

PROPAGANDA, NARRATIVES, AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR OF 1967-1970.

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Abstract

. On May 30, 1967, the former Eastern region of Nigeria formally announced its secession from the Nigerian federation. A concatenation of factors and circumstances led to the declaration of Biafra as a sovereign state. Nigeria subsequently declared war on the “secessionist” Biafra on July 6, 1967. While it lasted, both Biafra and Nigeria had their own views and justifications for engaging in the war. Apart from the differing narratives and perspectives, both sides also employed propaganda to elicit support for their positions. This paper adopted the qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research methodology in its examination of the topic, complemented with the historical thematic approach. It concluded that though the Nigerian propaganda machinery succeeded in mobilizing domestic support for the government, it was the Biafrans who had the upper hand in the use of propaganda. As a result, there were more positive responses to the plight of the Biafrans by the international community and international humanitarian agencies.

Keywords: Narratives, massacres, perspectives, propaganda, public relations, war.

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Introduction.

In the course of the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970, propaganda was extensively used by both sides to publicize their different perspectives of the war. This involved their selective presentation and deliberate omission of facts, and was intended to appeal to emotions rather than reason on the causes and course of the war. Various media outlets were used to disseminate propaganda, the most popular and commonly used being the newspaper, radio, television, posters, and speeches. The objective generally, was to influence public opinions and behavior within Nigeria and Biafra, as well as in the international community.

Such biased and distorted information which frequently used emotional language and imagery, as well as appeals to fear, pride, and anger worked for both sides. However, the Biafran propaganda machinery was by far the most effective in its reportage and portrayals of the brutality of the Nigerian forces on the Biafrans, especially women and children. That is why the Biafran struggle elicited more sympathies globally vis-a-vis the Nigerian side. The Biafrans adopted very innovative, shrewd, and dynamic psychological and political propaganda strategies and techniques to not only outwit Nigeria, but also to win support within Biafra and in the international community.¹

Definition of concepts

Coup d'état: A sudden, violent, and unlawful seizure of power from a government. It could also be called a putsch.

Ethnic group: A community or population made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent.

Ethnicity: The quality or fact of belonging to a population group or sub-group made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent

Genocide: The deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation, religious group, racial group, or ethnic group with the intention of completely or utterly destroying them.

Marginalization: This means consigning a person or group to the periphery and regarding as insignificant, especially in decision-making.

Massacre: The indiscriminate and brutal slaughtering of many people.

Pogrom: An organized massacre of members of a particular ethnic or religious group.

Propaganda: The deliberate use of a biased or misleading information to promote a political cause or point of view.

War: This refers to a state of armed and violent conflict between different countries or different groups within a country.

The Official Nigerian Government Narrative Of The War

The Nigerian government saw the war and portrayed same to the international community, as a war that was necessary to ensure the unity and stability of the Nigerian state. Therefore, the Biafrans were seen as secessionists who must not be allowed to threaten that unity. That was why Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, the Nigerian Head-of-State (whose promotion was accelerated to the rank of General after the counter-coup of July 1966) said that “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done”². Allowing Biafra to secede would have implied two things, according to this narrative. In the first place, it would have challenged Nigeria territorial integrity. Secondly, it would have set an unhealthy precedence which would have encouraged other regions to also try to secede. That, the Nigerian government believed, would have resulted in disintegration of the country.

Furthermore, Nigeria’s so-called “police action” against Biafra, was, according to the federal government, intended to end the “Biafran rebellion” and prevent unnecessary loss of lives and property. The Nigerian government also blamed foreign interests for trying to destabilize the country. For example, Nigeria alleged that the Biafran government had hired Chinese soldiers and European mercenaries whose faces were painted black to conceal their real identities³. Gowon’s de facto deputy and the federal government’s Commissioner for Finance,

Obafemi Awolowo, also re-echoed the position of that government when he stated that “All is fair in war and starvation is one of the weapons of war...”⁴ This statement unequivocally underscored the federal government’s position that the economic blockade of Biafra and the weakening of its ability to sustain itself economically was a necessary and legitimate measure to preserve the unity of Nigeria. On his part, Anthony Enahoro, another top official of the Gowon-led federal government who served as the Federal Commissioner for Information during and

after the war, blamed the conflict on the ambitious disposition of the Igbo. In his words, “The problem of Nigeria since Independence has been the problem of some Ibo leaders and how to make them accept a basis of equality for every ethnic group in the Federation”⁵

The official federal government position also claimed that oil was a major factor in the war. It is said that the decision of the former Eastern region to secede was because of its huge oil reserves. To the Nigerian government, therefore, allowing Biafra to secede would have meant allowing her to be the sole beneficiary of the oil wealth, a situation that was unacceptable to Nigeria, especially the North⁵.

Finally there was the Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Ojukwu factor. While, Gowon justified his declaration of war on what he called “The personal ambitions of Ojukwu and his rebel gang,” the British government’s fear was that a divided Nigeria would mean allowing Ojukwu to control southern Nigeria⁷. This would invariably have affected Britain’s economic stranglehold on Nigeria, given the rich natural resources of the South, especially crude oil.

The Biafran Government Narrative

For the Biafrans, the war of 1967-1970 was forced on them by the Gowon-led federal government. Therefore, it was a battle of either survival or annihilation. The Igbo in particular, felt that they were no longer needed in Nigeria following the counter coup d’état of July 26 1966 and the subsequent large-scale pogroms and ethnic cleansing in the North and other parts of the country. There was a perceived threat of annihilation. This was not assuaged by Gowon’s repudiation of the terms of the Aburi Accord. Therefore, there was an infectious feeling of the cry for self determination and defense against perceived injustices and threats from the federal government. It was for the Biafrans, a war of liberation and survival⁸. For example, when on May 30, 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the secession of Biafra (the former Eastern Region of Nigeria), he articulated the reasons for secession. These included, among others, the issue of marginalization, discrimination against the Igbo, and their right for self-determination⁹. Indeed, throughout the war, the Biafran government consistently defended Biafra’s sovereignty and legitimacy as an independent country. This was anchored on the right of Biafrans to determine their own political future and governance structure as provided in the United Nations Charter¹⁰.

Another Biafran narrative was the need to preserve the Biafran people’s Christian heritage vis-a-vis the Muslim-dominated North (which was seen as the main Nigeria) and the lackey of Arab-Muslim expansionism and Russian imperialism in Africa¹¹. Thus, the war was seen by the Biafran leaders as a struggle between good (Biafra) and evil (Nigeria)¹². Furthermore, the Biafran government accused the Nigerian government of colluding with foreign interests to

exploit the crude oil and other resources of Biafra and exploiting the Easterners. In fact, the Biafran leader, Ojukwu, once emphasized how the economic exploitation of the Eastern region's resources, including crude oil, was a major consideration in Biafra's decision to secede from Nigeria. Thus, control over the crude oil resources of the former Eastern region was both a cause of the conflict and a crucial element in its prosecution¹³.

The Propaganda War Between Biafra And Nigeria.

During the war, both sides in the conflict employed various propaganda strategies to sell and justify their perspectives of the conflict to their local and international audiences. To achieve the desired objectives, public relations firms from abroad, as well as world publicity and lobbies were hired by both the Nigerian and Biafran governments. These were in addition to the local media outlets who were vigorously giving out massive information to the local people regarding the course of events.

The Biafran propaganda machinery

In Biafra, the government established a Propaganda Directorate in 1968¹⁴. There were three Divisions within this Directorate, namely, the External Publicity Bureau (EPB), the Home Press Services (HPS), and the Publication and Research Department (PRD). While the External Publicity Bureau was charged with the responsibility of making releases for both the Voice of Biafra (VOB) radio station and Biafra's press agent in Geneva, Switzerland (Markpress), the Home Press Services was charged with the responsibility of releasing information for the Biafran public. It did so through the distribution of government releases, handouts, posters, and propaganda tracts, slogans, and jingles. On its part, the Research and Publication Department was solely responsible for research and had a staff pool made up of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists who produced information on Biafra's historical, socio-cultural and political backgrounds and made same available to the Political Analysis Committee¹⁵.

The Political Analysis Committee was one of the committees set up in each of the three divisions. The other two committees were the Calling Africa East of Biafra Committee and the Political Orientation Committee. Each of these committees had a chairman who supervised staff members such as script writers and researchers. The major duty of the all-important Political Analysis Committee was to analyze every news item on Biafra and to recommend appropriate responses, especially regarding news from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and other foreign radio stations. The idea was to know the motives of such news items and their possible impact both locally and internationally. The recommendations of the Political Analysis Committee were usually made available to the State House which thereafter, decided, through

the Guidance Committee, on what the propaganda theme would be. The theme chosen was usually in the form of a memorandum outlining what arguments to adopt in order to avoid contradictions and also recommended areas of emphasis in the propaganda that would produce greater effect on the target audience¹⁶.

Biafra also engaged the services of foreign public relations firms. These include Ruder and Finn, a New York-based agency which was mandated to stress that the federal government of Nigeria had initiated a genocide against the Igbo and other Easterners in the North, and that the Biafrans had a culture and history that had nothing in common with the Nigerians.¹⁷ Another public relations firm contracted by Biafra was Goldstein Enterprises of California, United State of America. It came on board after the contract between Biafra and Ruder and Finn had expired. Signed in December 1968, the contract with Goldstein Enterprises did not succeed because the company accused the Biafran government of using the issue of mass starvation for political purposes and the firm subsequently denounced Biafra publicly.¹⁸ After this, Biafra hired H.W.M. Bernhardt, a Geneva-based public relations firm owned and directed by an American public relations experts, William Bernhardt. Popularly known as Markpress, the firm had previously worked in Congo's Katanga province in the early 1960s, having been established in Geneva, Switzerland in the early 1950s as a spectrum of businesses that included hotels, airlines. Et cetera.

The Biafran government engaged Markpress in late 1967 and the firm was quite effective in the discharge of its assigned responsibilities. It distributed press reports, war communiqués, briefings, and photographs to a number of news agencies and thousands of addresses, including the British House of Commons and the United States' Congress¹⁹. The firm's effectiveness in international publicity regarding the war was such that Bernhardt was dubbed by the western press as "the man who sold a war"²⁰. To Bernhardt, however, his mission in and on duty to Biafra, was humanitarian rather than political²¹, indeed, the firm effectively stirred up the conscience of the international community of the starving children of Biafra. But it also enabled the British and other allies of Nigeria to counter the genocide and starvation logic and make political gains there from due to Markpress' excesses²².

The Nigerian government's propaganda machinery

There is no disputing the fact that the Nigerian government was, literally speaking, outgunned by the Biafrans in the propaganda war. Though it had foreign public relations firms like the London-based Gallitzin, Chant and Russell and the U.S. firms of Marsteller Associates, in July 1968, they could not match their British counterparts, and had to give up in 1969. As a

result, the Nigerian government had to rely more on local information media outlets, such as the

Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the Federal Ministry of Information, Radio Kaduna, and newspaper like the Morning Post, Daily Times, and the New Nigeria, among others.

As a result of the failure of the federal government to elicit international support for its justification of the war against Biafra, it began to rely more and more on influencing public opinion within Nigeria. But even this was not properly coordinated. For instance, Radio Kaduna continued to embarrass the federal government and the Federal Ministry of Information by spewing out anti-Igbo and anti-Biafra lines contrary to the government's conciliatory tone³³. That way, the radio station reinforced the genocide fear of the Biafrans which may have had the opposite effect of winning more sympathies for the Biafrans, especially from listeners outside Nigeria.

Nonetheless, the Nigerian media continued to portray the war as a secessionist attempt by the Igbo. Therefore, they argued that if allowed to succeed, Biafra would be a negative influence on the African continent where separatist groups were not in short supply. Though it strengthened local support for the Nigerian government, such propaganda could not, however, successfully counter the more the ubiquitous, effusive, and effective Biafran propaganda machinery. Because the Biafrans had pictorial evidence of malnourished and starving children beamed to the international audience, the Nigerian government had difficulties challenging the narratives in both the foreign media and the international publics. In short, the Nigerians could not maintain a positive international image given the weight of international sympathy which Biafra's humanitarian crisis had generated abroad.

This was not helped by the fact that the Nigerian government's propaganda machinery, as earlier stated, had to contend with internal conflicts which, in the long run, resulted in censoring media houses like Radio Kaduna. In the area of publicity, therefore, the Nigerian government found it difficult to defend its war on Biafra. Thus, while Biafra's claims of genocide through war and starvation²⁴ resonated well in the foreign media, the Nigerian media were forced to constantly defend the government against such accusations and claims. The situation would probably have been different if there was a synergy between the propaganda machinery of the Nigerian government and its Ministry of External Affairs. That could have, in a way, countered the Biafran propaganda by altering the global perception of the war. But even the hiring of a British public relations firm to launder its image abroad at the peak of the war did not elicit the desired objectives of the Nigerian government.

The Impact Of Media Narratives And Portrayals.

Generally, the main objectives of propaganda during wars include demonizing the enemy before the international community as well as boosting confidence and patriotism in the citizens. While

trying to influence the opinions of the international community may take some time, the local population is immediately impacted by government-sponsored political communication. In other words, the emotions, beliefs, and reactions of the citizens are literally instantaneous. That is why they are ever ready to support the cause of their government. On the contrary, when a government engages in propaganda to win international support for its actions, the effect on the target audiences is usually gradual, and the campaign must be sustained in order to elicit the desired objectives.

Domestic impact

On the part of the Biafrans, the propaganda machinery was more effective in mobilizing support for the Ojukwu-led government. A major reason for this was the drive for a new national identity which had been created by stories and pictures of the brutalities associated with the mindless massacres of Easterners in the North and West, but mostly in the former. As has been observed;

...Biafra was an act of self-defense. Ojukwu was not even prepared to engage in the war. Gowon declared war, which he called a police action and later declared as total war.²⁵

According to Ben Gbulie, while the Biafran war propaganda had claimed that Biafra was ready to face and deal with Nigeria prior to the actual outbreak of the war, the truth was that the Ojukwu-led government was not really prepared for war as, according to him, Biafra had no arsenal at all on ground²⁶. Nigeria was equally ill-equipped. As a matter of fact, Nigeria had no tanks and had a shortage of officers with command experience. Thus, at the beginning of the war, both sides appeared evenly matched.²⁷ But the Biafra propaganda was so intense and effective that even when the war started, many Biafrans felt that winning Nigeria was only a matter of time. Ojukwu's personal involvement in the propaganda had an electrifying effect on the Biafrans. Through Radio Biafra, he urged the people to face the enemy and die bravely rather than run away or surrender²⁸.

There was, therefore a fight-to-the death mentality imbued in the average Biafran by the propaganda which had rightly referred to the defense of the motherland as a fight for survival. This mentality was always and constantly reinforced by the deep-seated hatred which other Nigerians, especially the Northerners, had for the Igbo and other Easterners as exemplified by

the pogroms of 1966. It further strengthened their resolve to fight rather than be subjected to mass killings. The result was an unprecedented show of solidarity with the Biafran government throughout the three years of Biafra's existence.

Indeed, the constant reference to Nigeria waging a war of genocide against the Biafrans and Ojukwu's personal involvement in the propaganda had the intended effect of making the Biafrans to see the Northern-dominated Nigerian army as being hell-bent on completing the annihilation of Easterners which the North had started in May, 1966. Thus, the fear of genocide sustained the patriotic spirit of Biafran soldiers and civilians alike throughout the war and against all odds. Indiscriminate bombing of schools, churches, markets, and hospitals by Nigerian war planes, as well as the pitiable sight of malnourished children and women could not have failed to add to the people's support for Ojukwu. His charismatic personality and condor endeared him to the people. Despite losing his personal vast fortune inherited from his billionaire father, Ojukwu's ability to readily identify with the people he led made him a hero.

In the final analysis, however, the Biafran war propaganda resulted in the death of many young men and women. These were people who had volunteered and joined the army and were deployed to the battlefield with minimal training and equipment. The resulting high causality figures notwithstanding, their patriotism was a testament to their love for freedom, justice, and equality. But Biafra does not seem to have really had any long-term strategic plan with clearly defined objectives²⁹. This could be due to the fact that there was truly no competent government in Biafra. Ojukwu was seen as both the leader and the government³⁰.

For the Nigerian government whose propaganda machinery could not match that of Biafra, there were, nonetheless, some felt impact of its justification for the war against Biafra. For instance, relying on its assertion of the Biafrans as secessionists, the Nigerian government's propaganda machinery succeeded in allowing any sympathies for them within Nigeria and among its populace. Furthermore, the Gowon-led government consistently insisted that its actions against Biafra were intended to maintain Nigeria's unity and territorial integrity.

On the vexatious issue of genocide through mass starvation and brutal military onslaughts, the Nigerian government's propaganda was able to downplay the accusations. This it did through minimizing criticisms from the local community by shaping their perceptions of the war. By depicting the Igbo as rebels, for example, the Nigerian government portrayed them as inordinately ambitious war-mongers who must be crushed. That way, the government was able to elicit local support for its war on Biafra.

In addition, the Nigerian war propaganda machinery succeeded in ensuring the enlistment of young people into the military. It did so by framing the war as a struggle against an attempt to stop the political ascendancy of the North vis-a-vis the East. In this regard, Radio Kaduna routinely broadcast the killing of Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in the January 1966 putsch. It used this as an example of the North's losses and the need to reclaim its dominance of the Nigerian state.

It is important, at this juncture, to point out that both Biafra and Nigeria made spurious claims about the exploits of their troops in the battlefield. Both sides not only claimed early victories at the beginning of the war, but also underplayed the brutality and causality figures of the conflict as they affected them. For instance, following its invasion of the then Mid-West, the Biafrans claimed that not only was states capital (Benin City) taken without a single Biafran casualty, but also that the Biafran troops were received with jubilation by the civilian population³¹. In reality, however, it is claimed that the Biafra incurred more losses than gains³².

International impact

Perhaps the most enduring impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war propaganda in the international arena was the massive show of support for the humanitarian crisis in Biafra. In the former Soviet Union, for instance, articles in newspapers and magazines portrayed the war as having been instigated by Western imperialists over control of Nigerian oil³³. The Soviet press, therefore, empathized with the suffering of the Biafrans and criticized their government for supporting Nigeria³⁴. The issue of genocide against Biafra necessitated the setting up of international observation teams to Nigeria which tended to favor the reports of genocide as merely a Biafran propaganda. For example, the conduct of the Nigerian troops towards Biafran civilians was applauded by the British and Polish members of that team³⁵.

Such biased reportage and observations did not, however, endear Nigeria to the international community who were actually aware of the terrible atrocities committed by Nigerian soldiers. A case in point is that of October 7, 1967, when Nigerian troops of the 2nd Division, led by Murtala Mohammed and Ibrahim Taiwo in Asaba, called out and heartlessly executed hundreds of

unarmed men and boys. They were part of the assemblage that had been deceived to attend a public dance to welcome the Nigerian troops. The men and boys were separated from the crowd before the massacre³⁶.

This brutal act was accentuated by the subsequent senseless bombing of such civilian target as churches, schools, and marketplaces by Nigeria's hired Egyptian pilots. Two major international reactions followed these unfortunate developments. The first was an upsurge in humanitarian intervention in Biafra. The plight of the starving and beleaguered Biafrans offended the consciences of America and European citizens and humanitarian organizations, thanks to the activities of Biafra's public relations and propaganda experts. As a result, relief agencies like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICR or Red Cross, for short), the Joint Church Aid (JCA), Caritas International, CANAIR Relief (Canada) and the African Concern (Ireland) quickly rallied and began delivering humanitarian assistance to Biafra³⁷. Nigeria was later to impose a sea and air blockade against these humanitarian agencies in the summer of 1969. They were accused of gun-running.

The second international reaction to the Nigerian genocide against Biafra arose from the dire humanitarian consequences of the war on Biafran civilians. A Swedish pilot, Carl Gustav von Rosen, was working as a humanitarian pilot but turned to a mercenary for Biafra when he became disgusted with the brutalities by Nigeria. But von Rosen was not the only foreign mercenary involved in the war. Both Nigeria and Biafra hired foreign mercenaries from and outside Africa³⁸.

Nigeria relied on Egyptian pilots for her aerial bombardment of Biafra and on mercenaries from Europe as well as Chad, and Niger, two countries with which Nigeria shares not only common boundaries but also cultural, religious, and linguistic affinities. European mercenaries who worked for Biafra include Rolf Steiner, a German who was in charge of the 4th Commando Brigade of the Biafran Armed Forces and commanded 3000 men, Taffy Williams, a Welsh who was Steiner's subordinate and commanded a hundred Biafran soldiers, as well as Jack Malloch of the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Lynn Garrison (a Canadian), and the Swedish Jan Zumbach. All of them worked with von Rosen as leaders of Biafran air operations. Others were

Giorgio Norbiato from Italy, Johnny Erasmus, an explosives expert from the then Rhodesia, Louis “Paddy” Malrooney from Ireland, and some Portuguese pilots³⁹. The United Kingdom is said to have not only covertly supplied weapons and provided military intelligence to Nigeria, but may have also helped her to hire mercenaries⁴⁰. Among European mercenaries hired by Nigeria were Bob Denard, a French mercenary and veteran of many African conflicts. In its broader strategy to leverage external support in her war against

Biafra, the Gowon-led government, as earlier stated, also hired mercenaries from neighboring Chad and Niger.

Finally, Biafra failed because of international conspiracy. The United States and many European nations did not sell weapons and fighter jets to Biafra. They did not want to upset the Nigerian government which they considered a much bigger customer vis-a-vis Biafra. Thus, the rest of the world turned their back on the Biafrans.

Conclusion

A combination of remote and immediate causes led to the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970. Among the remote causes is the fact that the British colonial regime bequeathed a country polarized along regional, ethnic, religious, cultural and even educational divides. These were, of course, all deliberately orchestrated by the colonialists. It was the failure of Nigeria’s political leaders after independence to see beyond the veil of British deception that sustained, and indeed, extended these divisions. Thus, when a group of middle rank military officers decided to overthrow the incompetent, nepotistic and very corrupt civilian administration on January 15, 1966, the British and the United States’ political elite wasted no time in convincing the Northern Nigerian political elite and oligarchy that the coup d’état was masterminded by the Igbo to truncate Northern Nigeria’s political ascendancy. Ultimately, there was a counter-coup d’état and a war which was preceded by large-scale massacres of Easterners, especially those of Igbo ethnic extraction.

It was the pogroms against Igbo residents in the North and other parts of Nigeria and the failure of the Gowon-led federal government to honour the terms of the Aburi Peace Accord of January 4-5, 1967, that led to the decision by leaders of the then Eastern region to secede from the Nigerian federation. Thus, on May 30, 1967, the Republic of Biafra was birthed. Soon afterwards, the Nigerian government declared a so-called “police action” to contain the

secessionist region. This later metamorphosed into a full-scale war that eventually ended on January 15, 1970.

While it lasted, the causes of the war were given different interpretations and narratives by both the Biafran and Nigerian governments. For the Biafrans, it was a war of survival and self-defence and of liberation from the stranglehold of the then Northern region and Islam¹. Propaganda played a significant role in molding

both domestic and international opinions and perspectives on and of the war. The Biafran propaganda machinery certainly had the upper hand in this unholy contest.

However, there are obvious and unassailable facts about the war between Nigeria and Biafra. In the first place, the war could have been avoided, but for Gowon's refusal to honor the terms of the Aburi Accord. This pushed the former Eastern region into secession. Secondly, Biafra was not the aggressor in the war. As a matter of historical fact, it was Gowon (and not Ojukwu) who declared the war². Thirdly, the war attracted international attention as a result of the use of propaganda by both Biafra and Nigeria. Britain and other foreign interests played important roles in the internationalization of the war. Fourthly, for the Gowon-led federal government, hatred for the Igbo and an inspired wish to exterminate them was, a foremost motivational factor as evidenced from the war songs of the Nigerian troops' song which talked about slaughtering the Biafrans and ravishing their wives and abandoning them crying useless tears³.

Finally, since 1966 a generational burden of guilt has been imposed on the Igbo. This has continued to manifest from utterances by individuals and groups from the Northern and Western parts of Nigeria who have called for their expulsion from their regions even up to 2024⁴. There has also been a deliberate policy by the successive Nigerian government to consign the Igbo to the periphery of both national politics and the national economy. Igbophobia thus appears to be the oldest hatred in Nigeria.

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