

From Shock to Self-Determination: Igbo Responses to the 1966 Pogrom and the Rise of Biafra Nationalism

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Abstract : In modern-day Nigeria, the spirit of Biafra, the defunct secessionist state of former Eastern Nigeria, endures. While some attempt to downplay the historical factors that led to its creation, this paper aims to demonstrate that the 1966 pogroms in Nigeria, which claimed the lives of over 30,000 Igbo people, shattered their faith in the nation's ability to provide security and acceptance. This loss of faith led to a mass exodus from various regions of the country back to their homeland in Eastern Nigeria. Utilizing primary sources such as interviews and archival reports, and secondary sources like books, journals, and websites, this paper will argue that the trauma and terror of the 1966 massacres were the primary drivers of secessionist sentiment and self-determination among the Igbo people, ultimately leading to the declaration of Biafra. By drawing parallels with other historical incidents across the globe, this paper will establish the theoretical connection between shocking events, identity questioning among traumatized groups, and the subsequent rise of nationalistic sentiments seeking to ensure group preservation. To achieve its objective, this paper will employ descriptive, narrative, and chronological methods of analysis to present and discuss its findings.

Keywords : Igbo, pogrom, shock, trauma, nationalism, Biafra

Conference Title : ICHSPS 2024 : International Conference on Humanities, Social and Political Sciences

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : February 19-20, 2024