatives and obligations.\(^23\)

But the real weakness was that the Assembly failed to back up its appeals with machinery for a ceasefire and negotiations. Once again, by default, the decision was left to the force of arms.

But this seemed to be a long and costly process. Despite terrible suffering, Biafra was still holding on. In Nigeria, riots and incidents as well as the calmer views of General Gowon showed that not everyone supported the war at all costs. Yet the generals and the hawks on both sides could not be stopped by local unrest and humanitarian concern nor the half-hearted attempts of various

\(^{23}\)AHG/Res. 58 (vi), 1969.
African leaders to seek a compromise. The only serious effort at bringing both sides together was made by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia with seemingly little support from the rest of the OAU. It collapsed on December 18 when the Biafran mission left Addis Ababa after waiting for the Nigerians, while the leaders on both sides demanded the preconditions that had always been rejected, a cease-fire or a prior acceptance of Nigerian unity.

However astonishing it may seem in retrospect, Ojukwu firmly believed in December, 1969, that Biafra possessed the means to fight on long enough to force a political settlement with Nigeria since the OAU has from the beginning shown its inability to handle the crisis.

By then the Nigerian army had launched another offensive. This time it was effective. The army had grown in size and had more material for its land and especially air forces.

The Biafrans, after thirty months of war, were greatly weakened and morale was low. With its troops pressing from all sides, Nigeria made for Owerri, the last major town, and the Uli airstrip. Backed by artillery and bombers it took Owerri on January 10, 1970, and Uli was pounded into rubble. The same day, there was a council of war among the Biafran leaders. This time Ojukwu, admitting that conventional warfare was no longer possible,
yet hoping for a guerrilla effort, was in the minority and he decided to leave the country and place all powers in the hands of the Chief of Staff, General Phillip Effiong. Two days later, as the Biafran army collapsed and the population fled, he called for peace. This was accepted by General Gowon who announced that the time had come for national reconciliation and reiterated his offer of an amnesty. Thus, the hostilities ended. But how much greater this would have been if it had been obtained earlier, and more peacefully. The OAU's policy—that of Africa—had been one of excessive timidity and missed opportunities due to its conservative nature. Throughout the crisis there had been moments of deadlock when a concerted effort could have brought the opposing sides closer together. Then, as Biafra weakened, it could have stepped in to impose negotiations which would have shortened the war. But in the end its resolution only served to permit General Effiong to surrender briefly to African Unity. With the deaths of Biafra and two million Africans, it was hard to see how one could conceive of the OAU as an effective peace solving organization.
CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF OAU IN OTHER AFRICAN CONFLICTS
COMPARED WITH ITS ROLE IN
THE NIGERIAN CRISIS

In its few years of existence, the Organization of
African Unity has been repeatedly called upon to help
preserve the peace and tranquility of the African contin-
ent. It handled several boundary disputes and dealt
with one of the worst crises in the Congo and an even
more explosive one in Nigeria. Although its successes
have not been numerous or dramatic, the OAU's contribu-
tion cannot be measured only by what it has done. Equally
important was what it avoided. The Organization's very
existence prevented some conflicts from arising, kept
others from spreading, and complicated others, however
difficult this might be to document or to verify.

But the OAU was in a rather poor position for these
activities. It had not received the authority or powers
to act effectively to maintain internal order. It could
not make its members desist from hostilities or settle
their differences peacefully. Even less could it influ-
ence the government and opposing factions in internal
disputes. Much depended on the parties. The Organization
could only create an atmosphere in which to end a dispute or propose and work for solutions. Its means of pressure were few.

By the time the first Assembly met in Cairo, July 17-21, 1964, two serious border conflicts had broken out—each of which led to violence. Several principles of the Charter had been disregarded and war had separated African states. Fortunately, action by African leaders and the OAU calmed the hostilities. Still, the heads of state felt the need to fill in the gaps in the principles affirmed in the Charter. Obviously, the principle of "territorial integrity" was not sufficient when there was some question as to just where the border ran between two neighbors. An attempt at clearing the situation was made by adopting a resolution in border disputes among African states. Since there was already a rule followed by most of the members, the Assembly went a step beyond the Charter and solemnly declared that "all Member States pledge themselves to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence." Although this important corollary was adopted by acclamation, its value was uncertain. There were cases where no frontier or several had been drawn, and others where the interpretation or demarcation was contested. More particularly, it had been impossible

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1See OAU Charter, Article III, paragraph 3.
to consecrate the respect of colonial frontiers in the Charter to begin with and this was still rejected by the two states most directly concerned: Morocco and Somalia.\textsuperscript{2}

Although the Charter of African Unity laid down the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, the original summit conference had not inserted an article prohibiting the use of force. This oversight may have been due to excessive optimism. After war had broken out twice in the course of a year, a stronger stand was felt necessary. Repudiating the recent past, the Assembly proclaimed that "all Member States herewith renounce war and the use of armed force, except in self defense, as instruments of national policy in dealing with other African States or as means of reaching national goals with respect to other African states."\textsuperscript{3} It even provided that measures could be taken against any member found by the Assembly or Council to have violated its commitments under the Charter or its resolutions.

These two resolutions and the principle they embodied were important additions to the credo of the Organization. Whereas the Charter was at least binding, if unenforceable, the resolutions were not even binding. Even though the


\textsuperscript{3} OAU Review, I, no. 1 (May, 1964), 6. Also see OAU Charter, Article XIX.
"non aggression resolution"\(^4\) envisaged concerted measures against a state violating it, there was little chance that this would happen in the future. Any state threatened with action by the OAU would most strongly reject it as an infringement of its sovereignty. These resolutions were destined to be largely academic. The principle of inviolability of frontiers inherited from colonial rulers could have been invoked in the Algerian/Moroccan and Somali disputes. The use of force and subversion could have been condemned in other cases. But this was never done. No state was ever openly criticized or threatened even with ostracism for violating any of the Organization's principles.

**OAU's Process of Settlement in African Conflicts**

Although the Organization of African Unity could not use a heavy hand, it did make a contribution to maintaining order in the continent. Owing to its existence it became easier to avoid disputes and clear up those that arose. The periodic meetings encouraged Africa's leaders to discuss their problems and often to solve them. Potential disputes were occasionally nipped in the bud. Others, such as the exchange of Guinean and Ghanian nationals could be settled by the parties concerned or through the

good offices of other states. Certain border affairs were also calmed.

The context in which disputes could be handled most readily turned out to be the Council of Ministers. The foreign ministers were accustomed to such activities and could easily be called into extraordinary session. In most cases no settlement could be reached at first, especially after hostilities, and the Assembly or Council had to establish subordinate bodies. An ad hoc committee, or a group of the Commission of Mediation if the states agreed, could then study the situation, undertake investigations, help the parties find a solution or propose one. It could meet more often and would be fairly flexible. To give it greater authority, the members were chosen from among senior officials, eminent jurists, foreign ministers, or even heads of state. Men like Emperor Haile Selassie or President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia acted as African elders.

The first challenge to the OAU was the dispute between Algeria and Morocco. Through the good offices of the Emperor of Ethiopia and the President of Mali, it was possible to obtain a ceasefire which was later sanctioned by the OAU. The Council then set up a special commission

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5 Jon Woronoff, p. 436.
6 The Maghrele Digest, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 28.
to deal with the border disputes. Unfortunately, no progress was made towards a final solution, i.e., an agreed boundary line, and the parties could not even be brought together to seek an agreement under the Commission's auspices. However, the fighting had ceased and despite friction and an arms race, the fighting did not resume. With the renewal of the Arab common front, the conflict was temporarily forgotten.

After extensive warfare along the Somalia-Ethiopia border, it was possible to achieve a disengagement, although this required several injunctions by the Council and the good offices of a member state. This was followed by sporadic clashes between shiftars and the authorities in Ethiopia and Kenya. Nevertheless, it left time for the parties to reconsider their positions and seek a solution. With the general pacification in the region after the Arab-Israeli war, Somalia came closer to its neighbors.7

One of the most dangerous crises dealt with by the OAU was the civil war in the Congo. Although primarily internal, it seriously affected the peace and security of the whole continent. The question of competence was waived when President Kasavubu invited the OAU to deal

with this "African problem." However, the issue of sovereignty was a considerable obstacle to its activities thereafter. The Council's compromise on the internal dispute was highly ambiguous and by not following a carefully balanced approach, the Congo Commission eventually came under criticism for its role. Neither its appeals for a ceasefire nor its attempts at reconciliation succeeded. The relations between the Congo and its neighbors, as well as serious African intervention in its internal affairs, aggravated the situation. And the final solution was reached when one side was victorious in the field. With peace restored by force, both the internal disputes and its external ramifications ceased partially. The OAU's attitude created loopholes for super power involvement in the Congo Crisis.

In 1966, as a result of Rwanda-Burundi interstate ethnic conflict, Rwanda leaders complained to the OAU. The Heads of State Conference in Addis Ababa in 1966 asked President Mobutu of the Congo to mediate the affair. Three meetings held in April, 1967 between the two sides led to agreement on controlling the activities of refugees and the issue was reported settled to the 1967 OAU Summit Conference. Although the OAU as a body did not provide

8 The Times (London), September 6, 1964.
10 Ibid., p. 158.
settlement, it isolated and abated the conflict for three years.

The situation during the Nigerian civil war was roughly similar, but the OAU's attitude was completely different. After ignoring it for some time, the OAU finally and reluctantly decided to deal with the matter at the Kinshasa Assembly. Even then, the services it offered were very weak. It empowered its consultative committee merely to assure the federal government of its assistance. Very slowly it realized that steps such as a cessation of hostilities and relief were essential, but it never considered the substantive dispute or proposed a compromise solution. Rather, the Organization seemed to await the final military conclusion.

Why the OAU Was Unsuccessful in Handling the Nigerian Civil War

The first reason is that the OAU is, by design and constitution, an essentially conservative organization. It is anti-secessionist, anti-interventionist, and anti-border changes. Such an Organization must face up to the questions of change and destruction that the normal social process inevitably involves, that is, whether or not to recognize a change in a concrete situation and if not, what concerted action should be taken to frustrate the change?
The OAU decided not to recognize the change in the Nigerian situation inherent in Biafra's demand for secession. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, meeting in its Fourth Ordinary Session at Kinshasa in September, 1967, resolved to reaffirm "their adherence to the principle of respect for the Sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States," and to reiterate "their condemnation of secession in any Member States . . ."\textsuperscript{11} Member States, with "artificial boundaries" and multi-ethnic populations, were not surprisingly worried about opening a Pandora's box of secessions which would shake the territorial integrity of some of their countries.\textsuperscript{12}

The second weakness of the OAU with reference to the Nigerian situation was its inability to enforce its decisions on Member States. The OAU could do nothing to prevent four Member States (Tanzania, Zambia, the Ivory Coast, and Gabon) from recognizing Biafra. The OAU has no sanctions, except those of collective disapprobation of defaulting states, but even these the OAU was unprepared to invoke against the four States. Thus the Nigerian situation divided Africa on the central issue of secession and it

\textsuperscript{11}OAU, 4th Ordinary Session of Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Inishasa, September, 1967, Resolution ANG/Res. 51 (iv).

became an open field for intervention—at least diplomatic intervention—on either side of the civil war.

The third factor was the weakness of the OAU with respect to the outside world. Neither the OAU, nor any of its members possesses the power to insulate African problems from extra-regional intervention. Nigeria thus became an open field for unilateral third-party interventions by extra-African states.\(^{13}\)

Conclusion

As is clear from its record, the Organization was always most successful in the first phase of action intended to maintain internal order, namely putting an end to active hostilities or intervention. (Of course, except the Nigerian case, where the OAU had no success from the beginning.) The Crisis could sometimes be kept from spreading, the fighting stopped and the parties brought to the conference table. However, when it came to the second phase, finding a solution to the problem and settling the dispute definitively, there was little or no success. No borders were drawn, reconciliation was urged but not imposed or accepted, subversion or intervention often resumed after initial temporary success in stopping it. The OAU's task was not finished as long as peace and harmony were threatened and a conflict could start again.

What was far more serious was that the OAU had steadily decreased its efforts. Whereas it appointed a Commission to seek a settlement between Algeria and Morocco, there was nobody to study and inform the Organization of the situation in the North of Africa. The OAU drew up an ambitious if impracticable peace plan for the Congo: a ceasefire, a reconciliation, a reminder to the warring parties of their pledges; the creation of a true Algerian presence. During the civil war in Nigeria, however, the OAU went to the other extreme and its presence had little or no significance.

One thing has to be admitted: all the OAU's activities were characterized by its weakness and conservatism. The Organization had few material means or sources of pressure upon its members. It did not have the military or financial force to run a real peace keeping operation. Nor could it impose decisions. Only when contending nations realized that they could not get what they wanted did they call upon the OAU to restore peace or seek with them a solution. It tied its hands with Article III, paragraphs 2 and 3. And the only solution a nation would accept was one it already desired . . . or a second best.¹³ Very much depended on good will. It is important to recognize this, because each attempt at imposing a solution had failed. The most

¹⁴Jon Woronoff, p. 440.
visible failure came when the Congo Commission forgot its limits—and tried to impose a solution on Prime Minister Tshombe. Neither a ceasefire nor reconciliation could be forced on opposing sides. Politics was the art of knowing and doing what was possible. The OAU enjoyed its successes when rival parties were simply encouraged to define and then accept their own terms. By helping them find a solution, and then consecrating it on the altar of African Unity, the OAU had a definite role to play.

But the Organization could increase its chances of success. As an international organization, it should be fundamentally, if not exclusively, a reaction to the problem of war. The Pacific Settlement approach should be characterized by emphasis upon the problem of discouraging resort to war as a means of solving disputes.15 It has to deal with every dispute. No matter how fruitless or dangerous it appeared, it is better to attempt a settlement than to let a dispute deteriorate. Moreover, the sooner it acted, the better, for the most realistic solution might best be found before hatred and passion accumulated and clouded the acceptable terms. A constant African presence was essential.

The Organization and, in particular, a special body established to deal with a specific conflict, would have to follow the situation closely to avoid aggravation or to take advantage of any unexpected opportunities of improvement.

It is necessary always to pay attention to timing. The best moment to offer services is when there is a draw. When the parties are of equal strength and neither could overcome the other, both will be most willing to compromise. Even after one party has seized the initiative, there are periods of deadlock and stalemate when a settlement may seem reasonable. The last opportunity is just before the defeat of one side, and a political conclusion may prove more satisfactory than a military victory.

The Organization should deal with substantive issues. It is essential to see the problem as it really is, if necessary by sending committees of inquiry or hearing both sides, and not as members feel it is. Each conflict has its own peculiarities and nothing is gained by treating it as a precedent. Fear of territorial adjustments or tribalism is not a sufficient reason to ignore legitimate claims and aspirations. On this basis the OAU can seek feasible solutions. The next and most difficult step is to obtain acceptance from the parties. This can be done first by emphasizing the advantages of a settlement, any settlement, over the continuation of a conflict. Warfare
harms both sides and internal strife only leads to lasting bitterness. But a temporary disengagement is not enough. As long as the underlying causes have not been resolved, the conflict could flare up again. Finally, it has to convince both sides of the advantages of the proposed compromise, and the compromise has to be designed to provide both sides with some advantage.

If the parties are not willing to accept a settlement, the other member states should seriously consider whether pressure is not appropriate. The OAU has few resources, and an attempt at imposing a solution by force is bound to fail. Still the Organization can certainly exert greater pressure than it has in the past. Moral pressure can also be felt.¹⁶

The parties could be censured for their intransigence. Diplomatic pressure is also possible, and a threat from the member states to sever relations and cease support will not leave the belligerents indifferent. Even economic sanctions are possible in some cases. This procedure is realistic, but it requires considerably more imagination and courage.

For it to work, it is also essential to develop a feeling for compromise. In the OAU, the members dealing with a conflict have to be neutral. This does not mean a

¹⁶ Jon Woronoff, p. 441.
mixture of states, but a body consisting of members that earnestly desire a solution. Then, the parties have to be open to compromise. They cannot expect to obtain all their demands, some of which are unreasonable in the circumstances. Unfortunately, the experiences in seeking internal order in the Organization all too often show that some of its members take sides or even intervene and that the parties are very inflexible. Only if this changes is there real hope for maintaining internal order.
APPENDIX I

CHARTER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

We, the Heads of African States and Governments assembled in the City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
CONVINCED that it is the inalienable right of all people to control their own identity;
CONSCIOUS of the fact that freedom, equality, justice and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples;
CONSCIOUS of our responsibility to harness the natural and human resources of our continent for the total advancement of our peoples in spheres of human endeavor;
INSPIRED by a common determination to promote understanding among our peoples and cooperation among our peoples and cooperation among our States in response to the aspirations of our peoples for brotherhood and solidarity, in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national differences;
CONVINCED that, in order to translate this determination into a dynamic force in the cause of human progress, conditions for peace and security must be established and maintained;
DETERMINED to safeguard and consolidate the hard-won independence as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our States, and to fight against neo-colonialism in all its forms;
DEDICATED to the general progress of Africa;
PERSUADED that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the principles of which we reaffirm our adherence, provide a solid foundation for peaceful and positive cooperation among states;
DESIRIOUS to reinforce the links between our states by establishing and strengthening common institutions:
Have agreed to the present Charter.

Article 1

1. The High Contracting Parties do by the present Charter establish an Organization to be known as the ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY.

2. The Organization shall include the Continental African States, Madagascar and other Islands surrounding Africa.

PURPOSES

Article II

1. The Organization shall have the following purposes:
   a. to promote the unity and solidarity of the African States;
b. to coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa;
c. to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence;
d. to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and
e. to promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. To these ends, the Member States shall coordinate and harmonize their general policies, especially in the following fields:
   a. political and diplomatic cooperation;
   b. economic cooperation, including transport and communications;
   c. educational and cultural cooperation;
   d. health, sanitation, and nutritional cooperation;
   e. scientific and technical cooperation; and
   f. cooperation for defense and security.

PRINCIPLES

Article III

The Member States, in pursuit to the purposes stated in Article III, solemnly affirm and declare their adherence to the following principles:
1. the sovereign equality of all Member States;
2. non-interference in the internal affairs of States;
3. respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence;
4. peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration;
5. unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighboring States or any other State;
6. absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories which are still independent; and
7. affirmation of a policy of non-alignment with regard to all blocs.

MEMBERSHIP

Article IV

Each independent sovereign African State shall be entitled to become a Member of the Organization.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBER STATES

Article V

All Member States shall enjoy equal rights and have equal duties.
Article VI

The Member States pledge themselves to observe scrupulously the principles enumerated in Article III of the present Charter.

INSTITUTIONS

Article VII

The Organization shall accomplish its purposes through the following institutions:

1. the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments;
2. the Council of Ministers;
3. the General Secretariat; and
4. the Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration.

THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Article VIII

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government shall be the supreme organ of the Organization. It shall, subject to the provisions of this Charter, discuss matters of common concern to Africa with view to coordinating and harmonizing the general policy of the Organization. It may in addition review the structure, functions and acts of all the organs and any specialized agencies which may be created in accordance with the present Charter.
Article IX

The Assembly shall be composed of the Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives and it shall meet at least once a year. At the request of any Member State and on approval by a two-thirds majority of the Member States, the Assembly shall meet in extraordinary session.

Article X

1. Each member state shall have one vote.
2. All resolutions shall be determined by a two-thirds majority of the Members of the Organization.
3. Questions of procedure shall require a simple majority. Whether or not a question is one of procedure shall be determined by a simple majority of all Member States of the Organization.
4. Two-thirds of the total membership of the Organization shall form a quorum at any meeting of the Assembly.

Article XI

The Assembly shall have the power to determine its own rules of procedure.

Article XII

1. The Council of Ministers shall consist of Foreign Ministers or such other Ministers as are designated by the Governments of Member States.
2. The Council of Ministers shall meet at least twice a year. When requested by any Member State and approved by two-thirds of all Member States, it shall meet in extraordinary session.

Article XIII

1. The Council of Ministers shall be responsible for the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. It shall be entrusted with the responsibility of preparing conferences of the Assembly.

2. It shall take cognizance of any matter referred to it by the Assembly. It shall be entrusted with the implementation of the decision of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government. It shall coordinate inter-African cooperation in accordance with the instructors of the Assembly and in conformity with Article II (2) of the present Charter.

Article XIV

1. Each Member State shall have one vote.

2. All resolutions shall be determined by a simple majority of the members of the Council of Ministers.

3. Two-thirds of the total membership of the Council of Ministers shall form a quorum for any meeting of the Council.
Article XV

The Council shall have the power to determine its own rules and procedure.

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Article XVI

There shall be an Administrative Secretary-General of the Organization, who shall be the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Administrative Secretary-General shall direct the affairs of the Secretariat.

Article XVII

There shall be one or more Assistant Secretaries-General of the Organization, who shall be appointed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Article XVIII

The functions and conditions of services of the Secretary-General, of the Assistant Secretaries-General and other employees of the Secretariat shall be governed by the provisions of this Charter and the regulations approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

1. In the performance of their duties the Administrative Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any other authority external to the Organization.
2. Each member of the Organization undertakes to respect the exclusive character of the responsibilities of the Administrative Secretary-General and the Staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

COMMISSION OF MEDIATION, CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION

Article XIX

Member States pledge to settle all disputes among themselves by peaceful means and, to this end, decide to establish a Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration, the composition of which and conditions of service shall be defined by a separate protocol to be approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Said Protocol shall be regarded as forming an integral part of the present Charter.

Article XX

The Assembly shall establish such Specialized Commission as it may deem necessary, including the following:

1. Economic and Social Commission;
2. Educational and Cultural Commission;
3. Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Commission;
4. Defense Commission; and
Article XXI

Each Specialized Commission referred to in Article XX shall be composed of the Ministers concerned or other Ministers or Plenipotentiaries designated by the Governments of the Member States.

THE BUDGET

Article XXIII

The budget of the Organization prepared by the Administrative Secretary-General shall be approved by the Council of Ministers. The budget shall be provided by contributions from Member States in accordance with the scale of assessment of the United Nations; provided, however, that no Member State shall be assessed an amount exceeding twenty per cent of the yearly regular budget of the Organization. The Member States agree to pay their respective contributions regularly.

SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION OF CHARTER

Article XXIV

1. This Charter shall be open for signature to all independent sovereign African States and shall be ratified by the Signatory States in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.

2. The original instrument, done, if possible in African languages, in English and French, all texts being
equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Government of Ethiopia which shall transmit certified copies thereof to all independent Sovereign African States.

3. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of Ethiopia which shall transmit certified copies thereof to all independent Sovereign African States.

4. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of Ethiopia, which shall notify all signatories of each such deposit.

ENTRY INTO FORCE

Article XXV

This Charter shall enter into force immediately upon receipt by the Government of Ethiopia of the instruments of ratification from two-thirds of the signatory States.

REGISTRATION OF THE CHARTER

Article XXVI

This Charter shall, after due ratification, be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations through the Government of Ethiopia in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.
INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARTER

Article XXVII

Any question which may arise concerning the interpretation of this Charter shall be decided by a vote of two-thirds of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization.

ADHESION AND ACCESSION

Article XXVIII

1. Any independent Sovereign African State may at any time notify the Administrative Secretary-General of its intention to adhere or accede to this Charter.

2. The Administrative Secretary-General shall, on receipt of such notification, communicate a copy of it to all the Member States. Admission shall be decided by a simple majority of the Member States. The decision of each Member State shall be transmitted to the Administrative Secretary-General, who shall, upon receipt of the required number of votes, communicate the decision to the State concerned.

MISCELLANEOUS

Article XXIX

The working languages of the Organization and all its institutions shall be, if possible, African languages, English and French.
Article XXX

The Administrative Secretary-General may accept on behalf of the Organization gifts, bequests, and other donations made to the Organization, provided that this is approved by the Council of Ministers.

Article XXXI

The Council of Ministers shall decide on the privileges and immunities to be accorded to the personnel of the Secretariat in the respective territories of the Member States.

CESSATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Article XXXII

Any State which desires to renounce its membership shall forward a written notification to the Administrative Secretary-General. At the end of one year from the date of such notification, if not withdrawn, the Charter shall cease to apply with respect to the renouncing State, which shall thereby cease to belong to the Organization.

AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER

Article XXXIII

This Charter may be amended or revised if any Member State makes a written request to the Administrative Secretary-General to that effect, provided, however, that the proposed amendment is not submitted to the Assembly
for consideration until all the Member States have been
duly notified of it and a period of one year has elapsed.
Such an amendment shall not be effective unless approved
by at least two-thirds of all the Member States.

IN FAITH WHEREOF, We the Heads of African State and
Government, have signed this Charter.

Done in the City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia this 25th
day of May 1963.

Algeria Mauritania
Burundi Morocco
Cameroon Niger
Central African Republic Nigeria
Chad Rwanda
Congo (Brazzaville) Senegal
Congo (Leopoldville) Sierre Leone
Dahomey Somalia
Ethiopia Sudan
Gabon Tanganyika
Ghana Togo
Guinea Tunisia
Ivory Coast Uganda
Liberia United Arab Republic
Libya Upper Volta
Madagascar
Mali
APPENDIX II

NIGERIA BEFORE JULY 1967

Key
1. Northern Region
2. Western Region
3. Midwest Region
4. Eastern Region
APPENDIX III

NIGERIA AFTER CREATION OF STATES BY THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN JULY 1967

Key

1. Lagos State
2. Western State
3. Kwara State
4. North Western State
5. North Central State
6. Kano State
7. North Eastern State
8. Benue-Plateau State
9. Midwestern State
10. East Central State
11. South Eastern State
12. Rivers State
APPENDIX IV

NIGERIA DURING THE WAR--1967-1970

Key
1. Federal Military Government
2. Biafra
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