

Civil Wars and the African Universities: The University of Ibadan Example, 1967–1970

A. Adegboyega Adedire

Abstract

Civil war is not a new phenomenon in Africa. The Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 represents a dark past but provides an intriguing basis to develop a history that enables us to understand Nigeria's direction. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the impact of the Nigerian Civil War on the educational decline in the University of Ibadan. While some effects were immediate, such as diminishing student admissions and enrollments, a decline in postgraduate studies, and the insecurity of lives and property, other long-term effects manifested themselves after the war include problems such as displaced families, ethnic chauvinism, and the reabsorption of the Easterners into the University community. This work relies heavily on primary sources, archival materials, newspapers, and secondary sources to make its case.

Keywords: civil wars, universities, University of Ibadan, education

War is one of the oldest human activities, so much so that in contemporary times nations of the world still devote enormous resources into the prosecution and preparation for it.¹ A review of educational trends since the eighteenth century reveals a relation between war and education.² Thomas Goody has argued that war is an instrument of the national state, while education has been termed as an instrument of the national will.³ Provincial satisfaction with one's nation and a smug belief in its superiority or underestimation as well as contempt for or hatred of others are often achieved through education.⁴ On the other hand, the acceptance of war as a means of settling interstate conflicts, an arrogant "lick the enemy," or "conquer the world" patriotism, and a docile readiness to obey commands when national leaders decide that the favorable moment for conflict has arrived are the various attitudes that have been developed in varying degrees by modern

contestants for victory in the race for national supremacy. Every war is in one sense or another a struggle for liberty; a powerful, aggressive state wants liberty to expand to fulfill its “destiny,” while the weak one fights for freedom or for mere survival. The Romans saw their wars of expansion as a struggle for liberty, even though others might have to endure slavery.

However, education, in whatever form it might take, plays a dynamic role in the development of people, societies, and the world. For Abel Ishumi, education is an instrument of, a prerequisite for, and an outcome of any community’s development process.⁵ Hence, despite the crucial roles education plays in solving many developmental problems, it is still plagued by complex challenges, which are threatening to weaken its continued contribution to development in many places. Historically, civil wars have been major threats to educational development. In the case of Nigeria, the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 signaled the beginning of an era of upheavals in both the university and country.

This research is a historical evaluation of the Nigerian Civil War and its effects on the University of Ibadan. It interrogates links between the 1967 Nigerian Civil War and the University of Ibadan. One cannot understand the University of Ibadan without taking into account the role of the Nigerian Civil War.⁶ Ade Ajayi calls both milestones in Nigerian history.⁷

Before and during the war, the University was a reflection of the ills in the larger community, and not an aberration. Thus, an interrogation of it allows us to re-understand the effect of the war on a different community—the scholastic one. The impact of the University’s policies on its community, the problems of displaced families, ethnic chauvinism, the problem of reabsorption of Easterners into the University community during and after the war, and the repatriation of staff and students are worthy of scholarly consideration.

It is important to understand these milestones within this period to broaden our horizon on the nexus between the town and gown, which should reflect the symbiotic relationship that should exist between the University and its society. Also of great importance are the roles of University staff as experts and advisers, through teaching and research, in identifying and finding solutions to the problems of their nations. The study of history provides a solid foundation for understanding the problems of social and

economic development. In any case, history provides the basic foundational structure from which other disciplines take off.⁸

Moreover, the position of Slavoj Žižek becomes appropriate here when he stated that some “lost causes” may deserve our renewed attention. He argued that the failed revolutionary movements of the past- Jacobinism, Leninism, Stalism and Maoism - need to be revisited so that their ‘redemptive’ and ‘revolutionary’ kernels can be separated from their ‘totalitarian’ shells.⁹ In view of Žižek’s position, an understanding of the “lost causes,” that is, the Biafra revolution in relation to the University of Ibadan, deserves our renewed attention so that the “redemptive” kernels can be separated from its rebellious shell.

Furthermore, the literature has paid little attention to the role of the University of Ibadan and its attendant effect on the Nigerian Civil War. The works of Nwaka (2011), Oparah (2014), Oyeweso (1992), and Osaghae (2002),¹⁰ etc., have contributed immensely to the historicity of the Nigerian Civil War. For example, *The Nigerian Civil War and its Aftermath*,¹¹ edited by Eghosa Osaghae, adopts a thematic approach in its interrogation of the Nigerian Civil War. The Nigerian Civil War, which remains a watershed in the history of Nigeria, has in turn affected almost every aspect of Nigerian life in terms of ethnicity, federalism, national question, marginalization, and the like. Eghosa’s work attempts to shed light on the varied issues that have emerged after the war. Though it provides a footing for the historiography of the war, which will aid this study, it did not examine the role played by the University of Ibadan vis-à-vis the war, which is a gap that this research intends to fill.

In a similar vein, in his book on the Nigerian civil war, the military and strategic studies expert Siyan Oyeweso¹² provides a good background to understanding the war from divergent points of view, ranging from historical to the fictional aspect, as reflected in the authorship’s background. Oyeweso argues that it was as a response to his duty as an historian to record the recent past. The book is a departure from the norm, dealing with the relations between Nigeria and France during the war and *dramatis personae* involved in the war. However, it has failed to address issues as regards education and its impact during the civil war years, which is a gap my research intend to fill.

A review of this existing literature reveals that a gap needs to be filled in the political history of Nigeria with the experience of the premier University of Ibadan. Within the Nigerian Civil War historiography, the role of the University of Ibadan is omitted.

1966 Coup d'état in Nigeria and the University of Ibadan

The first coup in the history of Nigeria occurred on January 15, 1966, when a group of young army officers, largely with the rank of Major, attempted to take over the government of the country. According to the leaders of the failed coup, their object was patriotic—it was to clean up the messy Nigerian political table.¹³ They promised radical reform and called for death sentences for a variety of crimes ranging from corruption, bribery, and subversion to rape and homosexuality. The effort was code-named Operation Damisa (“Leopard”).¹⁴ But the manner of casualties of that effort generated disbelief for the coup plotters¹⁵ because the January coup left the dangerous impression that its leaders—mainly from the Igbo ethnic group—were out to destroy the Republic’s first government, led by the Northerners, in order to pave the way for Igbo political ascendancy.¹⁶ It thus brought into play the decision to abolish the regions and their powers of autonomy, setting into motion a constitutional crisis about how Nigeria was to be governed, a crisis that continues until today.

The rioting in the north was a result of the promulgation of Decree 34. Still resentful over the killing of political leaders and frightened by the disappearance of their autonomy, northern officers staged a revenge coup on 29 July 1966, in Ibadan, where Ironsi had gone to open a conference of traditional rulers. This led to the killing of Ironsi and his host, the Military Governor of Western Region, Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi. Ten other military officers, nine of the Igbo or Easterners,¹⁷ were killed in the counter-coup, which was code-named “Operation *Araba*” (“Sucession”).¹⁸ The code name was suggestive of the fact that those who planned the operation thought in terms of the North seceding from Nigeria, which was a replay of threats to secede earlier in 1953, following a motion passed by the delegates of the West that the independence of Nigeria should be granted by 1956. This was objected to by the northern delegates, and the Sardauna of Sokoto in the aftermath of this regretted the amalgamation as the “mistake of 1914” and

even threatened secession because he perceived that the North was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the South.¹⁹ Earlier in 1948, the North also showed signs that they wanted to be left alone, and they were honest about this when Mallam Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who subsequently became Prime Minister of Nigeria, said:

Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one . . . this is wrong.²⁰

This time around, there was no sign of readiness to secede, as no decision about who was to replace Ironsi was made. Brigadier Ogundipe, a Yoruba, was the most senior military officer, but he could not assume leadership because of his inability to command the loyalty of the majority of the officers and men who were of Northern origin.²¹ In the long run, it was Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon who emerged as the new military Head of State.

With the pogrom in the North, Ojukwu was forced to order the Easterners to return to their place of origin.²² This saw the mass movement of Easterners from the North, and in the south, equally venomous attacks were made on the Northerners in the press as many migrated from different parts of the country. Many likened the massacre of Easterners to that directed against the Israelites. They opined:

It was in this kind of catastrophe, massacre, persecution that the Israelities had to go home and to found what is now known as Israel in November 1947.

They added:

Israel today is a mighty nation . . . and Eastern Nigeria will emerge out of this catastrophes one of the strongest . . .²³

Others saw it as a call to safety. This was reflected in the interactions of a fleeing Easterner who was believed to be a top civil servant in Lagos. He succinctly puts it: "Our lives and properties are not in any way safe as far as we remain in Lagos. The murderers do not ring bell before their illegal act."²⁴ Despite this variant view, another school of thought saw it as a call for regional development. This was observed in the interactions of two legal luminaries. They stated: "Now that we have been driven home, we have to remain in the east to develop our own region instead of going out to develop other regions."²⁵ The killing in the North in

September 1966 was an important factor in the events that put a wedge between the regions. It helped transform secession from a contingency plan into inevitability.²⁶ The coup and counter-coup of 1966 greatly altered the political equation and destroyed the fragile trust existing among the major ethnic groups. By the end of 1966, the country seems to have settled on the brink of collapse with the isolation of the East.

However, prior to the official announcement of the coup by University authorities, students and staff members who heard it on the radio celebrated the announcement with relief. Nobody saw any ethnic tone in the coup. Subsequently, when the university bulletin announced that the Premiers of the Northern and Western Regions had been killed, but the Eastern Premier had not been, some grew suspicious that ethnicity played a role in the coup. The bulletin, however, made it clear that the situation in Ibadan (Western region) was calm and that everybody should remain on campus for as long as possible.²⁷ The selective killings of the Premiers made many argue that the coup had an ethnic tone. The consequence for the University of Ibadan was that Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Northerner who serves as the Premier of Northern Nigeria and the Chancellor of the University, was killed, and Nnamdi Azikiwe (an Easterner) as the Visitor of the university, had lost his office as the President of Nigeria. In the light of this, many perceived suspicions that University of Ibadan academics of Eastern origin may have been associated with the coup.²⁸ Unluckily for Kenneth Onwuka Dike, the Vice Chancellor and of Eastern origin, he was away on leave of absence from the university, which prompted many of his colleagues to claim that he was aware of an impending coup, alleging that this was the reason he took his leave of absence prior to the coup. Thus, upon the completion of his leave, he requested an extension.²⁹ In the same vein, it was well reported that the officials of the Commonwealth Relation Office (CRO) heard about Kenneth Dike's planned meeting with Ironsi in London as an academic pretext. Some records available in the CRO offices reveal that officials were interested in Dike's "reputed closeness to Ironsi,"³⁰ which further underscores his awareness of the coup.

Furthermore, as the coup was alluded to as an ethnic one, the stories of the massacre of thousands of innocent Easterners were on the increase. A Sierra Leonean living in Northern Nigeria

commented that “the mass killing of the Igbo in the north has become a state industry in Nigeria.”³¹ Orjinta, a civil war scholar, also argued that the “horror of the massacre surpasses the atrocities of Hitler.”³² The subsequent reaction of demonstrators in the Western Region accompanied the singing and shouting anti-Ibo songs such as “Ibo must go,” “Go and meet Ojukwu,” and “No more place for the Ibos here.”³³ In addition, the July counter-coup raised fears and suspicions among residents of Eastern Nigeria, which had its own fair share of the university community. This led to the mass exodus of students and staff with their families.³⁴ Among these was F.A.O. Udekwu, a Senior Lecturer in Surgery, I.O.K. Udeozo, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemical Pathology,³⁵ S.J. Akpakip, the Assistant Librarian, W.O. Ikpasa, Junior Research Fellow in N.I.S.E.R.,³⁶ and Mr. Anele of the Establishment Office, just to mention a few.³⁷ Also, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Sir Louis Mbanefo, resigned on April 22, 1967, and was immediately replaced with Sir Samuel Manuwa, effective from May 18, 1967.³⁸ In a letter to the Chancellor of the University, Sir Kashim Ibrahim, dated April 18, 1967, Louis Mbanefo (an Easterner) wrote from his Enugu residence:

My dear Chancellor,

The national crisis has reached such a stage that I feel I cannot usefully continue in my post as Chairman of Council of the University of Ibadan. Since the national crisis began in August last year I have held on to my post in the hope that a solution would be found which would make it possible for me to continue to carry on effectively as Chairman of Council. That has not happened. I feel that in the present situation when all dialogues likely to lead to a solution appear to be making no progress, it would be foolhardy on my part to think I could continue to be effective in the discharge of my duties as Chairman. I have, therefore, very regretfully come to the conclusion that I must resign my appointment as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council of the University with effect from the 22nd April, 1967.

He added:

I am painfully aware that this is, perhaps, not the proper time to relinquish my appointment when the Council is engaged with the problem of finding a Vice-Chancellor, but considering all circumstances I am convinced that I should not delay my decision any longer. I am addressing a letter to you on the

stage reached by Council and Senate in the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. My association with the University, from its inception, has been a happy one and I shall continue to watch its progress with keen interest. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to member of Council with whom I have worked and whose loyalty and co-operation I have come to value.³⁹

Furthermore, the Vice Chancellor, who was on leave of absence, never returned. The indefatigable John Harris, the then Librarian and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, acted as Vice-Chancellor from the summer of 1966 until early 1968.⁴⁰ Many Easterners never returned, as the crisis became a Civil War that lasted for three years. Most of the academics from the Eastern region acquired lecturing jobs at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; also, a good number of the students who fled to “safety” across the Niger were drafted into the Biafran army immediately. However, while people from the East left the university amid fear and suspicion, few from the West returned to their ancestral homes for fear that they might be killed. Afterward, they returned to the University. On the other hand, the mid-Westerners, who were regarded as “strangers” in that part of the region and who did not constitute a major ethnic group, were determined to stay in the university no matter what the situation might become.

Nigerian Civil War and the University of Ibadan Administration

With the commencement of the Nigerian Civil War, one of the immediate impacts of the war was on the University of Ibadan administration. This came under intense pressure as a result of staffing. This was openly adumbrated by Harris, the acting Vice-Chancellor of the University at the graduation ceremony. He stated thus:

Already we had lost our Chancellor and visitor. We then found ourselves without most of the Chief Officers of a University, we had no Vice-Chancellor, and we were without the services of a Registrar, a Deputy Registrar, and even an Academic Secretary. Two of the largest halls of residence comprising a thousand students were without their Wardens, one faculty has no Dean, and four departments have no

heads. In the course of the session, some forty other teaching staff deserted us. It is a tribute to the nature of University organisation in general and to our own constitution in particular that Ibadan withers the storm.⁴¹

The Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Sir Samuel Manuwa, gave a similar speech in 1968:

Many of those in higher posts who were left to carry on were obliged to do so in various acting capacities: acting Vice-Chancellor, acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, acting Registrar, acting Deputy Registrar.⁴²

The university was understaffed, resulting in the appointments of two professors as assistants to the Vice-Chancellor. Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi was appointed as the assistant on academic matters, particularly academic planning for development, and Professor D.H. Irvine as the assistant on administration with special reference to matters on halls of residence.⁴³ Moreover, other senior administrative officers were also appointed temporarily as Registrars and department heads. In Oloruntimehin's view, he maintained that some of the posts were later made permanent because some fleeing staff had sent resignation letters, and other positions were advertised in the course of the session.⁴⁴ This enabled the Council to take a position on the issue of salary payment to absconders until the end of March 1967; afterwards, their appointment would have been terminated.

The postgraduate school established in 1955 felt the impact of the mass staff exodus. The economy was shattered, postgraduate students could not afford tuition, and many talented faculty had departed. Ade-Ajayi argued that many students educated at the University of Ibadan or abroad could not get jobs in Nigeria due to the country's economic situation, resulting in a postgraduate admission decline. This led to a reliance on undergraduate programmes.⁴⁵

Ade-Ajayi also contended that despite the dwindling of postgraduate activities, the university broadened its scope beyond the production of university teachers.⁴⁶ For example, there was a keen interest in the development of postgraduate diplomas and professional training in the field of medicine.

The National University Commission recommended that a minimum of 10,000 undergraduate students be enrolled

in Nigerian universities by October 1967. Ibadan was given an admission quota of 3,012. UI had to increase its enrollment from 1,800 in October 1962 to 3,000 in October 1964. Despite failing to meet the new requirement, from 1964 to 1966, student enrollment increased by 60 percent between 1961/62 and 1966/67.⁴⁷ Therefore, the sharp drop in student enrollments to 2,569 in October due to the Civil War was not that large, constituting only 6.7 percent.⁴⁸

In Okedara's perspective, while many students left during the war, many returned after the war to complete their degrees. At UI, returning students impacted the daily life of the university. Thus, it extended its registration period to both new and returning students until November 1966. While the crises continued to threaten the lives and property of non-Eastern Nigerians in the Eastern region, Col. Ojukwu's stance compelled many students at UI to return home. In Harris's words, "the University of Ibadan remains what it has always been, a University of and for Nigeria. Others may claim the name but we maintain the reality."⁴⁹ In April 1967, despite 270 students leaving UI to return home, 111 students (104 from Nsukka and 7 from Ahmadu Bello, respectively) were admitted, bringing the total number of students enrolled for the 1966-1967 session to just short of 340.⁵⁰

A case in point was K.P.E. Odili, a student displaced by the war from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Odili was on a scholarship from the Ministry of Education, Benin, and had successfully completed two academic sessions. He wrote to the Head of Department of Modern Languages at UI to ask if he could transfer to complete his program in French and German. The Registry of the Undergraduate Admission Division gave his application considerable attention.⁵¹

On the other hand, 12 prospective students from Calabar in the Southeastern part of the country were unable to take up their places in the University of Ibadan as a result of a lack of transportation facilities from Calabar to Lagos. These students were Emmanuel E. Edem, Emmanuel Ndem, Emmanuel E. Asuquo, Peter E. Ekpo, Nfon Asanga, Bassey H. Bassey, Erete Ikpeme, E. Orok, Augustine Mfon, Magaret Nakanda, Emmanuel Onoyom, and Eugenia Bassey. The incident was brought to the University's attention by E.E. Esua, a Federal Ministry of Education official, who suggested ways to tackle the issue. He stated:

It is a fact that the present academic year is far advanced, but you are well aware that a disappointment of this character usually demoralizes an intending student and might blast his prospect for life. I should be grateful if you could request the Federal Military Government to provide such transport facilities to these intending students as will enable them to travel to Ibadan so that they could embark upon direct reading in the library without waiting for the next session. The local situation in Calabar is such that many houses have been destroyed in consequences of the battle there, so that these intending students can find nothing useful to be engaged in except to loaf about and be demoralised.⁵²

This situation prompted a letter by the Vice Chancellor to Lt.-Col. B. Adekunle, the General Officer Commanding, Third Division, of the Nigerian Army in Calabar, requesting that the Commanding Officer authorise the departure of these students from Calabar and to help arrange for moving them by means of any available military aircraft to Lagos as soon as the military situation makes it possible.⁵³ In a reply to the Vice Chancellor's letter, E.J. Utuk, the Assistant Secretary to the Military Governor of the Southeastern state, maintained that "admission for the affected students for the current session is impossible because he has been informed by different universities not to send any more candidates for the 1967/1968 academic year as it is now late for such admission."⁵⁴ A different twist was added to the whole scenario when in a private memo to the Vice Chancellor, a senior member of the Registry, A.M. Babalola, advised:

We will be setting a dangerous precedent because we will in effect be committing ourselves to offering admission to the people concerned and we are not sure of their qualification. We will also be obliged to provide them accommodation and boarding. If we do, who will pay for them?⁵⁵

The Vice Chancellor, Professor T.A. Lambo, finally laid the matter to rest in his reply to E.E. Esua. He stated:

To assist the students, I would have agreed to request the Federal Military Government to provide them transport facilities to Ibadan so that they can start reading against next session. But there are many implications if we take this action. One of this is that once we request the Military authorities

to transport them to Ibadan, in fact we are not sure of their academic qualifications. In addition, we will be obliged to provide them with boarding facilities for which someone would have to pay. As you probably know, our University is going through a most critical financial strain and we will not be able to provide such boarding facilities to the affected students. . . . It is with regret that I have to say that I cannot meet your requests. I wish I could be of help to you.⁵⁶

Despite the aforementioned development, 766 students joined in 1967. Of these, 558 were from the western region, while only 13 were Igbo. The others came from different parts of the country.⁵⁷ Also, Yoruba students occupied the spaces left by fleeing Easterners, which also coincided with the Adamolekun's reinstatement as the Registrar in November 1967, five years after his battle with his boss, Kenneth Dike.⁵⁸ This signaled the beginning of Yoruba domination at the University of Ibadan.

Additionally, the Civil War depleted the university's finances. Lambo publicly bemoaned on Foundation Day celebration the university's financial state:

The most crucial drawback has been one and for three and a half years to nearly four years in the university we have been operating standstill budgets. This has had a most incapacitating and disturbing effect not only on the progress of the university but on the morale of the staff, intellectual quest and enquiries, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the training of young men and women, the inherent capacity for institutional growth may be incapacitated by lack of funds.⁵⁹

The issue of funding was so critical that it affected the university's postgraduate programmes and other developmental programmes. Consequently, Lambo sought funds from international agencies.⁶⁰ While some gave financial support, others offered their support in the form of staffing. The financial milieu was so strong that vacancies had to be frozen until more funds were made by the Federal Military Government.⁶¹

Describing the situation as tragic, Bolanle Awe, a former member of staff at the university of Ibadan, stated that it became challenging to members of staff because they had to shoulder unusually heavy teaching loads and other commitments—a situation that was not conducive for research endeavors.

UI's inability to support indigent students was also called into question, as there was a usual practice of setting up a Special Loan Fund for financially destitute students in 1965.⁶² But with the lack of funds, it became increasingly apparent that many students would not take their exams due to their financial status. This led the University authority to recommend students to the Federal Government for assistance under the Indigent Students' Scheme.⁶³ Unfortunately, the FMG could not provide succor, and by March 1968, the university listed 43 students as indebted and thus unable to take their forthcoming exams. This included post-graduates.⁶⁴ As a result, Ibadan's prestige did not solely attract international donors. This led the Vice Chancellor to travel abroad often for funds.⁶⁵

Nigerian Civil War and Academic Life in the University of Ibadan

The Nigerian Civil War also impacted the university academically. 20,000 people lived in the residential areas before the Civil War. Olatunji Oloruntimehin opines that different regional groups were suspicious of each other, and feared that the Midwesterners were infiltrators or collaborators.⁶⁶ The Midwesterners, however, argued that their region had been playing the role of mediator during the war. Conspirator accusations led to deaths. Soldiers shot dead two Midwestern students, prompting the students to seek protection from the Military Governor of the Western state, Brigadier (Later Major-General) Adeyinka Adebayo. Adebayo urged them to be law-abiding and arranged for their placement at either the Liberty Stadium or at the University of Ibadan for their safety.⁶⁷ Okudu, an alumnus Registrar and a Midwesterner, opined that the reaction of the Western region's Governor suggested that he thought that the students were actually collaborators or saboteurs.⁶⁸ Still, Igbo students had it worse.

The remaining Igbo students were constantly under suspicion and fear. The campus security situation became so intense that Harris publicly lamented that "one of the major problems has been the number of Ibos, mostly western Ibos, still employed here. They are a considerable source of anxiety because their presence arouses strong feelings."⁶⁹ The terror forced the school authorities to issue a bulletin to urge their staff to stay in Ibadan,

and for students to carry out their work without any fear. The Military Area Commander for Ibadan Province supported Harris's position:

It has been brought to the notice of the Military Area Commander for Ibadan Province that a number of citizens of Ibadan have been moving out of the city and taking their property and family to their place of origin in fear that there were some plans by certain groups of individuals to attack them. The Military Area Commander wishes to assure all citizens that there is no plan or design to attack any group or persons from a particular area of the Republic. It is the responsibility of the forces of law and order to ensure adequate protection to all citizens, irrespective of their places of origin, and all the Military personnel wishes to assure all and sundry that military and police personnel are being deployed throughout Ibadan and environs to assure that adequate and effective protection is ensured to all law-abiding citizens.⁷⁰

Once the military commander's position was aired on radio, the university gave a standing order that staff and students should continue with their normal activities.⁷¹ General Gowon, who visited the university, also tried to dissuade people from leaving the university. He reiterated the FMG's position to keep Ibadan and other universities safe for all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin.⁷² This led to UI being placed under military guard amid fears of enemy subversion.

Thus, a local Civil Defence Group was formed. This was partly to alert members of the university community on the need for vigilance. It was also to involve them in tackling the problem of security and civil defense on campus, and thus discourage purposeless panic. This afforded members of staff the opportunity to volunteer to be part of these vigilante groups. This was subject to the approval of John Harris, who then issued identity cards to individuals. The duty of the Civil Defense Group also included accompanying members of the Armed Forces when carrying out spot checks and patrols at night. The husband of a lecturer in the University of Ibadan, Bolanle Awe, was among those who volunteered. The lecturer expressed her fear—one shared by many in her shoes—of what might possibly happen to her husband, an “untrained military personnel,” in case of any imminent attack.

According to her, she stayed all night until his arrival each time he went out on patrol duty.⁷³

As the situation continued to be intense, it came to the notice of the University authorities that accommodation that was meant for the sole use of members of staff and their dependents were sublet to other people to bring additional income to such members of staff. This act was most glaring especially in Abadina quarters where non-academic staff mostly resided. The situation prompted University management to order the filling of a form to gather data on every household, which was required to be submitted through the Heads of Department before 5 p.m. on Friday, August, 1967. Non-compliance with the directive could result in possible eviction from the staff quarters. For the senior members of staff who were absent from the University, the Heads of Department were responsible for the provision of information on their behalf.⁷⁴

The step taken by the University as regards the abuse of University accommodation was made available to occupants in which the University authority argued that “it is essential in this period of national emergency to ensure that university housing is not used to harbor people who, known or unknown to the householders, may be potential risks to security.”⁷⁵ In the same vein, householders who have other dependents besides a limited number of children below the age of 15 were asked to declare their name, status and place of origin of those dependents. The possible reason for this action was due to the fact that the University had the right to limit the number of such dependants.

The directive of the University led to the compilation of the list of staff members, which revealed the addresses of those residing on campus. For instance, A.L. Mabogunje of the Faculty of Arts resided then at 2 Ebrohimie Road, R.A. Adeleye, Flat 1 Block 1, Phillipson Road, O Ikime, Flat 4 Block 5, Phillipson Road, and O. Aboyade from the Faculty of Social Sciences resided at 10 Pepple Road, E.U Essien-Udom, Flat 4 No. 4 Barth Road, just to mention a few.⁷⁶ After the compilation, a thorough search was carried out to flush out illegal residence. It is important to note at this point that nobody was exempted from the search by the security personnel including Harris, the acting Vice Chancellor and his deputies. This was made clear in an official bulletin issued from the Vice Chancellor’s office, stating:

In this period of emergency, we must expect such check, and it is a good thing that to emphasize that none of us is exempted from this. It is meant for the security of our lives and property. We are in duty bound to cooperate fully with the police in such matters. For our parts, we are considering various measures to further strengthen security on the compound both to reassure all law abiding citizens and to deter or detect potential saboteurs.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the Acting Vice Chancellor attributed the actions of his administration to the prevalence of fear and suspicion which had become the order of the day as a result of lack of communication. To tackle this and at the same time calm the nerves of staff and students alike, the publishing of an official weekly bulletin was introduced. The Official Bulletin first appeared on October 15, 1966, and its aim, according to Olatunji Oloruntimehin, was to provide factual information to the University community specifically and to the society at large on past, current, and forthcoming events.⁷⁸

The first set of the bulletins signed by John Harris was a step in the right direction to bridging the communication gap between his office and the larger University community and dispelling rumors.⁷⁹ The messages featured in the bulletins were appropriately captioned under various headings. For instance, *The Bomb that Never Was: A Tale of Horror with a Happy Ending*, was intended to dispel rumors that a time bomb has been planted on the campus, which was like a soothing balm to the University community when the bulletin was released. Also, when it was rumored that the university has opened its gates indiscriminately to Igbo, the Official Bulletin under the caption "Rumours" stated:

May I repeat that there is no truth in the rumour still circulating on the campus that we have opened our gates indiscriminately to Ibos. After the weekend, when quite a number of our workers were molested in town, a total of 34 workers who previously lived outside were allocated available accommodation at Abadina. Like everybody else, they were subjected to security checks. In addition, we have instituted regular checks to ensure that only bona fide workers and their genuine dependents are allowed to stay on the compound. Instead of trying to create alarm, any members of the University can check on these facts and establish, for

example, that there is no truth in allegations that workers have been allocated accommodation in any of the halls.⁸⁰

The bulletins were not just released to dispel rumors but also to provide the university with the true picture of the situation on campus. Furthermore, when the situation intensified, individuals exploited this avenue for stealing and disguising themselves as security personnel. The Official Bulletin kept its pace by providing the required advice and instruction to combat such crises under headings like Burglaries, Thieves and Bogus Policemen. To this end, it is one of the legacies of the Vice-Chancellor's office.

Furthermore, vehicle movement was also given adequate attention by school authorities. This was necessary to combat theft and for such vehicles not to be used as an avenue to convey materials detrimental to the security of life and property of members of the University community. This led the authorities to declare:

With effect from 7 a.m. on Friday, 1 September, all cars entering the University campus by the Main Gate or the University of Ife Gate will have to be checked and certified by the Estate Officer as belonging to the University or to a member of our staff. Every car owner who qualifies for this exemption should, before 5 p.m. on Thursday, 31 August, return the form attached listing the type and registration numbers of the car. This applies to both personal and departmental cars. Our register will include only cars to whose ownership we can testify. Let me emphasize that this exempts such cars only from being checked in and out of the register at the gates. ALL vehicles entering the University remain subject to security checks.⁸¹

While this measure was appropriate in the record for entries of cars in and out of the University, it also enabled the University to have on register the number of cars owned by the University and members of staff alike. This is also another enduring legacy the University maintained and improved upon to this day since the period of the Civil War.

In the midst of the security threat, Harris was away from the University until January 1968.⁸² Rather than allow fears to befall the University community with the absence of the Vice Chancellor, Professor Ade-Ajayi was appointed to act on his behalf, who brought his dexterity to play amidst the crisis. One his major

actions was the implementation of curfew on campus in specific areas that were declared out of bounds between 7 p.m and 6 a.m. This was to restrict the movement of people from one part of the University to the other as a result of the increasing fear of infiltration of Midwesterners. Ade-Ajayi, the Acting Vice-Chancellor, made this known while updating members of Senior Staff on holidays abroad:

From the point of the view of the University, the most important effect of the Midwest coup is the fear of infiltration into and sabotage within the Western state. This has heightened suspicion about possible disloyalty among Igbo members of the community and has called for increased vigilance to prevent hostility against Ibos developing into molestation as well as to ensure that infiltrators and saboteurs are not harbored. For these reasons, a curfew has been imposed on Ibadan from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. and vehicles are not allowed into the town after 7 p.m. There is an also increased check at our Main Gate as well as police and army patrols on the campus at night with occasional checks on houses. A Civil Defense group has been formed to assist the police and the army on these checks.⁸³

Because the University was on holiday, some members of staff had travelled out of the country and had to rely heavily on foreign news for information. The quantum of letters received by the Vice Chancellor's office inquiring about the safety of Ibadan precipitated the above explanation by the Vice Chancellor to keep them informed about events going on in their University.

Some of the places that were placed under restriction included the Library and Arts Building, Science Faculty Building, Pre-Medical and Agricultural Faculty Building and the National Archives. Not only were patrol men available at these areas but also military sentries were stationed there throughout the curfew period. For the rest of the campus, there was no such curfew, but a caveat was added to it. It stated:

In the general interest, everyone is advised as far as possible to observe the same hour as the official Ibadan curfew even on the campus, i.e. 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. This means that people are advised to stay indoors during these hours unless they have specific and legitimate business outside. Anyone can be challenged to explain his mission during those hours, and the patrolmen and military sentries can detain suspicious people

for questioning. Anyone found loitering will be arrested; those whose duties on the campus necessitate being regularly out of doors after 9 a.m. are advised to contact Estate Officer for passes.⁸⁴

Recounting his experiences as a University teacher, Tekena Tamuno posited that staff before the national crisis virtually lived in lecture rooms, laboratories and libraries. The scholarly burning of the proverbial midnight oil held no fear of armed robberies and other violent crimes in the University campus. The atmosphere was not one of panic but was pervaded by a vital ingredient of peace in the residential and academic areas, a peace that engendered opportunities for sober intellectual pursuits. However, with the then security threats, members of staff found it difficult to stay in academic areas at night, as it was their usual practice to read and work overnight in their offices, laboratories, and libraries.⁸⁵ However, while the curfew lasted, there were complaints about the behaviors of soldiers on the University campus. This arose as a result of incidents that indicated that the soldiers themselves did not understand the clear terms of their duties. Therefore, there was the need for the Vice Chancellor to reiterate his position to them so that they would have a clear understanding of their mission on campus. He outlined their duties as follows:

1. The sole aim of the small detachment of troops on the campus is to guard essential and clearly defined buildings and watch various footpaths leading into the campus. It is essential that this should continue to be done in the present circumstances.
2. The soldiers have no business within the residential areas of the university campus; they have no business enforcing black out regulations. They have no business with conducting searches or enforcing curfew. These are essentially the duties of the police and the Civil Defense Group.
3. There is no curfew in the University compound outside the clearly defined prohibited areas.

He further added that:

I have the assurance of the area commander and other army officers in charge of the detachment here, as well as of the N.C.O., that the ideas enunciated above are clearly understood by the soldiers on the campus and that they will be observed. I will be grateful to have clear and precise information about any possible future incidents that seem to

contravene these principles. I am anxious that, in spite of the emergency, life on campus remain normal. There is no reason why members of staff should feel bottled-up or feel unable to visit friends on the campus or the Senior Staff Club after 9 p.m.⁸⁶

Moreover, the majority of those who resides on campus were provided with tidbits on safety procedures. This included the use of such explosives as bombs, poison gas, fire bombs, or anti-personnel bombs left on the ground or dropped from the air, as well as gunfire and small arms. For example, when a bomb is dropped on the campus, the individual will discern through the loud voice from the air and the flying object that an explosion has occurred. It is expected that the individual lies on his/her belly covering his head with his hands. The individual is expected to remain there until the blast of air and flying objects, including dust and other materials, have passed over.⁸⁷

Each member of staff and students were armed with a three-page directive from the civil defense, while the patrol teams were to ensure that most of these directives are carried out. For example, it was expected that at night, lights out should be observed both in the rooms and sitting rooms, street lights should be switched off, and thick curtains should be fixed at every window. Other safety aids, such as buckets of earth or sand, first aid boxes, bandages, and pieces of clean clothes were meant to be handy in cases of emergency.

Also important was the issue of personal safety of students on campus. Many from the Eastern parts of the county had difficulties in their interpersonal relationships with friends and colleagues in the University from the Western parts who challenged their citizenry and bullied them about their real identity. The example of Lawrence Nata Wamo Wachuku stands out. He wrote to the Assistant Registrar (in Student Affairs) on the reasons why he changed his name. He stated that one of the reasons was that he was accustomed to soldiers on his way from town who after checking his identity believed that he was an Igbo man, even when he refuted the allegation and claimed that he was from Port-Harcourt. This situation, he opined, was among the reasons he changed his name for safety's sake to Lawrence

NataWamoWeli Wedge, which he argued is not irrelevant to the context of his family.

However, the situation did not go down well with colleagues, who believed he was hiding his Igbo identity. Westerners believed that anyone who crossed the Niger River was an Igbo. This was noticeable because Lawrence was a public figure who vied for the position of the Public Relation Officer of the Student Union in an election conducted during 1966/1967 session,⁸⁸ which he later won.

After the election, the Student Union President, Olaleye Ajayi, a Westerner, continued his derogatory remarks and became a “rebel.” Writing a letter of protest to the University authority, Lawrence remarked:

Any day I am missing on this campus, you may ask the President of the Student Union to give you details of my whereabouts. My having been cut off from home is the only advantage he has over me in life.⁸⁹

Providing a clearer definition of the difference between the Port-Harcourt region and other Eastern Ibo areas, he further stated:

I come from Port-Harcourt District—Port-Harcourt is not in the East Central State today because the owner of Port-Harcourt (not the strangers who live in it) are not Ibos. As for the accident of names, there is a mid-Westerner (in Kuti Hall) whose surname is Garuba, and that does not make him Hausa. All rivers students know me: I am the national Publicity Secretary of the Students’ Union of River Students (throughout the country). I only want to do my education here—playing full parts—not to dominate him in his own state. I shall go home afterwards to dominate myself.⁹⁰

Disclaiming the evidence that Weli Wedge was from Port Harcourt, the article “Mr. Lawrence Wachukwu (Weli Wedge): An Appeal by the Students’ Body” written by Boniface Okoro was of the opinion that Port-Harcourt is an Igbo Town. His reason had been that Lawrence Nwachukwu (using his spelling of Wachukwu) is an Ikwerre man and thus of Igbo origin. He also asserted that the Ikwerres and the Ikwerre land belong to the Igbo. Debunking the claim that Boniface O. Okoro is an Igbo man and defending Weli Wedge’s claim, a rejoinder was written in reply to Boniface Okoro called “Boniface Okoro: The Man with Multiple Names,” in which Ohochukwu Stephen affirmed first that an investigation

revealed that the name Boniface Olaleye Okoro was a fake name which did not exist on campus and is not associated with Independence Hall, as alleged by the writer Boniface Okoro. He added:

Mr. Boniface claims to be an Igbo man and says his town is adjacent to that of Weli-Wedge. Alright for the people who don't know much about the location of Port Harcourt and Weli-Wedge's town note this: Weli-Wedge is an Ikwerre man in fact from Obio. Obio land—which Port Harcourt is a part of—stretches fourteen miles in land from the sea. The last Ikwerre town before the Ikwerre-Ibo border is about forty-seven miles in land then see how possible for that fake Ibo man, Mr. Boniface Olaeye Okoro—who is of course not an Ikwerreman—to be a native of a non-existing Ibo town adjacent to that of Weli-Wedge.⁹¹

The above positions suggest that there was an attempt to foster a tense relationship between the Rivers people and the Igbo. This to a large extent caused tensions among the few Igbo who had nowhere to run to for safety other than remaining in the university campus. The fact that Lawrence changed his name also could be attributed to the fact that though he might have been from Port Harcourt, he possibly has an Igbo background.

The Nigerian Civil War and Displaced Families

Another major area in which the Civil War impacted the University of Ibadan was with regard to the issue of displaced families. The phenomenon of displacement was due to the war in the Eastern parts of the country, where many staff members could not be reunited with their families.⁹² On a rare occasion, John Harris, an acting Vice Chancellor was assisted by the Military Governor of the South Eastern State, Col. J.U. Esuene, in reuniting with his family from the Uyo axis during the war. In his letter of appreciation to the Governor which expressed mixed feelings, John Harris declared:

I have to thank you for all you have done to ensure the return of my stewards and family to Ibadan from Uyo. It has been very reassuring to many men from your state in the University to know that their area is now liberated and that communication is possible. . . . One of the consequences of my steward's return has been a number of applications from

other university employees enquiring whether the same thing can be done for them. Four members of the library staff have wives and children at Uyo, Calabar and Eket, and all want to be reunited with their family. I shall be grateful if you can let me know what is possible in this respect.⁹³

As rightly stated by John Harris, the Deputy Librarian circulated an internal memorandum to all departmental heads in the library to inquire further if such situations actually existed. This indeed yielded a favorable response from the Assistant Librarian (NISER) that Mrs. Akinwale had two cousins in the former Eastern region whose whereabouts she does not know.⁹⁴ The application of Mrs. Akinwale could not be processed due to the fact that adequate information could not be provided on the exact location of her cousins, which is one of the criteria for processing the application. However, the ones mentioned by Harris in his letter to the Governor of South Eastern States had adequate information. They included the following:

1. Mr. S.A. Basse, who has two wives and six children: Mrs. Iquo Basse and five children and Mrs. Akon Basse and one child: both of Mbierebe, Obio, c/o Mr. E.E. Akpan, Ikot Akpan Abia, Ibesikpo, Uyo.
2. Mr. M.O. Ephraim, who has a wife and one child: Mrs. Theresa Ephraim, 25 Murray Street, Calabar.
3. Mr. S. Isangedige who has a wife and six children: Mrs. A.M Isangedige, c/o Chief Peter Isangedige, Afaha Atai, P.M.B No. 8, Eket.
4. Mr. A.J. Inyang, who has a wife and four children: Mrs. Lucy A. Inyang, Okat, Onion Nung, Ndem, Eket Division, South-Eastern State.⁹⁵

It is important to state here that the number mentioned by John Harris to the Governor was possibly a ploy to seek his assistance, which would serve as an avenue to open the doors of opportunities to several others. For instance, Mr. S.J. Akpakp, also from the same library, who also provided adequate information on the name of his wife and location was on a pending list, while Mr. Emechete was another person who provided full data on his family but could not meet the deadline when the Vice Chancellor was compiling his list for the Governor. The Library also might seem significant here because John Harris was formerly the Librarian of the University before his appointment as the acting

Vice Chancellor of the University. However, the entire list was not merely from the Library. For instance, Mr. A.J. Inyang was from the Ibadan University Press (IUP) amongst others.

Conclusion

The University of Ibadan was established as a federal University expected to employ staff and admit students from all ethnic groups in the country. However, the Nigerian Civil War limited the attainment of these goals, as there were disruptions in the socio-economic arrangements of the University. It became evidently clear that the Civil War negatively impacted the university community. One such negative impact was the mass exodus of members of staff of Eastern origin. This led to a huge vacuum in the staff population that needed to be filled quickly. The mass movement of students of Eastern origin out of the University was also greatly felt by the University community. This created an atmosphere of fear and mutual suspicion thereafter between members of staff and students of different ethnic groups who worked and resided on the university campus. On the other hand, the challenges it posed kept the university on its toes. It is apposite to state that despite the many challenges it encountered, the University did not stop performing its statutory roles. Thus, it was practically pushed to adopt important measures to protect the lives and properties of its students and members of staff. Some of the measures adopted were continued even after the war and have thus become part of the tradition of the university community. It should also be noted that the university was able to ensure peaceful coexistence amongst various ethnic groups in the University.

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