

Paths to Self-determination:
A Comparative Study of the
Sociological Contexts and
Resistance Strategies of
Biafra and South Sudanese
Emancipation Movements

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Paths to Self-determination: A Comparative Study of the Sociological Contexts and Resistance Strategies of Biafra and South Sudanese Emancipation Movements.

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Abstract

This study examines the trajectories of the Biafra (located within current Nigerian territory) and South Sudan self-determination movements through qualitative analysis of interviews, surveys, and document sources. The research employs a triangulated data approach, including thematic analysis of 10 in-depth interviews with activists and scholars (7 for Biafra and 3 for the South Sudan movement), survey responses from 23 participants (19 for Biafra and 4 for South Sudan), and critical review of archival documents and scholarly articles. Findings reveal that both movements emerged from profound historical grievances, including colonial-era marginalization, postindependence genocide narratives, and systematic socioeconomic exclusion. While South Sudan achieved independence through a combination of unified leadership under John Garang, sustained armed resistance, and decisive international support (particularly from the US and regional allies), Biafra's struggle was hampered by fragmented leadership, geopolitical isolation, and Nigeria's military superiority backed by Cold War powers. The study highlights three critical success factors in self-determination movements: (1) cohesive internal organization, (2) strategic international alliances, and

(3) effective framing of grievances. Analysis further reveals how differential access to diplomatic recognition and arms supplies shaped outcomes, with South Sudan benefiting from post-9/11 geopolitical shifts absent in Biafra's 1960s context, which was exacerbated by post-Cold war politics.

Key words: Self-determination, Liberation Movements, Biafra, South Sudan, Sociological Context, Resistance Strategies

List of Abbreviations

UN—United Nations

EU—European Union

OAU—Organization of African Unity

AU—African Union

UNPO—Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

IPOB—Indigenous People of Biafra

MASSOB—Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra

BRGIE—Biafra Republic Government in Exile

USB—United States of Biafra

CPA—Comprehensive Peace Agreement

SPLM—Sudan People's Liberation Movement

SPLA—Sudan People's Liberation Army

PPT—Political Process Theory

ARCISS--Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan

NCP-- National Congress Party

IGAD-- Inter-Governmental Authority on Development

DoP—Declaration of Principles

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, omerebereifeanyi@gmail.com Paths to Self-determination:

A comparative study of the Sociological Contexts and Resistance Strategies of Biafra and South Sudanese Emancipation Movements. The Working Paper is based on a Master Thesis prepared by the author. Special thanks go to Arnab Roy Chowdhury for supervising the preparation of the Master Thesis.

USSR—Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
US—United States
UNMISS-- United Nations Mission in South Sudan
ICJ—International Court of Justice
BBC—British Broadcasting Corporation
FIDR—Foundation of International Development/Relief
MOSOP—Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People

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Introduction

The quest for self-determination has been a prominent theme in post-colonial studies (Castellino, 2024; Reynolds, 2018), particularly in Africa (Bereketeab, 2012), where numerous movements have emerged in response to historical grievances, ethnic marginalization, and socio-political injustices. The Biafra Liberation Movement is a socio-political movement advocating for the independence of the Igbo ethnic nationality, which inhabits mainly the southeastern part of Nigeria and some other parts of the country. The South Sudanese Liberation Movement, particularly represented by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), sought autonomy and independence for South Sudan from Sudan, culminating in the successful establishment of South Sudan as an independent nation in 2011. Scholars have extensively analyzed various liberation movements, highlighting the complexities and challenges they face in their pursuit of autonomy. Notable works by authors such as Craze & Tubiana (2016) and Gray & Roos (2012) have examined the dynamics of conflict and the role of external support in shaping the trajectories of these movements. However, while there is a wealth of literature on individual movements, there remains a significant gap in comparative analyses that explore the factors that lead to the contrasting outcomes of struggles for self-determination, particularly in the cases of the Biafra Liberation Movement and the South Sudanese Liberation Movement.

One of the primary distinctions between the two movements lies in their respective approaches to armed resistance and political negotiation. The South Sudanese Liberation Movement, particularly through the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), effectively combined military action with diplomatic efforts (Njuguna, 2023) to garner international support and legitimacy. This dual strategy allowed them to mobilize resources, attract allies, and ultimately negotiate a peace agreement that led to a referendum on independence. In contrast, the Biafran Liberation Movement has employed peaceful protests, sit-at-homes, social media, and security networks in pursuit of self-determination.

Another critical factor that may influence the outcomes of these movements is the role of external involvement and international dynamics. The South Sudanese movement benefited from significant backing from foreign governments and organizations (Johnson, 2016), which recognized the humanitarian crises resulting from the prolonged conflict and provided military and financial assistance. This external support was instrumental in sustaining the SPLM/A's efforts and legitimizing their cause on the global stage. On the contrary, the Biafran movement faced considerable challenges in securing similar international support, particularly during the NigeriaBiafra War; when geopolitical interests and Cold War dynamics complicated the situation. The perception of Biafra as a secessionist entity rather than a legitimate liberation movement limited its ability to garner sympathy and assistance from the international community. In examining the existing literature, it becomes evident that the Biafran struggle, which peaked during the NigeriaBiafra War (1967-1970), has often been framed within the context of ethnic conflict and postcolonial issues (Heerten & Moses, 2014) and marginalization (Ikegbunam & Agudosy, 2021). Similarly, the South Sudanese movement has been characterized by the same factors, providing a ground for the comparison.

Despite sharing similar goals of self-determination, the Biafra and South Sudanese movements experienced vastly different outcomes. The Biafra movement ended in defeat after a brutal war between Biafra (the former Eastern Region of Nigeria) and the government of Nigeria, while South Sudan achieved independence after decades of conflict with the government of Sudan. This disparity raises critical questions about the factors that influence the success or failure of selfdetermination movements and the overarching question of why one movement is fully recognized by the international community and the other is yet to gain such recognition.

The **central research question** guiding this study is:

What are the reasons for the contrasting outcomes of the Biafra and the South Sudanese Movements in their respective quests for self-determination?

To answer this central research question, sub-questions will be addressed:

- What are the narratives and perceptions surrounding Biafra and South Sudanese movements?
- What are the key factors that would help in understanding the contrasting outcomes of the Biafra and the South Sudanese Liberation Movements in their respective quests for selfdetermination?

The study hypothesizes that:

1. The narratives and perceptions surrounding the Biafra and South Sudanese movements are shaped by a complex interplay of historical grievances, socioeconomic injustices, and collective identities, which together influence public understanding and support for each movement. It is further hypothesized that both movements draw upon narratives of marginalization and oppression, yet they differ in their emphasis on leadership dynamics, conflict duration, and external influences, ultimately reflecting distinct cultural contexts and aspirations for self-determination.
2. The contrasting outcomes of the Biafra Emancipation Movement and the South Sudanese Liberation Movement in their quests for self-determination can be attributed to a combination of socio-political, economic, and external factors. Specifically, it is hypothesized that such factors, according to Trzeciński (2004) as cited in Berekteab (2012), are part of but not limited to:
 - Interests of powerful states
 - Attitude of the central government towards the secessionist movement
 - Military balance between the secessionist movement and central government
 - Strategic importance of the seceding region
 - External support to the secessionist movement or central government
 - Recognition of the secession by the international community, particularly the UN.
 - Economic significance of the seceding region for the parent state.

This thesis then **aims** to investigate the narratives and perceptions and then key factors that contributed to the contrasting outcomes of the Biafra and South Sudanese movements in their

respective quests for self-determination. The study seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics that shaped each movement's trajectory. This inquiry is justified by the need to understand how historical contexts, strategies, external influences, etc. can lead to success or failure in liberation struggles, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on self-determination. The research employs Trzciński's (2004) identified factors on self-determination while incorporating insights from Political Process theory to move beyond conventional state-centric explanations. Through systematic comparison of five key themes—external support, military dynamics, central government responses, economic/strategic considerations, and international recognition patterns—the study reveals how geopolitical contexts, movement strategies, and institutional pathways intersected to produce divergent results.

The analysis not only contributes to theoretical debates about the conditions enabling successful self-determination but also offers practical insights for contemporary movements navigating the tensions between sovereignty claims, rights of indigenous people, and international norms. By situating these cases within broader discussions of postcolonial statehood, humanitarian intervention, and resource politics; the study illuminates the enduring paradoxes of self-determination in the 21st century—where principles of justice and equality confront realities of power and interest in the international system.

This study further **contributes** to the academic understanding of self-determination movements by providing a comparative analysis of two significant cases in African history. It highlights the interplay of internal and external factors in determining the success or failure of such movements, offering insights for policymakers, conflict resolution practitioners, and scholars.

The **scope of generalizability** for this study is constrained both temporally and spatially.

Temporally, the applicability of the findings is primarily relevant to the specific historical contexts of the Biafra Liberation Movement (1967-1970) and the South Sudanese Liberation Movement (1955 to 2011), with the understanding that dynamics such as international relations, activism, and sociopolitical conditions may differ significantly in future independence movements. Spatially, while insights gleaned from the contrasting outcomes of these two movements may inform other global self-determination efforts, their unique cultural, historical, and geopolitical contexts necessitate caution in direct comparisons. Therefore, while the identified factors are pertinent to understanding these movements, their relevance may vary in different geographical regions and under varying political frameworks. Future explorations of self-determination should consider these temporal and spatial dimensions to foster a nuanced understanding of each context.

The layout of the paper is structured as follows: Following the introduction, a methodology section outlines the comparative case study approach employed in the research, and then the theoretical framework and literature reviews summarize existing knowledge on self-determination movements in Biafra and South Sudan, highlighting key themes. The findings section delves into the specific factors influencing the outcomes of the Biafran and South Sudanese movements. The analysis culminates in a discussion that summarizes the findings and explains the theoretical implications. Limitations are then highlighted.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing the paths to self-determination in the Biafra Emancipation Movement and the South Sudanese Liberation Movement. The framework offers a comprehensive lens to understand the dynamics, strategies, and outcomes of these movements, and it is very crucial in examining both the internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors.

Political Process Theory and Its Application to Social Movements

Political Process Theory (PPT), developed by Doug McAdam, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing social movements by examining the interplay between internal organizational dynamics and external political conditions (McAdam, 1999). The political process theory identifies three key components that shape social movements: *organizational strength*, *cognitive liberation*, and *political opportunity structures*. Organizational strength refers to a movement's capacity to mobilize resources, coordinate actions, and sustain collective efforts, influenced by leadership, networks, and institutional support. *cognitive liberation* involves the collective realization among marginalized groups that their conditions are unjust and changeable, driven by shared grievances, ideological framing, and persuasive narratives. *political opportunity structures* encompass external conditions—such as state repression, international support, and geopolitical shifts—that either enable or constrain a movement's success. By integrating these factors, PPT offers a lens for understanding how self-determination movements like Biafra's and South Sudan's emerge, develop, and either succeed or fail, emphasizing the importance of both internal mobilization and external opportunities.

The Interplay of Internal and External Factors

Social movements evolve through a dynamic interaction between internal and external factors. Insurgency results from a confluence of favourable factors that are internal and external to the movement (McAdam, 1983).

Internal factors include:

- Indigenous organizations and established networks that facilitate mobilization.
- Mass base resources and organizational capacity to sustain collective action.

External factors include:

- Expanding political opportunities, such as shifts in state policies or elite divisions.
- Elite involvement, which may provide resources but risks co-optation.
- Social control responses, including state repression or counter-movements.
- Political system openness or repression, which determines a movement's viability.

These elements interact through collective attribution, where groups interpret their circumstances and possibilities for action within existing power structures. Movements emerge when participants

perceive both the necessity and feasibility of change, underscoring PPT's focus on agency within structural constraints.

Political opportunities are critical in shaping movement emergence. McAdam (cited in Armato & Caren, 2002) defines them as "any event or broad social process that undermines the calculations of the political establishment"—such as wars, economic shifts, or international realignments. These opportunities reduce power disparities between insurgents and the state while raising the costs of repression. However, opportunities alone are insufficient; they must align with indigenous organizational strength and cognitive liberation—the collective belief that change is possible. Cognitive liberation reinforces organizational capacity, creating a feedback loop that strengthens movements. Its effectiveness depends on communication networks and leadership capable of articulating grievances and framing demands persuasively (Armato & Caren, 2002).

While PPT is influential, scholars have critiqued its limitations:

Meyer & Minkoff (2004) argue that PPT's conceptualization of political opportunities is often too broad or vague, leading to inconsistent applications. Their analysis of the civil rights movement highlights how factors like media coverage and elite attention shape protest dynamics, urging clearer definitions of political contexts. Bob (Bob, 2002) examines the Ogoni struggle in Nigeria, demonstrating PPT's limitations in transnational movements. Despite gaining international support, MOSOP faced severe repression and internal fractures, showing that external backing does not guarantee success. Goldstone (Goldstone, 2004) critiques PPT's structural bias, advocating for a relational field approach that accounts for interactions between movements, counter-movements, and states. He predicts that democratization will increase, not reduce, social movements as new avenues for dissent emerge. Khattra et al. (Khattra et al., 1999) challenge PPT's overemphasis on structural factors, calling for greater attention to culture, emotions, and agency in movement analysis.

Political process theory remains a valuable tool for analyzing movements like Biafra's and South Sudan's, but its structural focus must be balanced with cultural, emotional, and strategic dimensions. Success depends on:

- Strong internal organization (leadership, unity, resource mobilization).
- Cognitive liberation (persuasive framing of grievances).
- Favorable political opportunities (state weakness, international support).

However, as critiques show, movements must also navigate transnational dynamics, state repression, and internal divisions. This research integrates PPT with cultural and relational approaches to better explain why some movements succeed while others falter.

Literature Review

Overview of Self-Determination in Post-Colonial Contexts

Self-determination is defined as the process by which a group of people, typically possessing some degree of national consciousness, form their own state and choose their own government (Britannica, 2025). This principle emerged alongside nationalism and was prominently articulated in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points after World War I. Following World War II, it became a cornerstone of the United Nations' decolonization efforts, framed as the right of peoples to determine their political, economic, social, and cultural futures (Joffé & Schofield, 2023). Moltchanova (2009) distinguishes self-determination from self-government, describing it as the capacity for the political future to be controlled by the collective rather than merely rule-making within an existing state. She argues that self-determination is both a moral and legal entitlement, challenging traditional state-centric international systems, particularly in cases where minority groups seek autonomy or independence.

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) established the foundational criteria for statehood: a permanent population, defined territory, effective government, and capacity to engage in international relations (Bachmann & Prazauskas, 2019). While this framework supported decolonization by providing a legal basis for newly independent states, it has also clashed with self-determination movements where colonial borders did not align with ethnic or historical realities (Gzoyan & Banduryan, 2011). The tension between territorial integrity and self-determination remains unresolved, particularly in cases like Kosovo and Somaliland, where legal recognition has been inconsistent despite meeting Montevideo criteria (Bereketeab, 2012).

The application of self-determination has evolved beyond decolonization, as seen in cases like Yugoslavia's dissolution and Kosovo's independence. Paco (2016) notes that Kosovo fulfills the Montevideo criteria and has been recognized by over 100 UN member states, with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that its unilateral declaration did not violate international law. However, asymmetrical recognition persists—South Sudan gained widespread recognition after a 2011 referendum, while Somaliland, despite stability and governance since 1991, remains unrecognized (Bereketeab, 2012). Kadir (2016) critiques the stagnation of self-determination law, advocating for a remedial approach where oppressed groups can claim independence as a last resort, overseen by mechanisms like the UN Human Rights Committee.

Parfitt and Craven (2018) argue that a globalized legal landscape is increasingly contesting traditional notions of statehood. While states remain central to international law, the rise of nonstate actors and cases like Kosovo and Somaliland challenge the rigidity of sovereignty doctrines. They highlight the political dimensions of recognition, where great-power interests often override legal criteria (Bereketeab, 2012). This selective application emphasizes the need for a revised framework

that decouples statehood from diplomatic recognition, ensuring consistency in addressing self-determination claims (Kadir, 2016).

Self-determination remains a vital yet contentious principle in international law. While it successfully facilitated decolonization, its application to post-colonial and secessionist movements reveals inconsistencies shaped by geopolitics, legal ambiguities, and power imbalances. A more structured approach—balancing territorial integrity with remedial independence for oppressed groups—could mitigate conflicts and align international practice with the moral and legal foundations of self-determination.

Historical Context of the Biafra Emancipation Movement

Pre-Colonial and Colonial and Post-Colonial History of the Biafran Region in Nigeria

Figure 1: Map of Biafra



Source: <https://biafran.org/biafra-maps/>

The Biafran Region (see Figure 1 above: Map of Biafran Region), mostly inhabited by the Igbo people, was characterized by a complex social structure, vibrant trade networks, and rich cultural traditions. Igbo society was traditionally organized into autonomous communities, each governed by a council of elders and traditional leaders (Harneit-Sievers, 1998), fostering a strong sense of identity and communal ties. The region was known for its agricultural productivity, particularly in

yam cultivation, and its thriving markets facilitated trade with neighboring ethnic groups (Korieh, 2010).

The arrival of European powers in the late 19th century marked a significant turning point. British colonial rule imposed new political and economic structures that disrupted traditional governance systems and marginalized local leadership. Korieh (2010) examined how colonialism altered land tenure, agriculture, and gender roles, particularly through cash crops like palm oil. These changes economically disenfranchised women, who had previously held central roles in farming, while forcing Igbo society to adapt to exploitative colonial policies and missionary influence.

British policies exacerbated ethnic tensions, notably through the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. Ajayi (2022) analyzed how this forced union—imposed without regard for cultural and political differences—embedded structural imbalances in Nigeria's governance. The British "divide and rule" tactics deliberately favored certain groups, ensuring political dominance for the North while marginalizing the Igbo and other southern minorities (Ezeani, 2012). As Achebe (2012) argued, these colonial foundations created a fractured nation, where post-independence leadership failed to reconcile ethnic rivalries but instead perpetuated corruption and inequality.

The socio-political discontent crystallized in the post-World War II era, as Igbo nationalism grew in response to systemic marginalization. Historical grievances, economic disparities, and the 1966 anti-Igbo and other Easterners pogroms fueled demands for self-determination. By 1967, these tensions culminated in the declaration of the Republic of Biafra—a direct challenge to Nigeria's postcolonial borders and a rejection of what Achebe termed "the British-made trap" of unified statehood. The move triggered the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967–1970), a brutal conflict that exposed the enduring fissures of colonial engineering.

The Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-1970)



Figure 2: Timeline Report of Biafran Movement

Source: The Researcher

The Nigeria-Biafra War (See Figure 2 above: Timeline Report), also known as the Nigerian Civil War, was a brutal conflict that took place from 1967 to 1970 between the Nigerian government and the secessionist state of Biafra, which had declared independence in southeastern Nigeria. The war was rooted in longstanding ethnic, political, and economic tensions, particularly between the Igbo people, who predominantly inhabited the southeastern region of Nigeria, and minority groups with the Federal government of Nigeria. The immediate catalyst for the conflict was a series of events following Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960, including a coup in 1966 led largely by Igbo officers (Siollun, 2010), a counter-coup, and subsequent anti-Igbo pogroms in northern Nigeria (Harnischfeger, 2011). These events led to the declaration of Biafra's independence by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu in May 1967 (See Appendix C: Declaration of Biafra's Independence), prompting the Nigerian government, under General Yakubu Gowon, to launch a military campaign to reunify the country. The war was marked by intense fighting, widespread suffering, and a blockade imposed by the Nigerian government that led to severe famine in Biafra, resulting in the deaths of millions of people, mostly civilians, especially children (Korieh, 2010).

The conflict attracted significant international attention due to the humanitarian crisis, with images of starving Biafran children drawing global sympathy and prompting large-scale relief efforts (O'Sullivan, 2014). Despite this, Biafra received limited international recognition and support, with only a few countries, such as France and some African countries like Tanzania, Gabon, and Ivory Coast, (Achebe, 2012), formally recognizing its independence. The Nigerian government, backed by major global powers like Britain and the Soviet Union (Achebe, 2012; Ezeani, 2012), maintained its stance on preserving Nigeria's territorial integrity. The war ended in January 1970 when Biafran forces surrendered, and the region was reintegrated into Nigeria. The aftermath of the war was officially characterized by efforts at national reconciliation, including the policy of

"No Victor, No Vanquished," aimed at healing ethnic divisions. However, the legacy of the war continues to influence Nigerian politics and inter-ethnic relations, with calls for restructuring and greater autonomy for the southeastern region persisting to this day.

Post-War Dynamics and Current Agitations

Despite the government's post-war declaration of *"No Victor, No Vanquished,"* aimed at fostering national reconciliation, the Igbo and some minority ethnic groups in the Southeastern Nigeria faced significant economic and political marginalization (Onuoha, 2018). Policies such as the *"abandoned property"* decree (Obi-Ani, 2009), which dispossessed many Igbos of their land and property, and the devaluation of Biafran currency further pauperized the population, deepening feelings of injustice and exclusion. These post-war policies, coupled with the lack of meaningful reintegration, sowed the seeds for the emergence of self-determination movements like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the ongoing separatist agitations.

MASSOB

The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is an organization that emerged in the late 1990s in quest of the restoration of Biafra. It came about amid Nigeria's political liberalization and the uncertainties following the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999. MASSOB's youths, with their leader Ralph Uwazuruike, mobilized historical narratives and ethnic identity to assert their claims against an electoral authoritarian regime, posing a challenge to Nigeria's democratization process (Okonta, 2017). MASSOB has engaged in various activities centered around the ideology of peaceful protests, drawing inspiration from the nonviolent resistance strategies of historical figures like Mahatma Gandhi (Harnischfeger, 2011) and Martin Luther King Jr. (Onuoha, 2013). Its leadership, particularly under Uwazuruike, emphasized the importance of peaceful demonstrations as a means to advocate for the rights and self-determination of the Igbo people. This approach was rooted in the belief that nonviolent resistance could effectively challenge the Nigerian government's policies and practices perceived as oppressive and marginalizing towards the Igbo ethnic group.

MASSOB organized numerous peaceful protests, rallies, and public awareness campaigns to highlight the grievances of the Igbo people and to call for the recognition of Biafra's sovereignty. These activities were characterized by the use of peaceful means, such as marches and sit-ins, aimed at garnering national and international attention to their cause. However, despite their commitment to nonviolence, MASSOB faced significant pushback from the Nigerian federal government, which viewed the movement as a threat to national unity and stability. This led to a series of confrontations between MASSOB members and security forces, resulting in arrests, violence, and repression of their activities by the Nigerian State and its agencies.

The situation escalated in 2005 when Uwazuruike was arrested by the Nigerian Government (Okonta, 2017), a move that underscored the government's intolerance towards any form of agitation for secession or autonomy. His arrest was met with widespread condemnation from

MASSOB supporters and human rights advocates, who argued that it was an infringement on the right to peaceful assembly and expression. The government's heavy-handed response to MASSOB's peaceful protests not only highlighted the tensions between the movement and the state but also raised questions about the broader implications for democracy and human rights in Nigeria. This led to the formation of the new movement under Nnamdi Kanu's leadership.

IPOB

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu as a response to the perceived inadequacies of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) led by Ralph Uwazulike. It emerged as prominent a voice advocating for self-determination through non-violent means just like its predecessor. However, the Nigerian government's repressive response, including the proscription of IPOB as a terrorist organization and the use of military force against protesters, has radicalized the movement. Then, the formation of armed factions like the Eastern Security Network (ESN) (Nwangwu, 2023), which was formed to counter the attacks of Fulani militant 'herdsmen' terrorizing and killing the Igbos and other Easterners.

Kanu sought to reinvigorate the Biafran cause by adopting a more assertive approach (Nwangwu et al., 2020), emphasizing the need for self-determination for the Igbo people. A significant aspect of IPOB's inception was the establishment of Radio Biafra, an online radio station that became a crucial platform for disseminating information, mobilizing support, and promoting the Biafran agenda. Through Radio Biafra, Kanu was able to reach a global audience, raising awareness about the struggles of the Igbo people and advocating for the restoration of the Biafran state, although lots of people view it as a way of disseminating hate speech (Chiluwa et al., 2020) by employing harsh and abusive language.

Kanu's approach often puts him at odds with Uwazulike's MASSOB, which adhered to a more peaceful and conciliatory strategy. The ideological differences between the two movements led to tensions, as Kanu criticized MASSOB for its perceived ineffectiveness and lack of urgency in pursuing the Biafran cause, and Uwazulike himself was accused of enriching himself (Oyewole, 2019) and succumbing to the pressures of the Nigerian government. This divergence in tactics and philosophy contributed to a split within the broader Biafran movement, with IPOB gaining traction among younger supporters who were frustrated with the slow progress of MASSOB.

Kanu's activism, however, led to significant legal troubles. In October 2015, he was arrested (Nwangwu, 2023) by Nigerian authorities on charges of treasonable felony, among other allegations, following a series of confrontations between IPOB members and security forces. His arrest sparked widespread protests and calls for his release from supporters who viewed him as a political prisoner. After spending over a year in detention, Kanu was granted bail in April 2017, but he fled Nigeria later that year, reportedly seeking refuge in Kenya, after Nigerian government security forces invaded his house, which led to a clash between the government forces and IPOB.

supporters. His escape was marked by controversy, as it raised questions about the circumstances surrounding his departure, since it was labeled as ‘jumping bail’ by the government.

Kanu's subsequent forceful repatriation from Kenya in 2021 (Eze, 2021) led to renewed legal proceedings in Nigeria, where he faced multiple charges related to his activism and the activities of IPOB. The court proceedings have drawn significant media attention and public interest, with supporters rallying behind Kanu, viewing him as a symbol of the struggle for Biafran selfdetermination. The ongoing legal battles reflect the broader tensions surrounding the Biafran movement and the Nigerian government's stance on secessionist sentiments, as Kanu's case continues to be a focal point in the discourse on ethnic identity, rights, and governance in Nigeria.

BRGIE/USB

The Biafra Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE) has emerged as a significant player in the ongoing agitation for the independence of Biafra with Simon Ekpa as a leader and based in the diaspora (Finland); it pushed for a referendum from January 2024 to November 2024 and was able to realize over 50 million votes (see Appendix D: Biafra Self Referendum Results), which then followed its re-declaration of independence as the United States of Biafra (USB) on November 29, 2024 (biafrarepublicgov.org). This declaration marked a pivotal moment in the struggle, as USB sought to assert its claim to sovereignty and establish a government that represents the interests of the Igbo people and other minority groups in Biafra. The leadership of USB now focused on garnering

international recognition for the Biafran state, emphasized the historical grievances stemming from the Nigeria-Biafra War and the ongoing marginalization of the Igbo community within Nigeria.

Since its declaration, the United States of Biafra (USB) has engaged in various activities aimed at raising awareness and support for its cause. These activities include diplomatic outreach to foreign governments and international organizations, seeking to build alliances and gain recognition for Biafra as a sovereign entity, especially the most recent reaching out to President Donald Trump and the invitation for his inauguration. The organization has also utilized social media and other platforms to mobilize support among the diaspora and within Nigeria, emphasizing the need for self-determination and the right to self-governance.

The quest for recognition remains a central focus for USB as it navigates the complex political landscape of Nigeria and the international community. The organization faces significant challenges, including resistance from the Nigerian government, which views the Biafran agitation as a threat to national unity. Despite these obstacles, USB continues to push for dialogue and engagement with relevant stakeholders, aiming to secure a legitimate platform for the Biafran cause. The ongoing activities of BRGIE reflect a renewed commitment to the pursuit of independence, as the organization seeks to establish Biafra as a recognized and sovereign state in the global arena.

Historical Context of the South Sudanese Liberation Movement

Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial History of South Sudan in Sudan



Figure 3: Map of South Sudan

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/07/sudan-referendum-result-confirmed>

The roots of the South Sudanese liberation movement (see Figure 3 above, for map of South Sudan) can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, when the region was characterized by a diverse array of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct cultural, linguistic, and political systems. These groups, including the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk (Jok, 2015), and others, lived in relatively autonomous communities, often engaging in trade, alliances, and occasional conflicts. The arrival of Arab traders and slavers in the 12th century during the Ottoman period (Miran, 2022) introduced external pressures, as southern communities faced raids and enslavement.

According to Johnson (2016), “Many dated the struggle back to development in the nineteenth century when Sudanese merchants (including officials of the Egyptian regime) were prominent among those involved in the slave trade that devastated the South” (p.2). This period also saw the spread of Islam and Arab cultural influences in the north, while the south largely retained its traditional religious practices and Christianity. The pre-colonial (before 1899) history of South Sudan was thus marked by a strong sense of local identity and resistance to external domination, which later influenced the region's response to colonial and post-colonial rule.

The colonial era, under Anglo-Egyptian rule (1899–1955), entrenched the divisions between the north and south of Sudan. The British administered the two regions separately, implementing policies that marginalized the south economically and politically. Missionary activity in the south promoted Christianity and Western education (Seri-Hersch, 2017), further distinguishing the region from the Arabized and Islamic north. This "Southern Policy" was designed to prevent the spread of Northern influence but also isolated the South from broader political developments. When Sudan gained independence in 1956, the southern region was ill-prepared to assert its interests within the new nation-state. The northern-dominated government in Khartoum quickly moved to impose Islamic laws and Arab cultural norms (Johnson, 2016), ignoring the south's demands for federalism and autonomy.

These actions reignited historical grievances and set the stage for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which sought to address the legacy of colonial marginalization and assert the right to self-determination. The movement's struggle against northern domination was thus deeply rooted in both the pre-colonial resistance to external control and the colonial-era policies that institutionalized regional and ethnic inequalities.

In the 1947 Juba Conference, South Sudanese leaders voiced their aspirations for autonomy. At this conference, the British colonial administration, more focused on its interests in Egypt, demonstrated a lack of concern for the South's needs and grievances. Southern Sudanese delegates claimed that promises of self-determination made by Egypt and Britain were broken, leaving them feeling marginalized and neglected (Johnson, 2016). This sense of betrayal would set the stage for future conflicts, as the South Sudanese people sought to assert their rights and identity in a nation that seemed indifferent to their plight.

Tensions escalated in August 1955 when Southern soldiers, frustrated by the political marginalization and violence against their communities, killed Northerners in the South. This incident marked the beginning of a cycle of violence that would characterize the region's history. Following Sudan's independence in 1956, power was concentrated in the hands of Arab Muslim elites in Khartoum, further alienating the predominantly Christian and animist populations of the South. The years from 1956 to 1972 saw continuous fighting in the South, fueled by the imposition of Arabic culture and Islam, which alienated many Southern Sudanese and intensified calls for federalism and autonomy. By the early 1960s, armed resistance had escalated into a civil war, as Southern Sudanese sought to reclaim their rights and identity (Johnson, 2016).

The political landscape shifted dramatically in 1964 with the overthrow of the military regime in Khartoum, revealing a split among Southern leaders between those advocating for federalism and those demanding outright self-determination. The period from 1966 to 1969 was marked by intense warfare, culminating in Colonel Safar Mohamed Nimeiri's rise to power in 1969. In 1971, peace talks facilitated by the All Africa Council of Churches and Ethiopia led to a limited acceptance of self-rule, with Southern lawyer Abel Alier representing Nimeiri in Addis Ababa. However, internal rivalries between Alier and Joseph Lagu, coupled with Nimeiri's interference and the exclusion of Southern Sudanese from influential roles, undermined the peace process. The declaration of Sharia law by Nimeiri further exacerbated tensions, as it was imposed on a diverse population of 64 ethnic

groups in Southern Sudan, leading to a deepening of the struggle for autonomy and selfdetermination that would continue for decades (Johnson, 2016).

The Sudanese Civil Wars

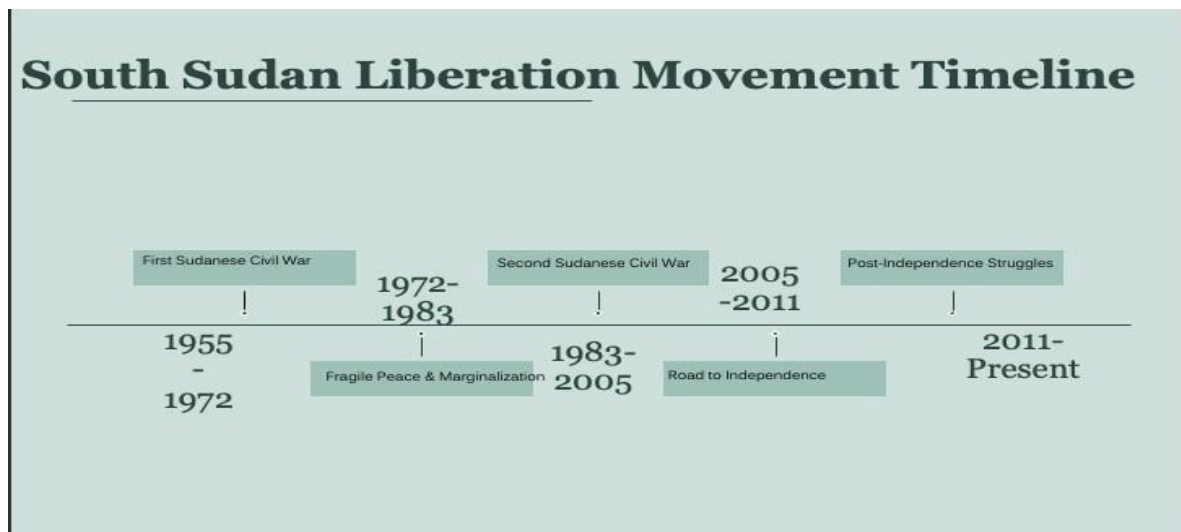


Figure 4: Timeline Report of South Sudanese Movement

Source: The Researcher

The Sudanese Civil Wars (see Figure 4 above: Timeline Report), spanning much of the second half of the 20th century, were rooted in deep-seated ethnic, religious, and political divisions between the predominantly Arab-Muslim north and the predominantly Christian-animist and ethnically African south. The First Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972) broke out shortly before Sudan gained independence from Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1956 (Arnold & LeRiche, 2013). The southern Sudanese people, who had been marginalized under colonial policies and feared further oppression under a northern-dominated government, rebelled against Khartoum's attempts to impose Islamic laws and Arab cultural norms. The war was characterized by guerrilla warfare led by the Anyanya movement (Rolandsen & Kindersley, 2019), which sought greater autonomy or outright independence for the south. The conflict ended with the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972, which granted the south limited self-governance and recognized its cultural and religious distinctiveness. However, the agreement failed to address the underlying issues of economic marginalization and political exclusion, setting the stage for renewed conflict.

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) erupted when President Gaafar Nimeiry abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement and imposed Sharia law nationwide, reigniting southern grievances (Johnson, 2016); this war was led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), under the leadership of John Garang, who framed the struggle as a fight for a "New Sudan" based on secularism, equality, and self-determination for all marginalized regions, not just the south. The conflict was marked by extreme violence, including widespread atrocities, famine, and displacement, resulting in an estimated 2 million deaths and over 4 million displaced persons. The war also saw the involvement of regional and international actors, with neighboring countries and

global powers taking sides based on geopolitical interests. The discovery of oil in the south further complicated the conflict, as control over resources became a central issue.

The Second Civil War ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which granted the south a six-year period of autonomy followed by a referendum and independence. In January 2011, the people of South Sudan voted (see Appendix E: South Sudan Referendum Results) overwhelmingly for independence, leading to the creation of the Republic of South Sudan in July 2011.

Achieving Independence in 2011

South Sudan's journey to independence in 2011 was the culmination of decades of struggle, marked by two prolonged civil wars and a relentless push for self-determination. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (see Appendix F: Comprehensive Peace Agreement) of 2005 (Ahmed, 2009), which ended the Second Sudanese Civil War, was a pivotal moment in this journey. The CPA granted South Sudan a six-year interim period of autonomy, during which it was governed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and provided for a referendum on independence. During this period, South Sudan worked to establish its own institutions and governance structures, though challenges such as underdevelopment, ethnic tensions, and limited infrastructure persisted. On January 9, 2011, the people of South Sudan voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence, with 98.83% of the population choosing to secede from Sudan (Arnold & LeRiche, 2013). This historic referendum was a testament to the enduring desire for self-rule and the rejection of decades of marginalization under Khartoum's rule.

South Sudan officially became the world's newest nation on July 9, 2011, celebrated with immense joy and hope for a brighter future. The declaration of independence was attended by global leaders (Johnson, 2016). However, the new nation faced immediate challenges, including unresolved ethnic tensions, weak governance, and economic dependence on oil revenues, which were vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets. Additionally, disputes with Sudan over border demarcation, oil-sharing agreements, and the status of the Abyei region (McNeily, 2012) threatened to destabilize the nascent state. Despite these challenges, South Sudan's independence represented a significant milestone in the history of the region, offering an opportunity to build a nation based on equality, justice, and development. Yet, the failure to address internal divisions and institutional weaknesses soon led to a devastating civil war in 2013 (Rolandsen, 2015) conveying the complexities of transitioning from liberation to stable statehood.

Methodology

Research Design

The comparative case study method was employed in this thesis, specifically utilizing Mill's Method of Difference (Hammersley et al., 2009). This qualitative approach is relevant for examining the paths to self-determination taken by the Biafra Liberation Movement and the South Sudanese Emancipation Movement. The most-similar case comparison is utilized, which is grounded in the logic of Mill's Method of Difference. This method involves selecting cases that are as similar as possible in all aspects except for the independent variable(s), which is believed to influence the outcomes. In focusing on the Biafra and South Sudanese movements, we can identify the independent variables that differentiate their paths to self-determination, thereby attributing to a degree the varying outcomes to these specific factors.

Comparative Case Study Approach: The Cases

The selection of the Biafra Liberation Movement and the South Sudanese Emancipation Movement as case studies is justified by their notable similarities in colonial background, ethnic composition, historical grievances, and socio-political contexts. Both regions experienced colonial rule that exacerbated ethnic divisions and laid the groundwork for post-colonial conflicts. In Nigeria, British colonial policies favored certain ethnic groups over others (Ezeani, 2013), leading to deep-seated grievances among the Igbo people and other minority ethnic groups, who felt marginalized and oppressed, particularly during the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-1970). Similarly, Sudan's colonial history, marked by Anglo-Egyptian rule (1899-1955), fostered divisions between the predominantly Muslim north and the largely Christian and animist south, culminating in a struggle for autonomy for the South Sudanese.

Religiously, both movements reflect a complex interplay of faith and identity, with the dominant religions being Christianity and Islamic religions and the Nigeria setting comprising Christians in the South (Biafrans) and the predominantly Muslim North, while the South Sudanese movement emerged from a predominantly Christian population seeking to assert its identity against a Muslimdominated Sudanese government in the North. Ethnicism plays a crucial role in both cases, as the

The Biafran movement is rooted in the Igbo identity and other ethnic minorities like the Ijaw, Ibibio,

Efik, etc., while the South Sudanese movement encompasses various ethnic groups, including the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, etc. (Shulika & Okeke, 2013). Historical grievances, such as the violent repression faced by both groups—Biafrans during the civil war and South Sudanese during decades of conflict—further underscore their struggles for self-determination.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative methods of document analysis, survey, and expert interview were employed in data collection. This technique enables the interpretation of a diverse array of documents, including historical records, political statements, surveys, interviews, and scholarly articles, to identify patterns and insights relevant to the research questions.

The main data for this study was obtained from in-depth interviews and surveys from Activists, Politicians, and Academicians interested in the cases. A pilot interview was conducted with a group of activists where the interview questions were tested, analyzed, and modified to suit the objectives of the study, before they were later applied to the general population of Biafran activists. The questions were further modified for the population of South Sudanese respondents. Furthermore, survey questions that capture the identified factors by Triscinski (2004) were used in data collection.

Secondary data for this study comes mostly from analysis of books such as Chinua Achebe's *"There Was a Country"*, Emefiena Ezeani's *"In Biafra Africa Died—The Diplomatic Plot,"* Hilde F. Johnson's *"South Sudan The Untold Story,"* Mathew Arnold and Mathew LeRiche's *"South Sudan from Revolution to Independence"* and other relevant articles from scholars.

Other sources include local newspapers and archival materials on Biafra and South Sudan.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis method primarily involves qualitative content and thematic analysis, aligned with the qualitative case study approach and Mill's Method of Difference. This method entails systematically examining a range of qualitative data sources, including historical documents, political speeches, scholarly articles, interviews, and surveys, to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to each movement's trajectory. Using the deductive approach (Pearse, 2019) and Mill's Method of Difference (Hammersley & Foster, 2000), the analysis will focus on isolating the independent variables that may differentiate the outcomes of the two movements, despite their similarities in context. Three processes employed are (i) Identifying narratives and perceptions using interviews and analyzing Trzcinski (2004) factors using surveys and documents, (ii) crossverifying findings across documents, surveys, and interviews, and (iii) examining similarities and differences between the two cases that led to divergent outcomes.

Survey Participants

Informed consent was obtained by sending out emails (*see Appendix A: Sample email*) to the experts in the field through internet searches and subsequent contact via Gmail and also through the snowball sampling method, requesting them to complete the questions in a written form. About 40 emails each were sent out to professionals from Biafra and South Sudan for the survey; while there were nineteen respondents from Nigeria, there was a poor turnout of participants from South

Sudan, who are primarily academics in the field, with 1 decline, 2 promises, and 3 acceptances, resulting in just three representations. Thereby, making a total of 22 participants. Google Forms were used in data collection for the written survey. (See *Tables 1& 2* below for the description of participants).

Table 1: Description of Survey Participants (Biafra)

#	AGE	GENDER	NATIONALITY	PROFESSION	AFFILIATION (e.g., University, Organization etc.)
1.	40	Male	Nigerian	Lecturing	Obedient Movement
2.	40	Male	Nigerian	Human Rights Activists	Society for Human Rights
3.	37	Male	Nigeria	Politician	Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo
4.	38	Male	Biafran	Engineering	Biafra Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE)
5.	32	Male	Nigerian	Politician	All Progressive Congress (APC)
6.	37	Male	Nigerian	Politician	---
7.	33	Male	Nigerian	Politician	---
8.	30	Male	Nigerian	Human Right Activist	--
9.	46	Male	Nigerian	Lecturer	--
10.	55	Male	Nigerian	Lecturer	Biafra Emancipation Movement
11.	30	Female	Nigerian	Ngo/Human Rights Activist	--
1 2	34	Female	Nigerian	Teacher	--
1 3	32	Female	Igbo	Activist	None
1 4	39	Male	Nigerian	Teaching	Indigenous People of Biafra

					(IPOB)
15	32	Male	Nigerian	Lecturer	Biafran Movement
16	35	Male	Nigerian	Lecturer	Liberal
17	45	Male	Nigerian	Lecturer	FIDR (Foundation for International Development/Relief)
18	41	Male	Nigerian	Historian	None
20	68	Male	Igbo/Nigerian	Priest/Lecturer	Catholic Church

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from Survey Data

Table 2: Description of Survey Participants (South Sudan)

#	AGE	GENDER	NATIONALITY	PROFESSION	AFFILIATION (e.g., University, Organization etc.)
19	56	Male	South Sudanese	Professor	Syracuse University
21	42	Male	South Sudanese	Educator	Bureau of Statistics, South Sudan
22	66	Male	South Sudanese	Professor	University of Juba
23	71	Male	South Sudanese	Public Administrator	Sudd Institute (Research Centre)

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from Survey Data

Analysis of Survey Participants' Demographics

Tables 1 & 2 above present a diverse group of 23 participants, predominantly male (20/23), with 3 female respondents (P11, P12, P13). The majority are Nigerians (19/23), with 4 South Sudanese academics (P19, P21, P22) and public administrator (P23); several explicitly identifying as Igbo/Biafran (P4, P13, and P20), underscoring the ethnic dimensions of the Biafra movement. Professionally, lecturers/academics (8/23) and politicians (4/23) dominate, alongside human rights activists (3/23). Affiliations reveal ideological leanings: pro-Biafra groups (IPOB, BRGIE, and

Biafra Emancipation Movement) are represented (P4, P10, P14, and P15), while others align with Nigerian political parties (APC, P5) or pan-Igbo organizations (Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, P3). Notably, participants 19, 21, and 22, South Sudanese professors and educator, and one public administrator, participant P23 provide a comparative perspective. The age range (30–71 years) captures intergenerational views, with older participants like P20 (68, a priest/lecturer) and P23 (71, Public Administrator from South Sudan) offering historical insights; while younger respondents (e.g., P11, 30) reflect contemporary activism. The lack of affiliation for some (P6, P7, P8, and P13) indicates independent or less formalized engagement with the movement. Overall, the demographics highlight the intersection of academia, activism, and ethnic identity in shaping perspectives on self-determination movements.

Age Distribution and Frequency

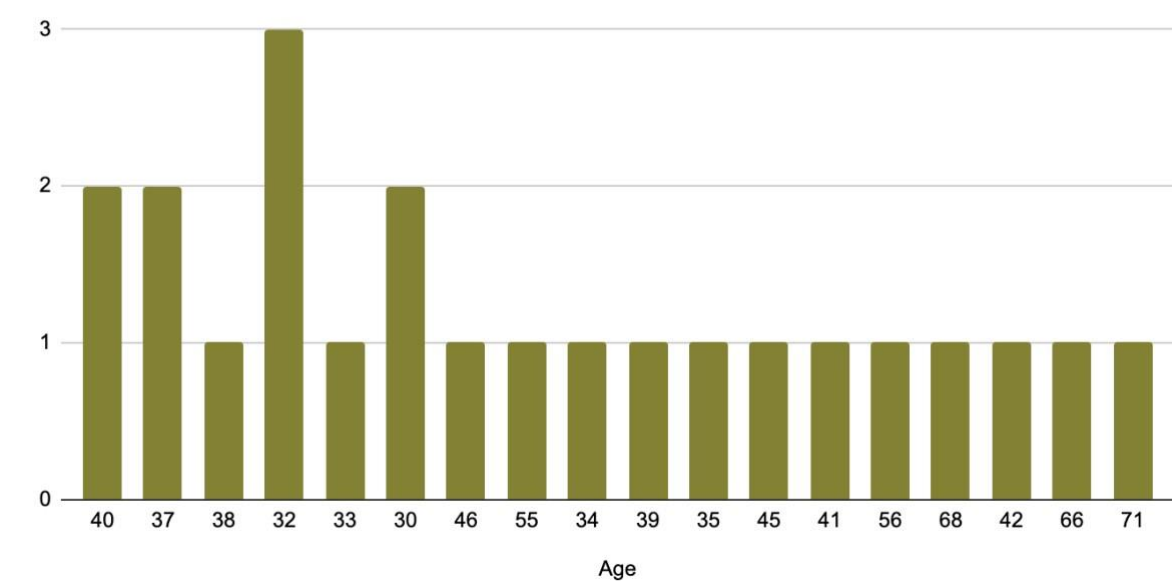


Figure 5: Age Distribution of Biafra and South Sudanese Survey Participants

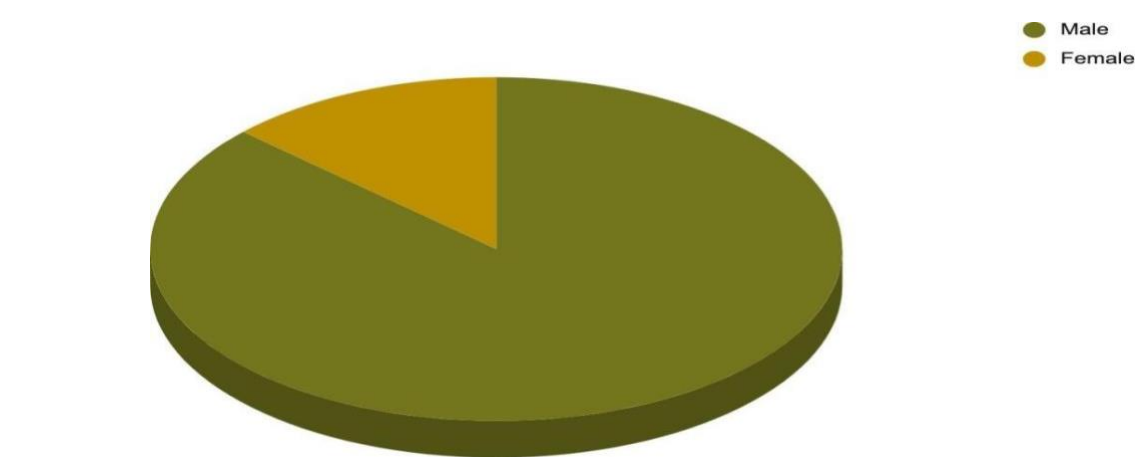


Figure 6: Gender Distribution
Nationality

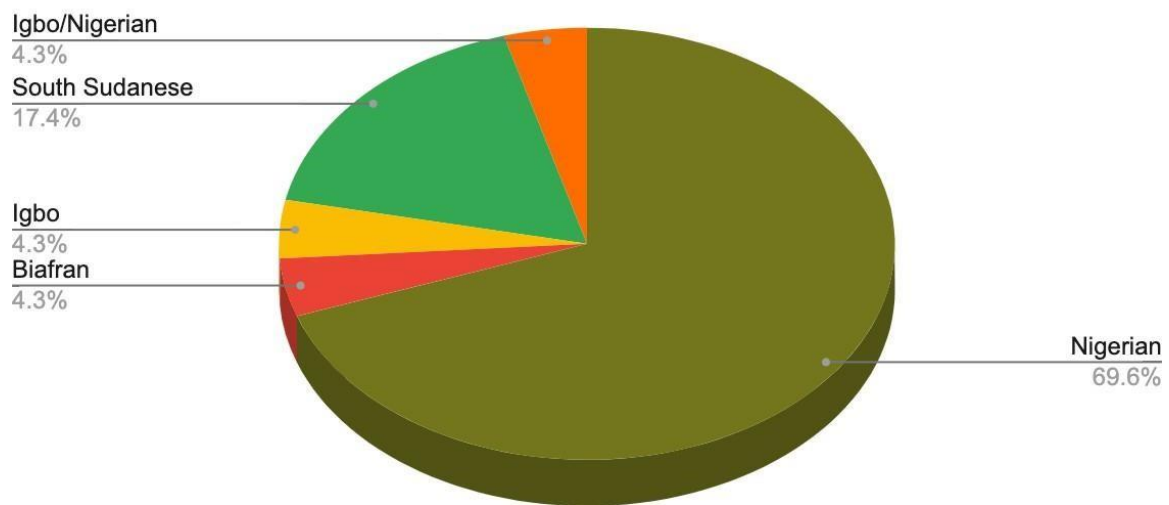


Figure 7: Nationality indications of Participant

Profession

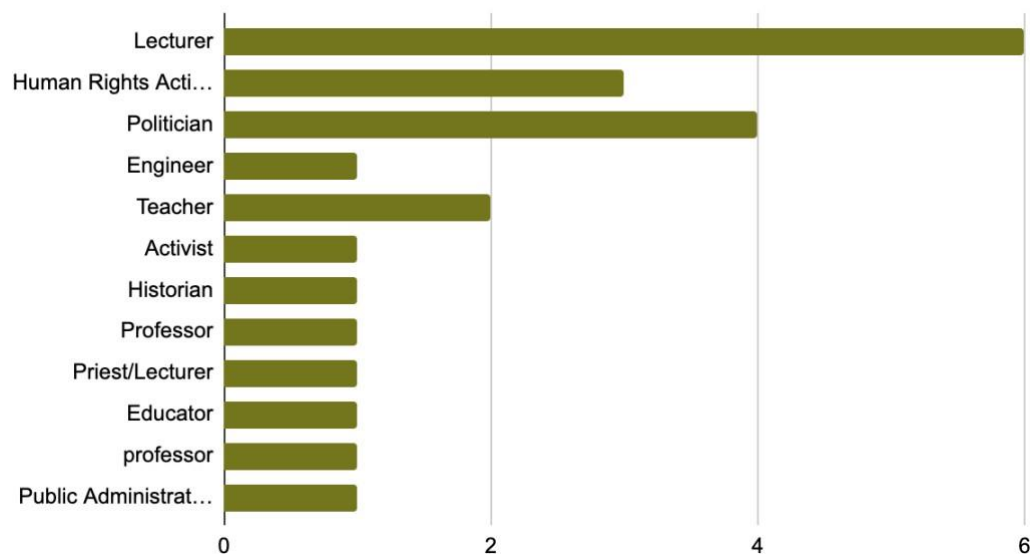


Figure 8: Profession Indications of Participants

Interview Participants

Interview participants were recruited through a combination of online searches and messaging via Gmail, employing both direct outreach and snowball sampling techniques. A series of emails were sent to various organizations, including the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Biafran Republic Government in Exile/United States of Biafra (BRGIE/USB), to obtain the perspectives of activists involved in the Biafran movement. Additionally, I reached out to known academics, activists, and government officials for insights into the narratives and public perceptions surrounding the Biafra and South Sudanese movements. Interview guides were prepared (see Appendix B: Interview Guide). Notable interviews were secured with prominent figures such as Prof. Hilde F. Johnson, the former Minister of International Development for Norway's humanitarian mission to South Sudan; Prof. Jok Madut Jok, a South Sudanese professor at Syracuse University; and David Yambio, a South Sudanese human rights activist. Detailed descriptions of these interview participants can be found in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Description of Interview Participants (Biafra)

Interview Participant (Biafra)	Movement Affiliation	Age	Gender	Location	Duration
Participant 1	MASSOB	45	Male	Nigeria	40 Minutes
Participant 2	MASSOB	65	Male	Nigeria	25 Minutes
Participant 3	IPOB	30	Male	Australia	1 hr. 32 Minutes
Participant 4	IPOB	45	Male	Russia	51 Minutes
Participant 5	BRGIE/USB	54	Male	Sweden	1hr 40 minutes
Participant 6	BRGIE/USB	37	Male	Sweden	1hr 11 minutes
Participant 7	Minority	45	Female	Sweden	35 Minutes

Source: Table adapted and compiled from Ifeanyi (2025) Generational Perspectives on the Biafra Emancipation Movement: Analyzing Attitudes, Beliefs, and Activism across Political Generations (Unpublished paper).

Demographics Analysis

The demographic analysis of the seven Biafra movement participants reveals several key trends. First, there is a clear generational and geographical divide: the two MASSOB affiliates are older (45 and 65) and based in Nigeria, while the IPOB and BRGIE/USB members are younger or

middle-aged (30–54) and located in the diaspora (Australia, Russia, and Sweden). This reflects a broader shift in activism strategies, with older groups like MASSOB rooted in local Nigerian resistance, while IPOB and BRGIE/USB leverage transnational networks for advocacy. Sweden emerges as a notable hub, hosting three participants (two from BRGIE/USB and one minority affiliate), suggesting organized diaspora mobilization. Female gender representation isn't much, with only one female participant (the minority affiliate) out of seven, highlighting a male dominated activism structure. Interview duration vary significantly, with BRGIE/USB members engaging in the longest discussions (over an hour), possibly due to their governance-focused roles, while MASSOB and minority voices had shorter sessions. The limited Nigeria-based perspectives (only two participants) reflect security risks for activists there, emphasizing the diaspora's growing influence in shaping the movement. These patterns show the need for broader research to identify the inclusion of women, minorities, and on-the-ground voices in future research.

Table 4: Description of Interview Participants (South Sudan)

Interview Participant	Affiliation	Age	Country	Gender	Duration
Participant 1— Prof Hilde F. Johnson	Former Minister of International Development of Norway (Humanitarian Mission to South Sudan)	61	Norway	Female	34Min 42 Sec.
Participant 2— Prof. Jok Madut Jok	Syracuse University	56	South Sudan (Residence: USA)	Male	48 Mins 44 Sec.
Participant 3— David Yambio	Human Rights Activists	28	South Sudan (Residence: Italy)	Male	55 min, 56 sec.

Source: Compiled by the researcher from interview data of South Sudan

Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis of the three South Sudan interview participants reveals a diverse mix of backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives. The group includes two South Sudanese nationals (one

academic and one activist) and one international participant (a former Norwegian minister), providing both local and global viewpoints on South Sudanese issues. In terms of age, the participants span different generations, from a 28-year-old human rights activist to a 61-year-old seasoned diplomat, offering insights shaped by varying life experiences. Gender representation is limited, with only one female participant (the Norwegian former minister) alongside two male South Sudanese voices. Geographically, one participant is based in South Sudan, the other in the USA, while one operates from Norway, reflecting both domestic and international engagement. The interview duration varies significantly, with the youngest participant (the activist) speaking the longest (55 mins, 56 secs.), possibly due to his interest in activism, while the more senior participants had shorter but more policy-focused discussions. This demographic mix combines academic, activist, and diplomatic perspectives. The inclusion of an international humanitarian perspective alongside local voices creates a valuable picture of South Sudan's situation.

Findings

The Comparative Analysis (Interviews)

Narratives and Public Perception of the Biafra and South Sudanese Liberation Movements

The following analysis incorporates interviews conducted for a previous paper focused on the narratives surrounding the Biafran Emancipation Movement, along with recent interviews related to the South Sudanese liberation movement. This integration of primary sources aims to enhance the understanding of both movements from a sociological point of view (see Appendix G: Interview Themes and Responses of Participants).

Analysis of Interviews (Biafra)

The Biafra Liberation Movement encompasses a broad spectrum of narratives that shape public perception and the movement's identity. The narratives draw from historical grievances, activism, and aspirations for recognition, framing the discourse around self-determination. Analyzing themes and sub-themes derived from participant quotations provides profound insights into how individuals relate their experiences and beliefs to the larger context of the Biafran struggle.

Historical Grievances and Erasure

One of the most potent themes identified is historical grievances and erasure, which reflects participants' deep-rooted concerns about the colonial legacy and ongoing marginalization. Participant 6 from BRGIE/USB underscores this by asserting that understanding the movement necessitates examining the colonial amalgamation of different ethnic groups in Nigeria, suggesting that historical injustices continue to resonate in contemporary politics. Such historical grievances are echoed by Participant 7, who represents a minority group and laments their systematic marginalization and the need for a government system akin to those established in regions like Eritrea. This desire for recognition exemplifies the perceived exclusion of the Biafra movement from Nigeria's political landscape.

The theme of marginalization is further emphasized by participant 4 from IPOB, who articulates frustrations regarding political leaders who prioritize their survival over advocating for freedom. This sentiment reflects a broader narrative of betrayal by political elites and an enduring belief in the necessity of self-determination. The participants express a collective identity shaped by oppression, framing their struggle within a historical context of marginalization and subjugation.

Moreover, the Islamization of Nigeria, noted by participant 6, draws attention to perceptions of systemic threats against the Igbo identity and culture, reinforcing a narrative of survival against

dominant political and religious forces. Additionally, participant 4 highlights the Erasure of History, noting how the Nigeria-Biafra War is largely absent from educational curricula, perpetuating a cycle of ignorance about the events that shaped their present realities. Such narratives illustrate a strong desire for historical recognition as a foundation for current claims to self-determination, placing the Biafran experiences in a global historical context, notably referencing the Biafran genocide as paralleling the holocaust in severity, which serves to elevate their struggle in moral and historical discourse.

Activism and Engagement

The theme of activism and engagement encapsulates the adaptive strategies employed by the Biafra movement in response to historical injustices and contemporary political realities. Participant 3, from IPOB, highlights the transformative role of social media, noting that it has amplified awareness and spread information about Biafra, effectively bringing the movement to a wider audience. This echoes the sentiments of modern activism, where digital platforms serve as crucial tools for mobilization and advocacy.

Additionally, the participation of women in the Biafra movement, as described by participant 6, marks a significant evolution from past movements. The acknowledgment of increased female involvement, including a deputy prime minister, signifies a progressive shift within the movement towards inclusivity, emphasizing that Biafra's liberation is a collective effort involving diverse voices. The discourse on peaceful protest represented by participant 4 is indicative of a strategy that emphasizes nonviolent engagement, contrasting with participant 5's comments on the demand for an armed struggle as articulated by Simon Ekpa. This dichotomy in resistance strategies indicates the internal debates within the movement about the most effective approach to achieving self-determination.

Minority Involvement and Identity Politics

The involvement of minority groups in the Biafra Liberation Movement introduces complex identity politics. Participant 7 indicates that, despite not identifying as Igbo, their participation in BRGIE reflects a broader unity against shared oppression. This acknowledgment showcases a sense of solidarity that transcends ethnic divisions, although tensions and divisions related to identity persist. Participant 6 notes that some minorities alter their identities for survival in the prevailing socio-political climate, which underscores the precariousness of identity in the context of resistance politics.

Moreover, Participant 3 emphasizes the division within the Biafra movement, suggesting that not all self-identified "freedom fighters" are as committed to the cause of independence, which raises questions about authentic representation and leadership within the movement or perhaps people's perception of it.

External Involvement and Future Prospects

The narrative of External Involvement and Recognition discusses the importance of international support in shaping the movement's future. Participant 3 expresses frustration over the lack of global attention to Biafra's situation, despite self-determination being recognized in the UN charter. The appeal to international advocacy emphasizes a yearning for legitimacy and support from the global community.

Recognition by powerful states, as indicated by participant 7, particularly in the context of potential support from figures like Putin or Trump by participant 2, reflects a strategic outlook where international alliances could drastically alter the momentum of the Biafran cause. The notion that recognition could facilitate faster progress toward independence is a recurring theme among participants, as seen in Participant 5's optimism about diplomatic appeals potentially influencing their cause.

In conclusion, narratives surrounding the Biafra Liberation Movement are steeped in historical grievances, ongoing marginalization, and a shared aspiration for recognition and self-determination. Public perception of the movement is shaped greatly by these narratives, revealing a complex interplay of history, identity politics, and activism. As participants articulate their experiences and hopes, it becomes evident that the movement is as much about reclaiming a narrative of history as it is about pursuing a political future, underscoring the critical role of storytelling in the quest for justice and freedom.

Narratives and Perceptions of the South Sudanese Liberation Movement

Analysis of Interviews (South Sudan)

The narratives surrounding the South Sudan Liberation Movement are significantly shaped by participants' perceptions of historical grievances, socioeconomic injustices, activism and engagement dynamics, and external influences (see Appendix H: Interview Themes and Responses (South Sudan)). These narratives illuminate the complex drivers of the movement, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by the South Sudanese people in their quest for self-determination.

Historical Grievances

A recurring theme in the interviews is historical grievances, particularly relating to marginalization, religion, and genocide. Participant 1 poignantly articulates the long-standing oppression experienced by southern Sudanese, stating, *"Religion did not play a main major role. What was the case was that elites dominated... in the Arab groups, they were of course Muslims,"* emphasizing that Islam was manipulated as a tool for oppression. This narrative echoes sentiments of exclusion and mistreatment stemming from a controlled narrative enforced by northern elites,

thus framing the conflict in terms of both religious and ethnic identity. Moreover, the theme of genocide is underscored by Participant 2, who asserts, *"What I know as the historical nature is something much more depicting severe violence and severe oppression,"* drawing attention to the atrocities committed in the South. The absence of recognition and consideration of the South's struggles further intensifies feelings of historical grievance, leading many to conclude that self-determination is essential for redressing these wrongs.

Socioeconomic Injustices

Another critical theme that emerges is socioeconomic injustices, which include poverty, famine, lack of education, and insufficient public services. Participant 1 elaborates on how these injustices, framed as *"socioeconomic factors,"* manifest visibly through lack of education and extreme poverty in the South: *"There weren't health services, all sorts of public services... very, very marginal."* This economic marginalization exacerbates the already fragile conditions, contributing significantly to the grievances held by many and driving them toward armed struggle.

The historical narrative surrounding socioeconomic issues is tied intricately to the conflict, as described by Participant 2, who remarks that the breakup of Africa's largest country was fundamentally linked to these injustices: *"The war had just simply left too much, too much wound and pain for the country to salvage its unity."* This perception of economic exclusion underscores the connection between the past and present, indicating that pervasive injustices, rooted in a history of conflict and neglect, compel the population to strive for self-governance.

Activism and Engagement

In terms of activism and engagement, the interviews reveal a strong community involvement in the struggle for liberation. Participant 3 highlights the widespread support for the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army), stating, *"It was a very broadly owned movement,"* indicating that the movement enjoyed collective backing across various demographic groups, including women and youth, who played vital roles during the conflict. The significance of women's involvement is emphasized as Participant 3 notes, *"The women were the backbone of the South Sudanese society,"* showcasing how their contributions were essential, even if often overlooked in historical narratives. Leadership dynamics within the movement also received attention, with Participant 3 describing Dr. John Garang as the pivotal figure in the SPLA, emphasizing his ability to unify diverse ethnic factions: *"one man... managed to unify the people,"* reflecting the critical role of competent leadership in mobilizing collective action towards independence.

However, Participant 2 acknowledges the internal divisions that arose over time, suggesting that the clarity provided during the war did not persist post-independence: *"That clarity of vision and forward thinking did not continue past the independence."* This statement hints at ongoing challenges for the country post-independence as it strives to address not only external interference but also its internal cohesion and vision.

External Influences

The theme of External Influences—including contributions from the diaspora, church involvement, and support from foreign states—highlights the multifaceted nature of the liberation struggle. Participant 3 notes the critical role played by religious leaders in fostering peace and reconciliation amidst ethnic tensions: “*The religious leaders... played an important role for reconciliation and peace internally.*” This underscores how internal dynamics are influenced by external actors, weaving a complex tapestry of support for the movement.

Participant 3 also discusses the diaspora’s contribution, particularly from the United States: “*A strong African diaspora was advocating,*” illustrating how international support bolstered the liberation movement. The logistical and military support from countries such as Ethiopia and connections with international entities were crucial, as highlighted in responses from other participants: “*Without Ethiopian training course, the SPLA would not have succeeded.*”

Overall, the narratives presented by participants reveal a rich and complex interplay of factors driving the South Sudan Liberation Movement. Historical grievances perpetuated through marginalization and socioeconomic injustices lay the groundwork for demands for selfdetermination. Activism reflects a robust community engagement, while external influences highlight the importance of international solidarity in shaping the trajectory of the movement.

The Comparative Analysis (Survey)

The 7 factors by Trzciński (2004) are comprehensive and well-suited for analyzing selfdetermination movements like the Biafra Emancipation Movement and the South Sudan Liberation Movement. However, for a comparative thematic analysis, some of these factors were merged into broader themes to streamline the analysis and avoid overlap. (see table 7 below: For survey themes and descriptions).

Table 5: Survey Theme and Description

Theme	Description
1.Interests of Powerful States	Examines the influence of global powers (e.g., USA, UK, USSR, China) on the outcomes of the secessionist movements, including their political, economic, and military interests in the region.

2. Central Government's Response	Analyzes the attitude and actions of the parent state (Nigeria for Biafra, Sudan for South Sudan) toward the secessionist movement, including policies of repression, negotiation, or accommodation.
3. Military Dynamics and External Support	Assesses the military balance between the secessionist movement and the central government, as well as the role of external support (e.g., weapons, funding, training) in shaping the conflict.
4. Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding Region	Evaluates the strategic importance (e.g., geopolitical location, resources) and economic significance (e.g., natural resources, revenue generation) of the seceding region to the parent state and external actors.
5. International Legitimacy and Recognition	Focuses on the role of the international community, particularly the UN and other states, in granting or withholding recognition and legitimacy to the secession movement

Source: Adapted from Trzciński (2004) cited in Bereketeab (2012)

Survey Results: Biafra

Analysis of Survey

The survey responses (see Appendix I: Summary of Responses to Survey Questions (Biafra)) provide significant insights into participants' perceptions regarding the various factors influencing the Biafran self-determination movement. Five key themes/factors were analyzed: the interests of powerful states, the central government's response, military dynamics and external support, the strategic and economic value of the seceding regions, and international legitimacy and recognition.

Interests of Powerful States

Participants underscored the detrimental role of global powers in shaping the outcomes of the

Biafran self-determination movement. Participant 1 noted, “The UK is the major determinant of Nigerian political outcome because of their interest in Nigeria's oil,” highlighting how foreign interests can manipulate local politics. Participant 20 echoed this sentiment, stating, *“The failure of Biafran self-determination... was negatively affected by global powers such as Britain and the USSR, which engaged in propaganda to dissuade recognition of Biafra.”* The UK was frequently accused of prioritizing oil interests (e.g., Shell BP) and maintaining Nigerian unity to facilitate exploitation (Participant 18: *“Britain fought to keep Nigeria one for economic gains”*). The US was seen as ambivalent—hoped for as a savior but criticized for inaction (Participant 1). The Cold War-era alignment against Biafra (USSR backing Nigeria, France alone recognizing Biafra) underscored how great-power rivalry can marginalize secessionist causes (Participant 20). Several participants pointed to a neocolonialist approach by these powers, indicating that their actions often serve their geopolitical and economic interests rather than genuinely supporting the aspirations of the local populations.

Central Government's Response

The responses regarding the reactions of parent states to self-determination movements were overwhelmingly negative. Participants described the Nigerian government's response to Biafran activists as brutal and oppressive, with Participant 11 stating, *“The Nigerian govt acts brutally and repressively against Biafran activists... Shooting unarmed protesters at Nkpor Bridge,”* Participant 4 added that the state employs “forceful disappearance of Biafran youths [and] mass assassinations.” The government also frames the movement as a terrorist threat, further delegitimizing it (P3, P5). Participant 16 elaborated on the complexities of government strategies, noting that while repression can temporarily suppress movements, it often leads to longer-term instability. Overall, it's clear that the Nigerian government's hostile stance contributes significantly to the persistence of the Biafran struggle.

Military Dynamics and External Support

Participants commented on the military disparities between secessionist movements and their central governments, with insights highlighting a severe imbalance of power. Participant 12 remarked, *“There was no military balance between the secessionist movement and the central government... the central government [had] the advantage,”* reinforced by British and Soviet support. This indicates that the central government received substantial international military support, which disadvantaged the Biafrans during the civil war. This sentiment was reinforced by Participant 11, who stated, *“The support is totally one-sided,”* reflecting on the overwhelming military capabilities of the Nigerian government due to external support compared to those of the Biafran forces.

Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding Region

The strategic importance and economic potential of regions seeking secession emerged as critical factors influencing self-determination efforts. Participants acknowledged that regions rich in resources, such as Biafra's oil, hold substantial bargaining power in negotiations for independence. Participant 3

noted that *“Biafra land is located in the southeast and south-south region of Nigeria with enormous economic value,,”* suggesting that such resources can affect both local aspirations and external perceptions of legitimacy. Moreover, strategic locations can influence the dynamics of conflict and the level of external support received.

The resource curse loomed large: Biafra’s oil and fertile lands were seen as both a motive for repression and a potential lever for independence. Participant 3: *“The southeast is Nigeria’s economic backbone.”* Yet, resource wealth also made central governments less likely to concede.

Participant 9: *“Resourceful regions sustain the center.”*

International Legitimacy and Recognition

The role of the international community was frequently mentioned as pivotal yet problematic. participant 20 stated, *“It is immoral to look away as people are being annihilated,”* calling for greater international intervention and recognition of self-determination efforts. participant 5 also emphasized the importance of upholding the right to self-determination as enshrined in international law, urging the UN to play an active role in supporting the Biafran cause. However, participants expressed skepticism about the international community's commitment, with participant 3 highlighting that the international decisions often align with Western interests aimed at maintaining control over Nigerian resources. The UN’s inertia was lambasted as hypocritical (participant 20: *“Calling genocide ‘internal affairs’ is immoral”*). Western dominance in international institutions was blamed for sidelining Biafra (participant 3: *“The UN follows British interests”*). Recognition was deemed vital but politically contingent (participant 5: *“The UN must uphold self-determination”*).

Most Important Factor in Success or Failure of Liberation Movements

When asked which factor most shapes self-determination outcomes, many participants (7/19) identified the interests of powerful states as one of the decisive factors. Participant 18 emphasized that *“Britain’s oil interests... contributed significantly to [Biafra’s] defeat.”* Others highlighted military dynamics and external support (7/19), noting that Nigeria’s superior forces, backed by foreign support, ensure suppression (P12, P15). Fewer cited central government response (1/19), Strategic and economic value (1/19) or international recognition (2/19), though these remain influential.

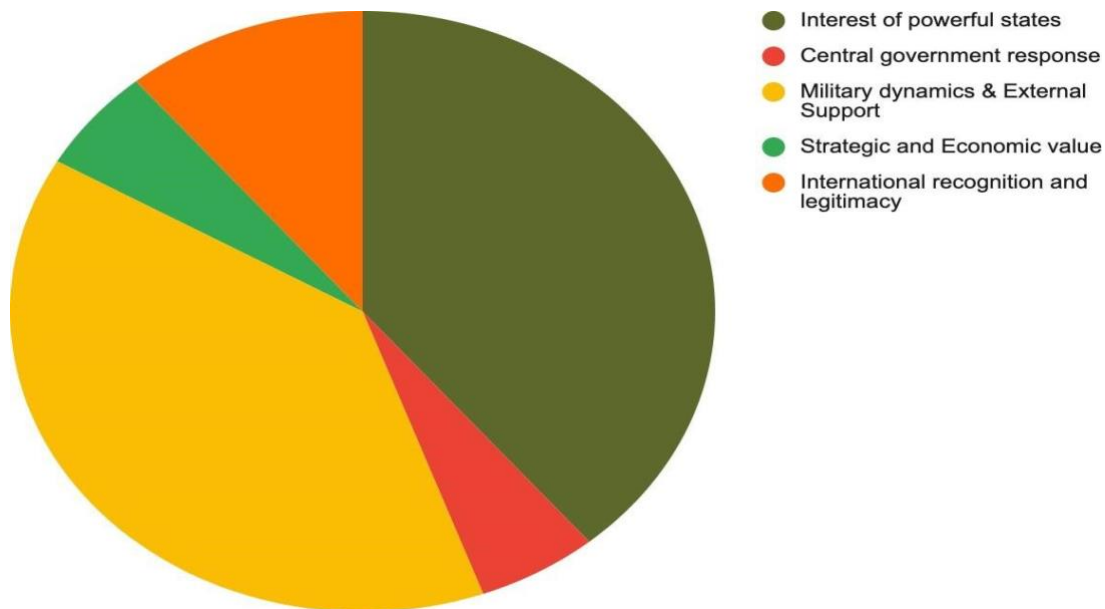


Figure 9: Responses to the Most Important Factor (Biafra)

Among the 19 participants that participated in the study, 18 responded to the question of the 'most important factor that could lead to success of secession.' 7 indicated IOPS, 1 CGR, 7 MDES, 1 SEV, and 2 IRL.

Other Influential Factors

Beyond the identified themes, several additional factors were mentioned as influencing the outcomes of self-determination movements. Participant 8 emphasized the importance of “*proper funding*,” while participant 7 pointed to “*ambiguity and inconsistency in international law*” as obstacles. Other factors included the role of religion, massive mobilization, internal disagreements, and the perception of activism within the movements, indicating that the internal dynamics of each movement are as critical as external influences.

Survey Results: South Sudan

Analysis of Survey Result

The survey responses (see Appendix J: Summary of Responses to Survey Questions (South Sudan)) reveal a distinct understanding of the factors influencing the South Sudanese liberation movement, focusing on the influences of powerful states, the central government’s response, military dynamics, strategic and economic value, and international legitimacy and recognition. Each of these themes offers insights into the complexities of the struggle for self-determination in South Sudan.

Interest of Powerful States

Participants indicated that the involvement of global powers plays a pivotal role in shaping the South Sudanese self-determination movement. Participant 21 noted that global superpowers tend to support either side of a conflict, which has historically affected outcomes in South Sudan. For example, the U.S.'s alignment shift from supporting the Sudanese government in the 1980s to backing the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the late 1990s illustrates the significant impact of external political alignments on the movement's trajectory. Participant 21 pointed out that this realignment involved investments both in the SPLA and in supportive neighboring states, underscoring the strategic importance of international backing in liberation movements.

Central Government's Response

Responses regarding the Sudanese government's approaches to independence movements revealed patterns of repression blended with occasional negotiation. Participant 19 emphasized that while the government often succeeds in temporarily suppressing these movements through force, persistence can eventually lead to independence. This theme reflects a cyclical nature of oppression and resilience, suggesting that ongoing struggles are met with state brutality, as articulated by Participant 21, who noted, *"The Sudanese government mobilized forces, waging an indiscriminate war in South Sudan,"* leading to catastrophic losses. Participant 22 corroborated this, affirming that the government frequently succeeds in suppressing movements with violence but ultimately fails to secure lasting peace.

Military Dynamics and External Support

The military balance between secessionist movements and central governments was another significant theme. Participants highlighted a general disadvantage for movements like the SPLA, with Participant 19 stating, *"The military balance is often in favour of the parent state."* This sentiment was echoed by Participant 21, who remarked on the state's upper hand in military capability, compounded by reliance on external support for secessionist movements. Participant 22 elaborated on the nature of this external support, including arms supply and diplomatic backing, underscoring how critical military resources and international alliances are in the struggle for self-determination.

Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding State

Economic factors, particularly the wealth of natural resources, emerged as key motivators for the conflict and efforts for secession. Participant 19 stated, *"The war is often over natural resources,"* suggesting that the parent state's fear of losing valuable resources fuels its resistance to independence. Additionally, Participant 22 emphasized the importance of oil resources, noting that external actors often exploit these resources to their benefit, further complicating the struggle for autonomy. This economic perspective underscores the significance of resource control in the dynamics of self-determination efforts.

International Legitimacy and Recognition

Participants unanimously recognized the critical role of the international community in legitimizing self-determination movements. Participant 19 articulated that the “*international community is key in terms of independence*,” as recognition by exceptional powers and organizations can solidify a new nation’s status. Participant 21 noted that at the eve of South Sudan’s independence, international recognition was “*critically desired*,” indicating that legitimacy from the global stage is a vital component of successful self-determination. Additionally, Participant 22 pointed out that a lack of recognition presents significant challenges to moving toward independence, illustrating the dependence on international support for achieving political goals.

Most Important Factor in Success or Failure

When asked to prioritize factors that impact the success or failure of self-determination movements, several participants highlighted the “*interests of powerful states*” and the importance of military support and UN recognition as pivotal to independence (P19, P22). However, Participant 21 suggested that the interplay of all these factors must be considered in their context, indicating a multifaceted approach to understanding liberation movements.

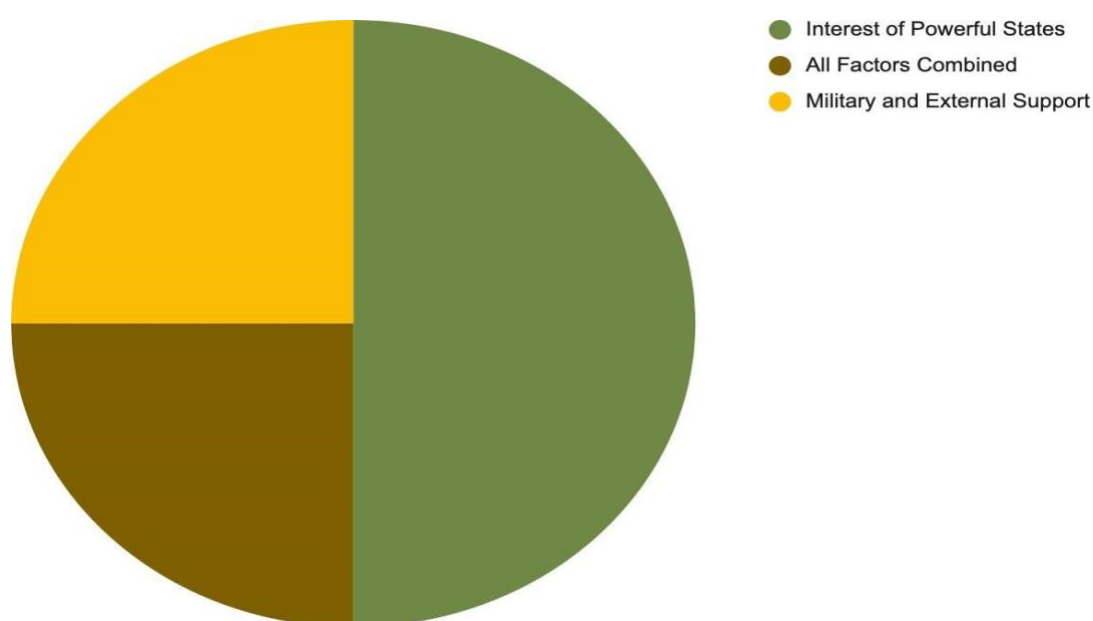


Figure 9: Responses to Most Important Factor (South Sudan)

Among the 4 participants from South Sudan, 2 identified the Interest of a Powerful State (IOPS) as the key factor. Meanwhile, 1 participant believed military and external support played the most significant role, while the remaining participant argued that a combination of all factors was most important.

Other influential factors

Participants also identified crucial factors beyond those already mentioned, such as the necessity for unity and strong leadership within the movement (P19), emphasizing that a cohesive strategy is vital for success. Participant 21 pointed out the importance of local agency, while Participant 22 reiterated the significance of determination and unity, highlighting the centrality of internal cohesion within liberation movements.

Further Comparisons (Document Analysis) Interests of powerful states

Biafra

The primary driver of British involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra War was the protection of its economic interests, particularly oil. Kilbride (a Dublin-born clergyman who served as a priest in Portharcourt, Nigeria, from 1954 to 1967) accused the British Labour Government under Harold Wilson of openly supporting the Northern-dominated Nigerian Federal Government, viewing it as more pliable for protecting British oil interests (Ezeani, 2012). According to BBC's Rick Fountain (2000), this *realpolitik* approach, confirmed by Michael Leapman's analysis of British Cabinet papers, prioritized economic gain over humanitarian concerns, leading Britain and the Soviet Union to arm Nigeria (Ezeani, 2012).

Beyond oil, Britain perceived Biafra as a geopolitical threat. The region's potential to become "the Japan of Africa" was noted by Ikeazor in 2010 (Ezeani, 2012)—fueled by Igbo ingenuity, such as the locally produced 'Ogbunigwe' bomb during the war—challenged Western dominance. Chinua Achebe (2012) exposed Britain's manipulation of Nigerian politics, including rigged post-independence elections to ensure Northern hegemony, which aligned with British strategic interests. Christian C. Onoh, a former governor of Anambra State (in Nigeria), argued that Western powers collectively suppressed Biafra to prevent the rise of a strong, independent African state (Achebe, 2012).

The Nigeria/Biafra war became a proxy for Cold War rivalries. While Britain and the USSR backed Nigeria, France covertly supported Biafra to weaken Nigeria's influence in Francophone Africa (Ezeani, 2012). The Soviet Union, aiming to secure contracts like the Ajaokuta Steel Mill (which later became a \$4.6 billion corruption scandal), leveraged military and economic aid to expand its foothold (Achebe, 2012). Nixon (1972) emphasizes that great powers selectively applied self-determination norms; Biafra's failure stemmed not from illegitimacy but from its misalignment with Anglo-Soviet and Cold War objectives.

The suppression of Biafra had dire consequences for Africa's development. Ikeazor opines that it stifled industrialization, perpetuating dependency on Western goods (Ezeani, 2012). Sterio (2010) frames this within broader international law, arguing that "Selfistans" succeed only when great

powers deem it strategically expedient. British policy, as Kilbride noted, was cynically pragmatic—offering conditional recognition while ensuring Nigeria's unity served its interests (Ezeani, 2012). Ezeani further underscores how non-material factors, like British political manipulation, were decisive, proving that resource wealth alone cannot guarantee secessionist success.

The Nigeria-Biafra War exemplifies how great powers weaponize sovereignty norms to serve economic and geopolitical ends. Britain's actions—protecting oil and manipulating postcolonial politics—reveal the hollowness of moral rhetoric in self-determination struggles. The war's legacy underscores Sterio's (2010) submission: international recognition is a political calculus, not a legal or ethical one.

South Sudan

The trajectory of South Sudan's self-determination movement was decisively shaped by the geopolitical calculations of powerful states, demonstrating how strategic interests consistently override normative principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Dersso (2012) argues, Western powers—particularly the United States—supported South Sudan's independence primarily to weaken Sudan's Islamist regime rather than out of commitment to self-determination ideals. This instrumental approach is evident in the international community's tolerance of elite corruption and flawed power-sharing agreements, so long as they maintained an anti-Khartoum alignment (Wight, 2017). The selective application of self-determination norms becomes stark when comparing South Sudan to cases like Biafra, where Cold War priorities led powerful states to oppose secession despite similar claims to autonomy (Nixon, 1972). Even after independence, South Sudan's sovereignty has been compromised by continued foreign interference, from Chinese oil investments to U.S. security assistance, reinforcing its status as a geopolitical pawn rather than a truly autonomous state (Patey, 2014). This pattern confirms Sterio's (2010) view that the survival of aspiring states ("Selfistans") depends on great power patronage rather than legal or moral legitimacy.

The disconnect between theoretical frameworks and on-the-ground realities is further illustrated by the failure of power-sharing agreements in South Sudan. Hartzell and Hoddie's (2003) fourdimensional model (political, territorial, military, and economic) provides a useful lens for analyzing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan (ARCISS). While these agreements were designed to distribute power according to liberal democratic principles, they ultimately devolved into elite bargains over patronage, undermined by both internal competition and external interference (Wight, 2017). The international community's prioritization of stability over democratic governance allowed these arrangements to be co-opted by corrupt elites, demonstrating how strategic interests can subvert institutional designs.

Dersso (2012) further highlights the contradictions in the international community's approach to self-determination. While South Sudan's independence was legitimized through UN recognition, this outcome was contingent on great power consensus rather than adherence to legal precedent. The U.S. and its allies supported South Sudan's 2011 referendum to isolate Khartoum, even as they

opposed similar movements elsewhere. This double standard showcases the primacy of realpolitik—South Sudan's statehood emerged not just from the strength of its legal claims, but from a rare convergence of local aspirations and external strategic calculations. The case thus exemplifies how self-determination outcomes are ultimately determined by the alignment of local movements with the interests of dominant global powers.

The South Sudanese case reveals the inherent tensions between normative principles of self-determination and the geopolitical realities that shape their implementation. While power-sharing models and international legal frameworks provide tools for conflict resolution, their effectiveness is ultimately constrained by the strategic priorities of powerful states. The comparison with Biafra further illustrates the selectivity of international support, which privileges strategic interests over consistent application of legal or ethical standards. As Sterio (2010) argues, the recognition of aspiring states remains a political calculation, leaving their fates dependent on the patronage of great powers rather than the legitimacy of their claims.

Central Government Response

Biafra

The Nigerian central government's response to the Biafran secessionist movement (1967–1970) exemplifies the authoritarian suppression of self-determination claims through military force and political intransigence. Under General Yakubu Gowon, the federal government framed Biafra's independence declaration as an existential threat, employing a total war strategy that included economic blockades and scorched-earth tactics (Achebe, 2012). This hardline approach was driven by northern elites' determination to retain control over the oil-rich Niger Delta, which lay within Biafra's territory. A government propaganda campaign successfully portrayed the conflict as a fight against tribal disintegration rather than a legitimate struggle for self-determination, garnering international support while marginalizing Igbo grievances. Although Nigeria's military victory preserved territorial integrity, the post-war "no victor, no vanquished" policy failed to address the political and economic marginalization that had fueled separatist sentiments. This reliance on coercion over meaningful power-sharing set a precedent for post-colonial Africa, demonstrating how short-term territorial preservation can perpetuate long-term cycles of conflict (Horowitz, 2000).

The return to civilian rule in 1999 renewed hopes for addressing Igbo grievances democratically, but the federal government's response to the neo-Biafra movement has been marked by repression rather than reconciliation. Military operations like Python Dance (2017) and Golden Dawn (2021) targeted IPOB members with excessive force, resulting in mass arrests, extrajudicial killings, and widespread human rights abuses (Amnesty International, 2016). These deployments are constitutionally dubious and politically expedient and have a corrosive impact on civil-military relations and democratic norms (Adefisoye & Ariyo, 2019). Judicial persecution has further weaponized the state's response, with IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu facing politically motivated treason charges and prolonged detention, while supporters languish in indefinite detention without

trial. A longitudinal study reveals how state repression has paradoxically strengthened separatist resilience, as activists adapt to crackdowns through evolving strategies (Adigun, 2018). Despite its democratic facade, the Nigerian state has perpetuated systemic marginalization of Igbo land—neglecting infrastructure, excluding the region from key federal appointments, and refusing dialogue.

This punitive approach reinforces perceptions of discrimination and ensures the Biafra question remains unresolved. The cyclical nature of repression and resistance accentuates the failure of coercive measures to address root grievances, mirroring the unresolved tensions of the 1967–1970 war. Ultimately, Nigeria's response—whether under military or civilian rule—prioritizes territorial control over equitable governance, ensuring that the specter of Biafra endures as a symbol of unredressed injustice.

South Sudan

A critical factor in the success of secessionist movements is the consent of the central government, a principle rooted in 18th-century doctrine that remains relevant today (Adigun, 2018). Without such consent, secessionist entities risk being declared illegal and facing international isolation. This dynamic is exemplified by South Sudan's independence, where the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) provided a legal framework for secession. The CPA, which included a referendum provision, was legitimized by the consent of Khartoum's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), paving the way for recognition by the African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) (Barltrop, 2010). Similarly, Eritrea's independence was achieved through a negotiated agreement with Ethiopia, further stressing the importance of central government approval (Farley, 2010). The international community's consistent advice to Somaliland to negotiate with Somalia reflects this enduring norm (Bryden, 2004).

The 1994 Declaration of Principles (DoP), adopted by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), marked a significant departure in African diplomacy by explicitly including separation as a viable resolution to the Sudanese civil war. This document, unique for an African intergovernmental organization, redefined the continental approach to self-determination and set the stage for South Sudan's eventual independence (De Waal, 2021). By legitimizing the possibility of secession, the DoP shifted the Sudanese debate on national identity and self-determination, even amid fierce disagreements among Sudanese factions. Sudan's central government initially responded to South Sudan's self-determination movement with brutal repression during the Second Civil War (1983–2005), employing scorched-earth tactics and proxy militias to crush the rebellion (Johnson, 2011). However, as LeRiche and Arnold (2012) noted, Khartoum's stance shifted under mounting military stalemate and international pressure, particularly after 9/11 when the U.S. actively supported the southern rebels.

The 2005 CPA represented a strategic concession, granting South Sudan autonomy while preserving Khartoum's control over oil revenues—a compromise that inadvertently

institutionalized the path to secession (De Waal, 2014). Young (2019) argues that Sudan's inconsistent response—oscillating between repression and accommodation—demonstrated the impossibility of equitable power-sharing, inadvertently strengthening separatist sentiments. The government's failure to implement key CPA provisions, such as border demarcation and oil-revenue sharing, further eroded trust and made independence inevitable (Patey, 2014).

This pattern highlights how authoritarian regimes' resistance to meaningful federalism often fuels secessionist movements, as seen in Nigeria's violent suppression of Biafra (Nixon, 1972). Sudan's experience accents a broader lesson: central governments that refuse to negotiate territorial autonomy and resource control risk transforming secessionist aspirations into self-fulfilling prophecies of state fragmentation. The contrast between Sudan's eventual (if reluctant) accommodation and Nigeria's unyielding repression illustrates how central government consent—or its absence—can determine the trajectory of self-determination struggles.

The South Sudanese case demonstrates that while international and regional frameworks can facilitate secessionist outcomes, central government consent remains pivotal. Whether through coercion or negotiation, the state's response shapes the legitimacy and viability of secessionist movements. Where consent is withheld, as in Biafra, movements face overwhelming odds; where it is granted, even reluctantly, as in South Sudan, the path to independence becomes possible. This dynamic reaffirms the enduring influence of state power in determining the fate of self-determination movements.

Military Dynamics and External Support

Biafra

The military balance between Biafra secessionists and Nigeria's federal forces was decisively lopsided from the conflicts' outset in 1967, fundamentally shaping its outcome. Nigeria possessed overwhelming advantages with thousands of well-equipped troops against Biafra's hastily assembled volunteers, many lacking formal training. While Nigeria inherited British colonial military assets, including artillery, armored vehicles and air power, Biafra relied on captured weapons and improvised arms like the "Ogbunigwe" rockets (Ezeani, 2012). This disparity intensified as Nigeria received millions in British arms and Soviet MiG-17 fighter jets by 1968, while Biafra's fragmented support network—involving France, Portugal (through São Tomé), and some Francophone African Countries (JacquinBerdal, 2002; Wyss, 2024)—proved insufficient to offset federal advantages.

The conflict became a Cold War proxy battleground, with global powers pursuing contradictory agendas. While Britain and the USSR armed Nigeria, France cautiously supported Biafra through July 1968 diplomatic recognition (Achebe, 2012). The U.S. maintained official neutrality but allegedly covertly backed Nigeria (Levey, 2014), while China surprisingly allied with Biafra (even though it was too late). Israel pursued a dual strategy, supplying both sides to maintain diplomatic relations (Levey, 2014). Nigeria's strategic blockade weaponized hunger, causing mass starvation

that became a global humanitarian crisis and propaganda tool for Biafra (Heerten, 2017). British dockworkers even refused to load arms shipments destined for Nigeria in protest (Achebe, 2012).

This military imbalance demonstrated how external support patterns, dictated by Cold War geopolitics rather than local legitimacy, determine self-determination outcomes. Nigeria's consistent arms flow contrasted sharply with Biafra's patchwork assistance, despite the latter's innovative adaptations like domestic arms production. The federal government's ability to internationalize the conflict while restricting Biafra's military capacity singled out the decisive role of great power patronage in such struggles (Nixon, 1972). Ultimately, the war established that in postcolonial Africa, successful secession requires not just local mobilization but sustained external backing—a lesson evident in subsequent conflicts across the continent.

South Sudan

The military dynamics and external support in South Sudan's self-determination struggle against Khartoum (1983–2005) present a stark contrast to the Biafran experience, illustrating how sustained international backing can elevate a rebel movement into a viable state-maker. Unlike Biafra, which faced diplomatic and military isolation, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) under John Garang achieved rough parity with Sudanese government forces through a combination of guerrilla tactics and robust external support (Jacquin-Berdal, 2002). The SPLA's initial lack of heavy weaponry was mitigated by their control of remote bush terrain and ability to mobilize southern ethnic groups, forcing the Sudanese army into protracted and costly garrison warfare (Arnold & LeRiche, 2013). External actors played a decisive role in this equilibrium: Ethiopia provided sanctuaries and Chinese-made arms in the 1980s, while the post-9/11 U.S. designation of Sudan as a terrorist state unlocked unprecedented American military aid—including \$350 million in funding between 1981 and 1985 and satellite intelligence (Patey, 2014).

This robust assistance stood in sharp contrast to Biafra's limited and fragmented French backing, with South Sudan's rebels benefiting from what regional dynamics further tilted the balance, as Uganda and Kenya facilitated arms flows while the Arab League's overt support for Khartoum alienated African mediators (De Waal, 2014). The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ultimately ratified this military stalemate, demonstrating that secessionist movements can succeed when external patrons provide not just rhetorical sympathy but sustained material and diplomatic leverage—a reality that highlights Sterio's (2010) argument about great powers as the ultimate arbiters of self-determination.

The theory of suffering, as discussed by Bereketeab (2012), posits that prolonged guerrilla warfare and systemic oppression can legitimize people's claim to statehood. This idea aligns with the doctrine of remedial secession, which asserts the right to self-determination in cases of severe and persistent human rights violations—such as unjust conquest, exploitation, or existential threats—where no alternative remedy exists (Freeman, 1999). In South Sudan's case, decades of Khartoum's brutal repression, including scorched-earth campaigns and economic marginalization, amplified the moral and legal justification for independence. As scholars above have emphasized,

remedial secession becomes an international imperative when a state's treatment of its minorities is egregious and irremediable within the existing political structure. The SPLM/A's ability to endure decades of conflict, coupled with the visible humanitarian toll of Sudanese state violence, galvanized global support and validated their claim to self-determination under this framework. Together, these factors—sustained external backing, military resilience, and the moral weight of prolonged suffering—created the conditions for South Sudan's successful secession, distinguishing it from Biafra's yet-to-succeed struggle.

Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding State

Biafra

The strategic and economic value of Biafra proved decisive in shaping both Nigeria's violent opposition to secession and the international community's ambivalent response. As the Eastern Region contained nearly 60% of Nigeria's known oil reserves, including critical infrastructure at Port Harcourt and Bonny Island, its independence would have crippled the post-colonial State's economic viability (Uche, 2008). This hydrocarbon wealth, then attracting major investment from Shell-BP, transformed Biafra into a geopolitical prize—explaining why British and Soviet support for Nigeria extended beyond Cold War allegiances to direct economic interests in preserving oil concessions (De Saint Jorre, 1980). The region's geographical advantages compounded its significance: its coastal access featured the only deep-sea port east of Lagos, while the Niger River and Bridge served as vital transportation arteries whose destruction during the war had devastating socio-economic consequences (Nnaemeka & Adelekun, 2023).

Paradoxically, these assets became liabilities—while Biafra's oil wealth and industrial capacity (including remarkable indigenous technological innovations during the war) (Ukaegbu, 2005) theoretically enabled sovereign viability, they also made Nigeria and its backers implacably opposed to secession. Nigeria's blockade of Biafra's ports and oil fields demonstrated how parent states weaponize economic geography, a tactic later seen in Sudan's conflict with South Sudan (Patey, 2014). The case affirms author's (Le Billon, 2001) contributions, showing how mineral wealth intensifies resistance to self-determination by threatening state revenues and elite patronage networks. Ultimately, the international community's tolerance of Nigeria's suppression of Biafra—despite the region's economic viability and technological resilience—exposed the primacy of resource stability over self-determination principles, a pattern perpetuated in contemporary conflicts from Cabinda to Kurdistan (Quinn, 2007). This historical episode underlines how strategic location and economic assets, more than ethnic or historical claims, frequently dictate the fate of secessionist movements.

South Sudan

The strategic and economic value of South Sudan fundamentally shaped both Khartoum's resistance to its secession and the international community's eventual support for independence,

illustrating how resource geopolitics can simultaneously fuel and resolve self-determination conflicts. Similar to Biafra, South Sudan contained over 75% of unified Sudan's oil reserves (Pedersen & Bazilian, 2014)—producing 150,000 barrels daily (sudantribune.com)—making its secession an existential economic threat to Khartoum's regime (Patey, 2014). This very resource wealth, however, paradoxically enabled southern independence, as Western powers and Asian energy firms pressured Khartoum to accept partition to protect oil investments, while China pragmatically shifted its allegiance to South Sudan to safeguard petroleum interests. The region's strategic position as a buffer between Arab North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa further intensified great power competition: Uganda and Kenya backed the SPLM/A to counter Islamist influence, while Qatar and Saudi Arabia funded Khartoum to maintain Arab dominance in the Nile basin (Verhoeven, 2016). Economically, South Sudan's underdevelopment proved advantageous—unlike Biafra's industrial base, its lack of infrastructure meant separation deprived Khartoum of oil revenues without burdening the south with complex administrative legacies (De Waal, 2014). This dynamic reflects the "resource curse" paradox (Le Billon, 2005), where oil simultaneously fueled conflict and created mutual dependency that necessitated negotiated separation, as neither side could fully control the oilfields militarily.

The secession in 2011 dramatically reshaped both states' economies, with South Sudan inheriting approximately 75% of Sudan's oil reserves (Pedersen & Bazilian, 2014). While this oil wealth became the cornerstone of South Sudan's economy, it also created severe vulnerabilities, including economic concentration and institutional underdevelopment (Yat, 2015). For Sudan, the loss of oil revenue forced economic restructuring, though it retained pipeline infrastructure and transit fees. Ultimately, South Sudan's case demonstrates how strategic resources can both motivate parent state repression—when aligned with great power energy interests—and enable self-determination success, contrasting sharply with Biafra's experience, where oil wealth guaranteed its suppression (Nixon, 1972).

International Legitimacy and Recognition by UN, OAU, and AU

Biafra

The United Nations' involvement in the Biafran conflict was constrained by its adherence to the principle of territorial integrity, which prioritized state sovereignty over secessionist claims. This stance reflected a broader international consensus that viewed postcolonial borders as inviolable, even in the face of catastrophic humanitarian crises. As Achebe (2012) argues, the UN's failure to intervene effectively was compounded by the leadership transition from Dag Hammarskjöld—a proponent of active conflict resolution—to U. Thant, whose noninterventionist approach deferred to regional bodies like the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This policy proved disastrous as the war escalated: when Biafran leader Ojukwu appealed to the UN in October 1969 for ceasefire mediation, U Thant effectively endorsed Nigeria's demand for unconditional surrender, providing diplomatic cover for Nigeria's brutal tactics, including deliberate attacks on civilians and starvation blockades.

The UN's inaction was symptomatic of Cold War realpolitik. Despite Biafra's sophisticated media campaign highlighting mass starvation, no UN member state formally recognized its independence, with even the OAU unanimously backing Nigeria's territorial integrity under *uti possidetis juris* (Shaw, 1997). This means that the boundaries established by the colonial powers before independence have to be maintained. The silence of the UN Security Council, dominated by powers like Britain and the USSR—both invested in Nigeria's unity for oil and geopolitical reasons (De Saint Jorre, 1980)—demonstrated how postcolonial sovereignty norms were weaponized against marginalized secessionist movements.

The contrast with later cases like South Sudan reveals the selectivity of international law. Whereas South Sudan's secession gained legitimacy through great power consensus, Biafra's fate emphasizes Crawford's (2023) axiom that state creation is a political and not a judicial act. The UN's failure in Biafra established a dangerous precedent: that moral and humanitarian appeals could be overridden by strategic interests, leaving secessionist movements vulnerable without powerful patrons.

South Sudan

The international community's approach to secessionist movements reveals a striking double standard shaped by geopolitical interests rather than consistent legal principles. In the case of South Sudan, international bodies such as IGAD, the AU, and the UN played a decisive role in legitimizing its independence by anchoring their support in the legal framework of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This multilateral endorsement, spearheaded by the U.S. and reluctantly accepted by traditional anti-secessionist powers like China and Russia, created an exception to the usual reluctance to recognize postcolonial fragmentation (Patey, 2014). The African Union's approval was particularly significant, as it effectively overrode the OAU's longstanding principle of colonial border integrity (De Waal, 2014). By contrast, Biafra's secessionist bid during the Nigerian Civil War was systematically undermined by the same international actors. Despite comparable governance capacity and a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, Biafra received no formal recognition from the UN or OAU, as Cold War powers like Britain and the USSR prioritized Nigeria's territorial unity to protect oil interests and prevent African Balkanization (De Saint Jorre, 1980).

The divergence in outcomes reflects how international recognition hinges on both the fulfillment of statehood criteria and great power strategic calculations. South Sudan met the Montevideo Convention requirements—defined territory, population, government, and independence—while also aligning with Western counterterrorism objectives and energy security interests (Bereketeab, 2012). Conversely, Somaliland, despite satisfying these criteria, remains unrecognized due to the absence of Somali government consent and lack of geopolitical value to powerful states. The UN's post-independence struggles in South Sudan further illustrate the contradictions of selective intervention: while UNMISS was deployed under a Chapter VII mandate, its state-building efforts

faltered amid ethnic fragmentation, logistical challenges, and tensions with a hostile South Sudanese government (Johnson, 2011).

Ultimately, these cases further align with Crawford's (2023) view that recognition is a political rather than judicial act. South Sudan's rapid UN admission—despite its institutional fragility—contrasts sharply with Biafra's suppression and Somaliland's limbo, proving that selfdetermination

succeeds only when local aspirations intersect with great power interests. This selectivity continues to shape contemporary secessionist movements, as international law remains subordinated to realpolitik in determining which "Selfistans" gain legitimacy (Sterio, 2010).¹

¹ Milena Sterio used the term "Selfistan" as a critical framework for analyzing self-determination movements. She introduced it as a metaphor that describes a hypothetical and ideal territory, where a group of people achieves absolute self-determination with the help of powerful nations unlike other groups with similar quests without such supports.

Sterio, M. (2010). On the right to external self-determination: Selfistans, secession, and the great powers' rule. *Minn. J. Int'l L.*, 19, 137.

Ifeanyi O.M, Alumna, Comparative Social Research (CSR), Higher School of Economics

, omerebereifeanyi@gmail.com Paths to Self-determination:

A comparative study of the Sociological Contexts and Resistance Strategies of Biafra and South Sudanese Emancipation Movements. The Working Paper is based on a Master Thesis prepared by the author. Special thanks go to Arnab Roy Chowdhury for supervising the preparation of the Master Thesis.

Summary of Key Findings

Summary of Key Findings (Interviews)

The interviews reveal striking parallels and contrasts between the Biafra and South Sudan liberation movements. Both movements were fundamentally rooted in historical grievances—for Biafra, this centered on colonial-era marginalization, post-independence genocide, and systematic erasure of their history from national narratives, with some participants likening their suffering to the Holocaust. South Sudanese participants similarly emphasized Arabization/Islamization policies and genocide as formative experiences. Socioeconomic injustices featured prominently in both cases, with economic neglect of resource-rich regions fueling discontent.

In terms of activism, Biafra's movement has employed diverse strategies ranging from social media campaigns to armed resistance, while facing challenges of fragmented leadership among competing factions. South Sudan's struggle benefited from more unified grassroots support and John Garang's cohesive leadership during the liberation period, though post-independence divisions later emerged. Minority involvement presented complex dynamics in both contexts, with identity politics creating both tensions and alliances.

The critical divergence emerged in external support and recognition. South Sudan's success was enabled by strategic shifts in international backing (particularly from the US, Ethiopia, and surrounding African countries), regional military support, and eventual UN recognition. In contrast, Biafra suffered from geopolitical isolation, with only brief French recognition outweighed by UK/USSR support for Nigeria. This contrast in international engagement, combined with Biafra's internal divisions versus South Sudan's wartime unity under Garang, explains their differing outcomes. The findings underscore how liberation movements require both internal cohesion and external patronage to succeed, while highlighting how historical narratives continue to shape contemporary struggles for self-determination.

Summary of Key Findings (Survey & Document Analysis)

The survey and document analysis of Biafra and South Sudan's self-determination movements yielded several critical insights across five thematic areas. First, regarding external support, South Sudan benefited from sustained U.S. and Western backing tied to post-9/11 geopolitics and oil interests, while Biafra received only fragmented assistance from France and African states amid Cold War constraints. Second, in terms of military dynamics, South Sudan's SPLA achieved strategic parity through guerrilla warfare and foreign arms supplies, whereas Biafra's early territorial losses and naval blockade proved insurmountable despite innovative indigenous weapons production.

Third, theme of central government responses revealed a stark contrast: Sudan ultimately negotiated with southern rebels due to international pressure and military stalemate, while Nigeria employed total war tactics against Biafra with tacit Western and Soviet support. Fourth, analysis of economic/strategic value showed that while both regions possessed significant oil reserves, South Sudan's underdevelopment worked in its favor by making separation less costly for Khartoum, whereas Biafra's industrial infrastructure provoked fierce Nigerian resistance.

Finally, regarding international recognition, South Sudan's UN membership was fast-tracked through great power consensus, while Biafra gained only a few African country recognitions, and also France, despite comparable governance capacity. These findings present three key surprises: first, that resource wealth could become a liability (as with Biafra) rather than an asset; second, that meeting conventional statehood criteria proved insufficient without geopolitical patronage. Third, the idea of war rather than peace is more likely to lead to self-determination, as in the case of prolonged suffering and being at the brink of extermination. The cases collectively demonstrate how self-determination outcomes depend less on legal principles than on intersections between local agency and global power structures.

Conclusion and Theoretical Implications

The comparative analysis of Biafra and South Sudan's self-determination movements reveals decisive factors that both align with and deviate from Trzciński's factors while offering important implications for self-determination theories when viewed through the lens of political process theory. Three key factors emerge as critical: (1) geopolitical alignment with great power interests,

(2) the central government's strategic flexibility, and (3) the movement's capacity to leverage both material resources and political opportunities. While Trzciński's factors correctly identify factors like international recognition, military balance, and economic significance, the cases demonstrate that success ultimately depended on how these elements interacted with the political opportunity structure—a core tenet of political process theory. South Sudan succeeded because its movement coincided with U.S. counter-terrorism objectives in Sudan post-9/11, creating political openings

that SPLM/A leaders skillfully exploited through diplomatic channels and carefully timed military actions. In contrast, Biafra failed despite meeting many of Montevideo's criteria for statehood because its struggle occurred during Cold War tensions that left no political space for Western powers to support secession without jeopardizing broader strategic interests.

Significant deviations from Trzciński's factors emerge when applying political process theory's emphasis on movement agency and political process. First, the role of diasporas and transnational advocacy networks proved crucial—South Sudan benefited from well-organized diaspora lobbying in Washington, while Biafra's sophisticated media campaign lacked equivalent political conduits, although lobbying has intensified in recent times, as exemplified by the recent appeal to US President Trump. Second, the cases reveal that internal movement cohesion and governance capacity matter; the SPLM/A's relative unity compared to Biafra's fractionalization allowed more effective exploitation of political opportunities. Third, the timing of movements within broader

geopolitical shifts—what political process theory terms "the structure of political opportunities"—emerges as decisive. South Sudan's ascendancy coincided with the post-Cold War era's humanitarian intervention norms and U.S. strategic realignment, while Biafra's timing during Cold War bipolarity left no room for maneuver.

These findings challenge conventional self-determination theories in several ways. They demonstrate that material factors like resources and military capacity, while important, are mediated by the political process—resources only become decisive when movements can leverage them within favorable political opportunity structures. The cases also show that international law's criteria for self-determination are applied selectively based on political calculations rather than objective standards. Most significantly, they suggest that successful self-determination movements must function as sophisticated political actors, not just military or administrative entities—they must read and adapt to shifting political environments, build transnational alliances, and demonstrate governance capacity. This political process perspective helps explain why some movements succeed against material odds while others fail despite apparent advantages.

Limitations

Limitations and future research directions include the need for more granular studies on diaspora influence and non-state actor networks in self-determination struggles. Future work could expand comparisons to other cases (e.g., Kurdistan, Catalonia) to test the universality of these findings, while also exploring how digital activism and social media reshape contemporary self-determination campaigns. Finally, the study calls for revisiting international legal frameworks to address the hypocrisy of selective recognition and better accommodate remedial secession in cases of persistent marginalization.

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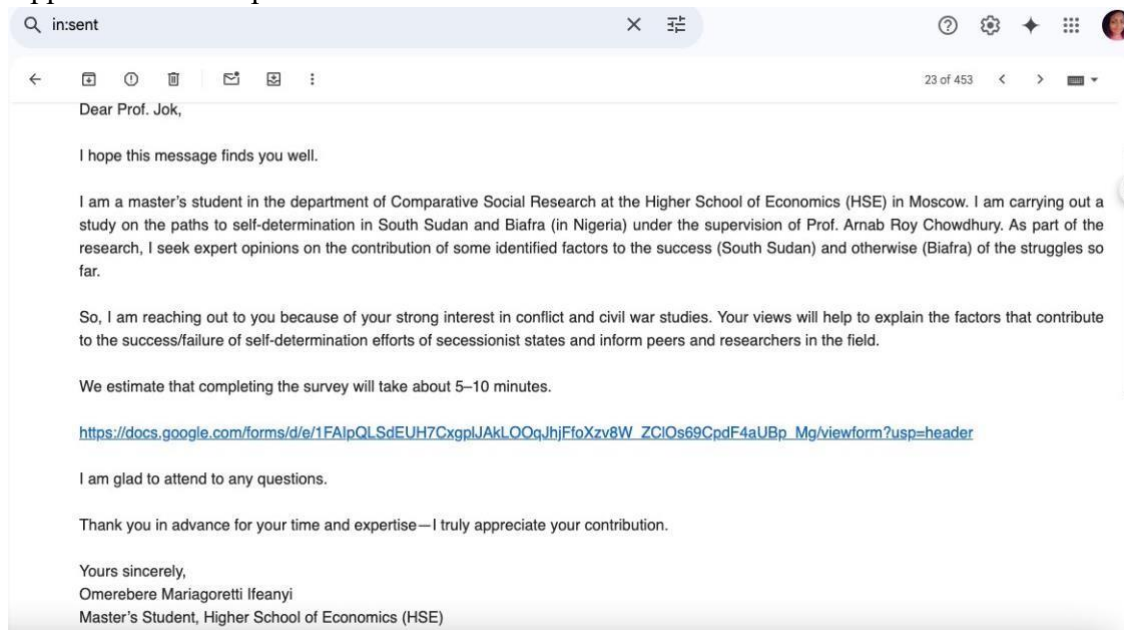
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Appendices

Appendix A—Sample Email



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A comparative study of the Sociological Contexts and Resistance Strategies of Biafra and South Sudanese Emancipation Movements. The Working Paper is based on a Master Thesis prepared by the author. Special thanks go to Arnab Roy Chowdhury for supervising the preparation of the Master Thesis.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Topic: Generational Perspectives on the Biafran Emancipation Movement: Analyzing Attitudes, Beliefs, and Activism Across Age Groups in Nigeria.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Background and Context

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?

Probe: What is your age? How does your background (e.g., education, profession) influence your perspective on the Biafran Movement?

- What do you know about the Biafran Emancipation Movement?

Probe: How did you first learn about it, and what sources of information influenced your understanding?

- What is Biafra Republic Government in Exile?

Probe: What can you tell me about the mission of this movement

2. Attitudes and Beliefs

- How would you describe your feelings about the Biafran Movement?

Probe: Do you view it as a justified struggle for independence? What factors contribute to your viewpoint?

- What do you believe were the primary goals of the Biafran Movement?

Probe: Do you think this goal is achievable and worth achieving?

- How do you see the impact of the Biafran Movement on our society?

Probe: Are there specific social, political, or economic changes you associate with the movement?

3. Generational Differences

- In your opinion, how do younger generations understand the Biafran Movement compared to older generations?

Probe: What differences in attitudes or beliefs do you notice? Are there specific events or topics that influence these differences?

- How do you think your personal experiences shape your perspective on the Biafran Movement compared to younger/ older individuals?

Probe: Are there significant event in history that you think younger generations may not fully understand?(For Older People)

Do you think the views on the methodology of the older generations of are still relevant today? (For younger people)

4. Activism and Engagement

- Can you describe your reasons for your active participation and engagement in the Biafran Movement?

Have you or anyone you know been involved in activism related to the Biafran Movement or its ideals?(Questions for general population)

Probe: Can you describe this involvement and its significance? How do you view the actions of activists today?

- What role do you think social media plays in shaping attitudes towards the Biafran Movement among younger people?

Probe: Do you think social media is a positive or negative influence? Why?

- If you could speak to the younger/older generation about the Biafran Movement, what message would you want to convey about your views?

Probe: What lessons do you think are important for them to understand about historical struggles for independence and rights?

- What roles did women play in the Biafran Emancipation Movement, and how did their contributions impact the movement's goals and activities?

Probe: Can you provide specific examples of prominent women or groups of women who were actively involved in the movement?

In what ways did women's involvement differ from that of men within the movement?

Did women face any specific challenges or barriers to participation?

5.Addressing Division

- What social or political issues have caused different Biafran groups to split apart and how does it affect current efforts?

Probe: Are there any contemporary events that you believe are making these divisions worse?

- What are the main differences in beliefs among Biafran groups, and how do these differences make it harder for them to work together toward their goals?

Probe: What specific beliefs or ideologies do you think create the most significant divides among Biafran groups?

Can you describe any particular incident where these differences have led to conflicts or disagreements among Biafran groups?

What strategies do you think could be implemented to bridge these belief gaps and foster collaboration among the groups?

6.Reflections and Future Perspectives

- Do you believe the principles behind the Biafran Movement are still relevant today?

Probe: If so, in what ways?

- In terms of the future, what are your hopes for Biafran Movement?

Probe: How do you envision your future living as a Biafran?

Interview Questions (South Sudan)

1. Personal Background and Involvement

Can you tell me about your background and how you became involved in the Biafra/South Sudan liberation movement?

What specific experiences or events motivated you to engage with this movement?

2. Historical Context:

What historical events or conditions do you believe significantly impacted the quest for independence of the south Sudanese people?

3. Sociological Conditions

Identity and Ethnicity:

How did ethnic identities of the South Sudanese people shape their movement for independence? Can you share specific examples?

4. Socioeconomic Factors:

In your view, how did socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty, educational levels, religion, influence the aspirations and activities of the South Sudanese people before independence?

5. Community Involvement:

How did community involvement (including participation from different demographic groups such as youth, women, and the elderly) influenced the movement's objectives and strategies before independence? Are there specific instances you can mention?

6. Role of Social Media:

How did the use of social media impact awareness and mobilization efforts with the movement before independence? How do you see its role in shaping public perception and community engagement?

What was the role of diaspora?

Resistance Strategies

7. Forms of Resistance:

What are some specific resistance strategies employed by the movement?

8. Nonviolent vs. Violent Tactics:

How did the movement navigate the use of nonviolent versus violent resistance?
What factors do you think influenced the decision to adopt one strategy over the other?

9. Leadership:

What were the leaders of South Sudanese Movement like?

10. Collaboration and Alliances:

How important were alliances with other organizations (domestic and international) in supporting the movement?

What was the role of diaspora?

12. Government Response:

How did the response of the central government shape the resistance strategies? Were there particular government actions that had prompted shifts in approach?

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Appendix C: Declaration of Biafra 1967 by Lt. Col. Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu

PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BIAFRA*

PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BIAFRA

IT IS RIGHT and just that we of this generation of Eastern Nigerians, should record for the benefit of posterity, some of the reasons for the momentous decision we have taken at this crucial time in the history of our people.

The Military Government of Eastern Nigeria has, in a series of publications, traced the evils and injustices of the Nigerian political association through the decades, stating also the case and standpoint of Eastern Nigeria in the recent crisis.

Throughout the period of Nigeria's precarious existence as a single political entity Eastern Nigerians have always believed in fundamental human rights and principles as they are accepted and enjoyed in civilized communities. Impelled by their belief in these rights and principles and in their common citizenship with other Nigerians after Amalgamation, Eastern Nigerians employed their ideas and skills, their resourcefulness and dynamism in the development of areas of Nigeria outside the East. Eastern Nigerians opened up avenues of trade and industry throughout the country; overlooked the neglect of their homeland in the disposition of national institutions, projects and utilities; made available their own natural resources to the rest of the country; and confidently invested in the general economic and social development of Nigeria. Politically Eastern Nigerians advocated a strong, united Nigeria; for ONE COUNTRY, ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE DESTINY. Eastern Nigerians were in the vanguard of the struggle for national independence and made sacrifices and concessions for the cause of national unity. They conceded the inauguration of a Federal instead of a Unitary system of Government in Nigeria.

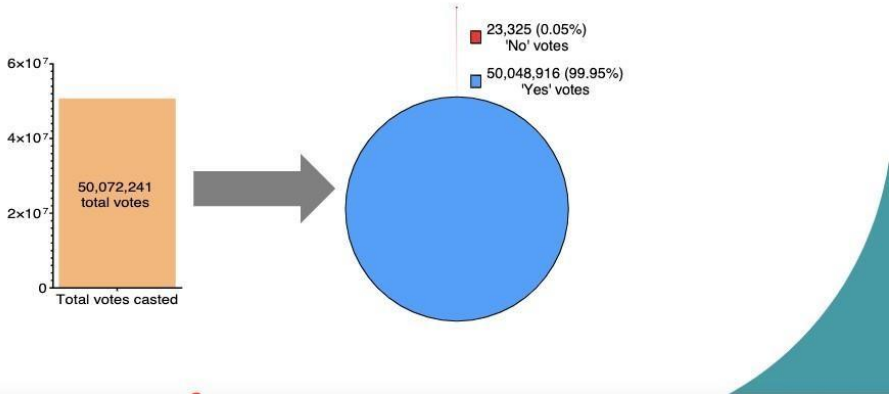
Leaders of Northern Nigeria have told us several times that what our former colonial masters made into "NIGERIA" consisted of an agglomeration of peoples, distinct in every way except in the colour of their skins, and organized as a unit for their own commercial interests and administrative convenience. The name "Nigeria" was regarded by many as a mere "geographical expression".

In course of time, the peoples of the other parts of Southern Nigeria found that they possessed many things in common with those of Eastern Nigeria, and while the colonial master made adjustments to accommodate these common ties between the Southern inhabitants, the peoples of the North insisted on maintaining their separateness.

Source: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-legal-materials/article/abs/proclamation-of-the-republic-of-biafra/EBFEC7A82904B41AB0C9CB6B1A4ACF89>

Appendix D: Biafra Self-Referendum Results 2024

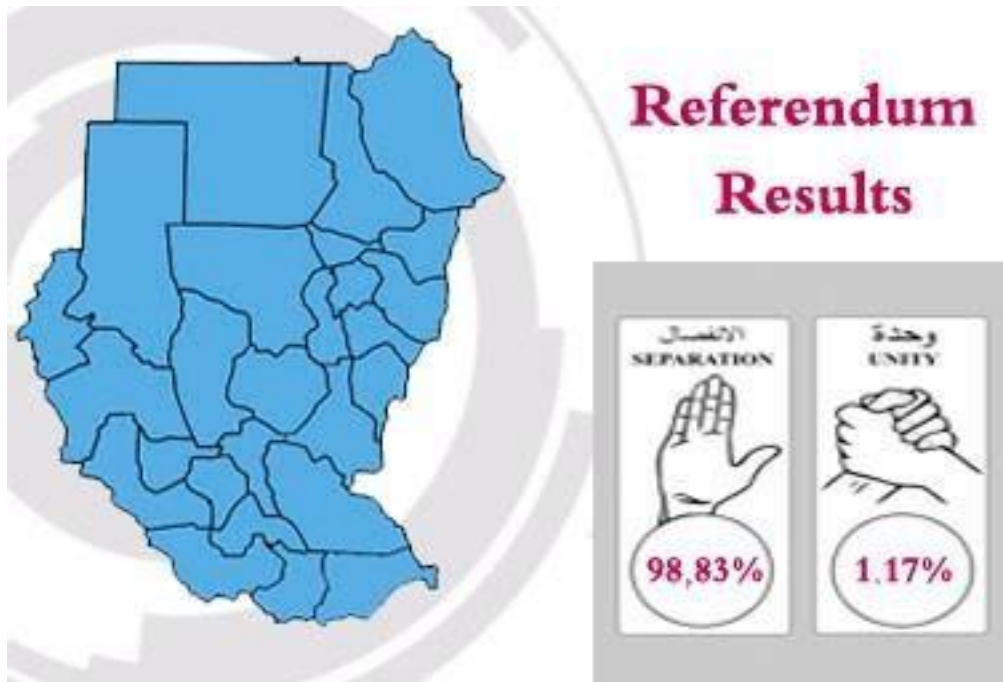
**Biafrans Overwhelmingly Voted “Yes” to exit Nigeria
in the Biafra self referendum
(February 1, 2024, to November 28, 2024)**



Source: <https://www.biafrarepublicgov.org/>

Appendix E: South Sudan Referendum Result

[Southern Sudan 2011 Referendum Results](#)



Source: <https://unmis.unmissions.org/referendum-coverage>

APPENDIX F: Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

The Comprehensive Peace
Agreement
Between
The Government of The Republic
of The Sudan
and
The Sudan People's Liberation
Movement/Sudan People's
Liberation Army

CHAPEAU OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT

WHEREAS the Government of the Republic of the Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A) (hereinafter referred to as the "Parties"), having met in continuous negotiations between May 2002 and December 2004, in Karen, Machakos, Nairobi, Nakuru, Nanyuki and Naivasha, Kenya, under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Peace Process, and, in respect of the issues related to the Conflict Areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States and Abyei Area, under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Kenya;

CONSCIOUS that the conflict in the Sudan is the longest running conflict in Africa; that it has caused tragic loss of life, destroyed the infrastructure of the country, eroded its economic resources and caused suffering to the people of the Sudan;

MINDFUL of the urgent need to bring peace and security to the people of the Sudan who have endured this conflict for far too long;

AWARE of the fact that peace, stability and development are aspirations shared by all people of the Sudan;

IN PURSUANCE OF the commitment of the Parties to a negotiated settlement on the basis of a democratic system of governance which, on the one hand, recognizes the right of the people of Southern Sudan to self-determination and seeks to make unity attractive during the Interim Period, while at the same time is founded on the values of justice, democracy, good governance, respect for fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, mutual understanding and tolerance of diversity within the realities of the Sudan;

RECORDING AND RECONFIRMING that in pursuance of this commitment the

NOW THEREFORE, THE PARTIES AGREE, upon signing this Agreement, on the following:

- (1) The Pre-Interim Period shall commence, and all the obligations and commitments specified in the CPA shall be binding in accordance with the provisions thereof;
- (2) The CPA shall be comprised of the texts of the Protocols and Agreements already signed, together with this Chapeau, the Agreement on Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices as Annexure I and the Agreement on the Implementation Modalities and the Global Implementation Matrix and Appendices as Annexure II;
- (3) The agreed Arabic and English texts of the CPA shall both be official and authentic. However, in the event of a dispute regarding the meaning of any provision of the text, and only if there is a difference in meaning between the Arabic and English texts; the English text shall be authoritative as English was the language of the peace negotiations.
- (4) Upon compilation of the official and authentic Arabic and English texts of the CPA, the initialled copies of both texts shall be given to both Parties, and copies shall also be lodged with the United Nations, the African Union, IGAD Secretariat in Djibouti, the League of Arab States and the Republic of Kenya.
- (5) All persons performing governmental functions shall continue to do so at the place at which they render such services or perform such functions unless or until redeployed or alternative instructions are received in accordance with the arrangements agreed to by the Parties.





(xii)



Source:

<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/sd060000the20comprehensive20peace20agreement.pdf>

Appendix G: Interview Themes and Responses of Participants (Biafra)

Theme	Sub-theme	Participants	Responses (quotes)
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Historical Grievances/Erasure	Colonialism	Participant 6 (BRGIE/USB)	<i>"To trace what the emancipation movement represents, you have to go as far back as what happened before 1967... the British colonialists masterfully and forcefully amalgamated the Southerners with the northern part of Nigeria."</i>
	Marginalization	Participant 7 (Minority Group)	<i>"We have been marginalized too much in Nigeria; we need to create a government like Eritrea."</i>
		Participant 4 (IPOB)	<i>"The marginalization has intensified... our politicians prefer to be slaves to their oppressors."</i>
	Islamization	Participant 6 (BRGIE/USB)	<i>"Ahmadu Bello said... we must ruthlessly prevent change of power. Igbos are the doctors, teachers... if we allow them, they will dominate us."</i>
	Erasure of History	Participant 4 (IPOB)	<i>"The (Nigeria-Biafra) Biafran war was kept secret... not taught in schools,"</i>

		Participant 4 (IPOB)	<i>carry placards and create awareness nonviolently."</i>
	Armed Struggle	Participant 5 (BRGIE/USB)	<i>"Simon Ekpa says a government needs an army to protect our people against Nigeria."</i>

	Leadership	Participant 4 (IPOB)	<i>"Ojukwu was military; today's leaders use civilian approaches... but the goal is the same."</i>
Minority Involvement	Activism	Participant 7 (Minority Group)	<i>"I am not Igbo, but I'm in BRGIE's government... minorities are part of this struggle."</i>
	Identity Politics (Igbo vs. Minorities)	Participant 6 (BRGIE/USB)	<i>"Some minorities changed names (e.g., Nwike to Wike) to deny Igbo identity for survival."</i>
	Division Within Biafra	Participant 3 (IPOB)	<i>"True freedom fighters belong in prison, exile, or the grave... some leaders aren't there."</i>
External Involvement/Recognition	International Advocacy	Participant 3 (IPOB)	<i>"The world looks away... but selfdetermination is in the UN charter."</i>
	Recognition by Powers	Participant 2 (MASSOB)	<i>"We have gotten what we want; Trump promised to come to Africa after he finishes with the Russia/Ukraine conflict."</i>

		Participant 7 (Minority Group)	<i>"Putin invited us... if Russia recognizes Biafra, it will fast-track freedom."</i>
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	Diplomatic Appeals	Participant 5 (BRGIE/USB)	"The EU/UN said 20 million voters for Biafra would make us 'good to go'."
Future Prospects	Hope for Recognition	Participant 2 (MASSOB) Participant 6 (BRGIE/USB)	<i>"We do not look for Biafra for us but for our Children; with Biafra, our country will be better."</i> <i>"I hope more countries join Eritrea in recognizing Biafra... our officials are lobbying the UN."</i>

Appendix H: Interview Themes and Responses (South Sudan)

Theme	Sub-theme	Participants	Responses (codes)
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Historical Grievances	Marginalization Islamization(religion) Genocide	Participant 1	<i>“Religion did not play a major role. it was the case of elite domination,; the dominant elites in the Arab groups, were of course Muslims. And it was then they used Islam as a tool, for example, for the implementation of Sharia law, and they used Islam to actually marginalize and mistreat southerners.”</i> <i>“So Africa's biggest country was broken up into two because both sides just failed to see themselves working together because of Islam and Christianity and because of race, Arab and African. Because of a long history of marginalization and enslavement,</i>
		Participant 2	<i>long history of violence and destruction, atrocities were committed. Genocide was committed in the south. So, the war had just simply left too much, too many wounds and pain for the country to salvage its unity.”</i> <i>“What I know as the historical nature is something much more depicting severe violence and severe oppression, lack of recognition, and lack of autonomy of the people of the South...”</i> <i>“...the religious subjugation. What I mean here is the Islamization and the Arabization of the people of the South, which meant that for you to become to be from the South and to enjoy the prosperity and all the resources and tools that were primarily controlled by the Arabs in the North. You had to speak Arabic. You had to become a Muslim, and</i>

		Participant 3	poverty, and lack of services supposedly because of your separate identity that is usually used to convince people to take up arms.” “...control of flow of resources, both material and non-material; access to health; access to education; access to certain infrastructure; mobility; infrastructure which was lacking and is still unfortunately lacking to this very day. These, I believe, did influence the movement and the aspiration of the people to have their own autonomy.”
Activism & Engagement	Armed Struggle (guerrilla warfare) Community involvement (women, youths, children, elderly) Internal factions Leadership dynamics	Participant 1	“So, I think it was a very broad movement. So, everyone supported the S-P-L-M-A, basically in the south, almost everyone. So of course, there were splits in the movement as well, but let's set that aside. But, you know, between 1992 and 98, but, you know, it was very important. So basically, most men were fighting, so the women were the backbone of the South Sudanese society for those who remained in the country. And youth, of course, also played an important role, as did the elderly.” “I mean, it was a, it was a guerrilla movement, right? It was a liberation movement. So, it was absolutely violent.”

		<i>“...so, I would say that—I wouldn't say leaders, I would say leader. I mean, it was very clear that Dr.John Goran was the leader of SPMA. There wasn't a leadership.</i>
		<i>And it says, yes, there was a command structure. There were five beyond, below him, in the overall leadership of the South Sudan liberation movement. But it was him that was the main authoritative leader, very strong, very able, capable, yeah, both political and military, a very impressive character; able , to convince internationally, also having, you know, meeting people at the ministerial and presidential level.”</i> <i>“It is when leaders, when leadership have a strong and clear vision that people will follow. Unfortunately, that clarity of vision and forward thinking did not continue past the independence. But during the war, it was very, very clear what they wanted to accomplish.”</i> <i>“Well, I was not there, but from what history tells us, from what parents, from what survivors, and from what retired generals tell us, the circumstance was violent...”</i>

		Participant 2	<i>“We did understand that there was a severe involvement of the community. Women, for example, in every society, of course, women are not always in the front lines of the newspaper or articles or any description of events that have taken place in history, but they remain the fundamental root of the movement, because without them, without those who managed to cook, without those who managed to take care of their husbands when they were shot, when they were getting ill. It was the women always who managed to unify the society together...”</i>
		Participant 3	<i>“When you look at the dynamics, even to this present day, the dynamic between ethnicity, between the Dinka, between the Nuer,</i>
			<i>between the Shuluk, the Zanda, the Toposa and the Balanda. You mentioned all those tribes. And the people who were much closer to the northern region of Sudan. You see that there was still a lack of unity, but one man with his network managed to unify the people... John Garang managed to mobilize the people, to motivate the people and to let go of ethnical divisions to form one alliance that will fight for the independence of South Sudan”</i>
External Influences	Diaspora contribution Church contribution Interest & Support of foreign states	Participant 1	<i>“...But I would also highlight that the religious leaders, meaning the Christian leaders of churches, were also key because there were also internal divisions and also ethnic tensions. So they played an important role for reconciliation and peace internally in South Sudan.”</i>

		<i>“On the American side, a strong African diaspora was advocating in the US, so there were support links there that were quite strong.”</i> <i>“Norway and the US had significant support, not directly for the S-P-L-M-A as such, but a lot of sympathy for their cause and a lot of contacts with their leaders. And then in Congress, you basically had some people that were more or less supporting the S-P-L-M-A, but of course not economically or militarily, but but politically. And then you had, among evangelical Christians, this anti-slavery movement that also was important in terms of mobilizing support for the South Sudanese cause.”</i> <i>“The top of this is Dr. John himself, the chairman of S-P-LM/S-P-L-A and commander in chief. And he has—he had—something called high military and political command, which had a lot of, which had this highly influential former politicians and former military</i>
		<i>generals who are now commanding the war. And below them were the field commanders, who were the ones actually running the armies.”</i>

		Participant 2	<i>“Yeah, there was a lot of external support beginning with Ethiopia, which hosted the SPLA and SPLM. The trainings were done in western Ethiopia and the former leader, so without Ethiopian training, the SPLA would not have succeeded. And then weapons were supplied by friendly allies, including Gaddafi's, Libya, Zimbabwe under Mugabe, and countries like Mozambique and Tanzania. And at first, and subsequently others, Kenya hosted the offices of the SPLM. So Kenya became sort of the diplomatic hub for SPLM Uganda the same.”</i>
		Participant 3	<i>“Just yesterday I was in Switzerland. I was in Zurich, and I met an old Sudanese who was even telling me about the Sudanese struggle. He was in diaspora in the 1980s.</i> <i>So he was telling me about the mobilization of people in the diaspora who were both from the North but who wanted to ensure that the people in the South also had the same recognition and autonomy as people in the North had.”</i>

Appendix I: Summary of Responses to Survey Questions (Biafra)

SURVEY QUESTIONS	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES(CODES)
1. Interests of Powerful States: How do global powers (e.g., the USA, UK, USSR, and China) impact these movements through their political, economic, or military interests?	<i>Participant 1: “The UK is the major determinant of Nigerian political outcome because of their interest in Nigeria's oil and perpetual mortgaging of the Igbo race in the country. The US is the state we are looking forward to saving us, but they seem not to be interested.”</i>

	Participant 20: <i>“The failure of the Biafran selfdetermination struggle in the late 1960s was negatively and grossly affected by such global powers as Britain, and the USSR with the cooperation of a good number of Muslim Arab countries. Politically, these countries helped to advance the propaganda that Biafra was the personal ambition of one man, General Emeka Ojukwu. They tried to dissuade other countries from recognizing the Republic of Biafra.”</i> Participant 18: <i>“The quest to maintain their political dominance on the world stage and to protect their oil interests in Nigeria through Shell BP, which contributes significantly to their economic growth, especially the UK, and their military fighting on the side of the Nigerian government against the secessionist state of Biafra impacted significantly the defeat of the Biafra state.”</i> Participant 16: <i>“Negatively, the impact of the superpowers has largely been that of a neocolonialist approach. They are all much concerned about what they can gain. No sincere positive approach to help most of the suffering 3rd world succeed from their struggles genuinely.”</i>
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2. Central Government's

Response: What is your perspective on how the parent states (Nigeria for Biafra and Sudan for South Sudan) respond to these movements? Discuss the effectiveness of their policies of repression, negotiation, or accommodation.

Participant 11: *"The Nigerian government acts brutally and repressively against Biafran activists. An example is the shooting and killing of unarmed protesters and prayer groups at Nkpor Head Bridge and Aba."*

Participant 3: *"The central government response is nothing to write home about. They have been accusing every movement targeted at actualization of Biafra of being a terrorist group."*

Participant 4: *"The Nigerian government has been responding with brutality, propaganda, forceful disappearance of Biafran youths, and mass assassinations of Biafrans."*

Participant 5: *"The parent state, Nigeria, in this case, perceives Biafra as a threat to her sovereignty and strength. In fact, the Nigerian government officially describes Biafra as a terrorist group."*

Participant 16: *"The responses of Nigeria and Sudan to independence movements have been complex and multifaceted, involving various strategies such as repression, negotiation, and accommodation. While repression may provide short-term gains, but it often leads*

	<i>to long-term instability and conflict. Negotiation and accommodation can provide pathways to peace but require genuine commitment and flexibility from all parties.”</i> Participant 10: <i>“The Nigerian government's response to the Biafra movement is hostile to the extent of declaring such movements a terrorist one. This policy has been ineffective towards the Biafran movement, for the movement continues to strive despite hostility.”</i> Participant 14: <i>“From Inception and of course originally, states seeking secession will always be perceived as dividing the center and thus altering the peace of the country. But reasonably enough, when it becomes obvious it is actually a quest for self-rule like that of every other state in the world at one time or another, the mother country is expected to understand and give credit to the seceding state , but it hasn't been like this from Nigeria as a country. Like in South Sudan, when Sudan saw they were most likely not to live together again, they granted them the self-rule they sought to avoid further fights and insurrection. In Nigeria, the Nigerian state has continued to view the Biafran struggle with such disdain. And since 1960s (Nigeria-Biafra) Biafran war no one from the East has been able to rule Nigeria for fear of secession. So Nigeria has not played any role like Sudan to South Sudan.”</i> Participant 20: <i>“The Nigerian Government was mad with the emergence of the Republic of Biafra. They gave the world the impression that they were simply fighting to keep Nigeria one, but actually, there were three major motives for fighting, Biafra; one was because of the crude oil in the land of Biafra, two was for Nigeria to continue to be a united-divided country for Britain to continue to exploit the country by making sure that the Muslim Fulani in the North, whom they can easily control, are always in the seat of government.”</i>
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3. Military Dynamics and External Support: How do you perceive the military balance between the secessionist movements and their respective central governments? What role does external support (e.g., weapons, funding, training) play in shaping the conflicts?	Participant 12: “Using the Nigeria civil war as a case study, there was no military balance between the secessionist’s movement and the central government. The central government is at an advantage over the secessionist movement. Like I stated earlier, the Nigerian (Nigeria-Biafra) Civil War took place after the Cold War, when the world was in great tension and under bipolarity. The global powers rendered military support to the central government, excluding France, which recognized Biafra. The Majority of the world leaders supported the Nigerian government.”
	Participant 11: “The support is totally one-sided and supports the central governments against the secessionist sect, causing the central governments to commit heinous and inhuman acts against the secessionist group.” Participant 9: “There’s no balance. No secessionist group can withstand the military strength of the sovereign state. International agencies provide unimaginable support and sabotage to selfdetermination.”
4. Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding Region: In what ways do you believe the strategic importance (such as geopolitical location and available resources) and economic significance of the seceding regions affect their selfdetermination efforts?	Participant 3: “The Biafra land is located in the southeast and south-south regions of Nigeria with enormous economic values and potentials. The regions are filled with crude oil and other natural resources. They equally have fertile land for agriculture. Also a destination for industrialization and economic activities.” Participant 7: “The strategic and economic value of seceding regions can significantly impact their selfdetermination efforts, influencing their bargaining power, external support, and conflict dynamics.” Participant 9: “Resourceful regions sustain the central government and as such are very impactful.”

5. International Legitimacy and Recognition: How critical is the role of the international community, particularly organizations like the UN and various states, in granting or withholding recognition and legitimacy to these selfdetermination movements?	<i>Participant 20: “...This is an area that requires international reconsideration. It is immoral to look away as a people is being annihilated under the guise of non-interference in a country's "internal affairs." Every people or nation is a part of humanity, and any threat to their existence by a state is no longer an internal affair but instead a humanity affair.”</i> <i>Participant 5: “The right to self-determination is enshrined in the United Nation’s charter. Hence, I believe that it is very sacrosanct that the United Nations quickly uphold the charter and help the people of Biafra gain freedom.”</i> <i>Participant 3: “The international community is dominated by Western countries, and as such, their decisions and activities align with that of the British target to ensure that Nigeria is one for the exploitation to continue. Biafrans are genuine in their struggle for the actualization of Biafra. The UN is not interested in any measure, plan, or activity that will grant recognition for Biafra.”</i>
6. Among the factors listed (interests of powerful states, central government’s response, military dynamics and external support, strategic and economic value of the seceding region, and international legitimacy and recognition), which do you feel is the most important in shaping the success or failure of self-determination movements? Please explain your reasoning.	<i>Interest of powerful states: Participant 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, 18, 20,</i> <i>Central government response—Participant 3</i> <i>Military dynamics & External Support—Participant 15, 14, 13, 12, 4, 8, 11</i> <i>Strategic and Economic value—Participant 17</i> <i>International recognition and legitimacy—Participant 2, 10</i>

7. Aside from the factors already mentioned (interests of powerful states, central government's response, military dynamics and external support, strategic and economic value of the seceding region, and international legitimacy and recognition), what other factors do you believe are crucial in influencing the outcomes of selfdetermination movements like the Biafra Emancipation Movement and the South Sudan Liberation Movement? Please elaborate on your thoughts.	<i>Participant 8: "Proper funding."</i> <i>Participant 7: "Ambiguity and Inconsistency in International Law"</i> <i>Participant 15: "Religion"</i> <i>Participant 9: "Massive mobilization, commitment, and resilience"</i> <i>Participant 3: "Sabotage."</i> <i>Participant 5: "Internal disagreement; sacrifice and perseverance."</i> <i>Participant 14: Perception of activists as touts" (Need for reliable contenders)</i>
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SOURCE: Compiled by the Researcher from coding of Survey data

Appendix J: Summary of Responses to Survey Questions (South Sudan)

SURVEY QUESTIONS	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES (Quotes)
1. Interests of Powerful States: How do global powers (e.g., the USA, UK, USSR, and China) impact these movements through their political, economic, or military interests?	<i>Participant 21: "These superpowers often engage in supporting either of the contending parties, largely militarily and politically. These alignments, as experienced in the South Sudanese case in the 1980s and 1990s, led to different outcomes. In the 1990s, the US aligned with the Sudanese government, with humanitarian catastrophe as a result. In the late 1990s, the US realigned with the SPLA, investing both in the SPLA and neighboring and supportive states."</i>

2. Central Government's Response: What is your perspective on how the parent states (Nigeria for Biafra and Sudan for South Sudan) respond to these movements? Discuss the effectiveness of their policies of repression, negotiation, or accommodation.	Participant 19: “States try their best to suppress the independence movements. They often succeed in this mission to suppress, but only for some time. If the movement persists, independence can be achieved eventually.” Participant 21: “The Sudanese government mobilized forces, waging an indiscriminate war in South Sudan. Over 2 million died, but it did not secure a peaceful Sudan.” Participant 22: “Often with force, succeeding in most cases but failing in others.”
3. Military Dynamics and External Support: How do you perceive the military balance between the secessionist movements and their respective central governments? What role does external support (e.g., weapons, funding, training) play in shaping the conflicts?	Participant 19: “The military balance is often in favour of the parent state. The self-determination movements always seek military hardware from other countries.” Participant 21: “As often expected, the state should have more wherewithal in this front. This was the case between the SPLA and the Sudanese government. The Sudanese government had an upper hand earlier on.” Participant 22: “supplying guns and other resources as well as diplomatic cover.”
4. Strategic and Economic Value of the Seceding Region: In what ways do you believe the strategic importance (such as geopolitical location and available resources) and economic significance of	Participant 19: “The war is often over natural resources, and so the parent country insists on unity out of fear of losing the resources. The seceding regions are very valuable economically.” Participant 22: “Oil resources are an important factor. External actors often benefit from valuable resources in the region that struggles to succeed.”
the seceding regions affect their selfdetermination efforts?	

5. International Legitimacy and Recognition: How critical is the role of the international community, particularly organizations like the UN and various states, in granting or withholding recognition and legitimacy to these self-determination movements?	<i>Participant 19:</i> “The international community is key in terms of independence because the seceding region would require legitimacy through recognition by the international community.” <i>Participant 21:</i> “At the eve of independence, international recognition was critically desired. This cements nationhood among other nations. Thus, international bodies play a huge role in enabling.” <i>Participant 22:</i> “Yes, it is important. Lack of recognition presents challenges to regions intending to secede.”
6. Among the factors listed (interests of powerful states, central government’s response, military dynamics and external support, strategic and economic value of the seceding region, and international legitimacy and recognition), which do you feel is the most important in shaping the success or failure of self-determination movements? Please explain your reasoning.	<i>Participant 19:</i> “Interests of powerful states, outside military support, and UN recognition are key to success of independence.” <i>Participant 22:</i> “Interest of Powerful States” <i>Participant 21:</i> “All of these combined, depending on how these are leveraged”
7. Aside from the factors already mentioned (interests of powerful states, central government’s response, military dynamics and external support, strategic and economic value of the seceding region, and international legitimacy and recognition), what other factors do you believe are crucial in influencing the outcomes of self-determination movements like the Biafra Emancipation Movement and the South Sudan Liberation Movement? Please elaborate on your thoughts.	<i>Participant 19:</i> “Unity and strong strategy within the movement, existence of strong visionary leadership” <i>Participant 21:</i> “Local agency is crucial.” <i>Participant 22:</i> “Determination and Unity”

SOURCE: Compiled by the Researcher from coding of Survey data

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, omerebereifeanyi@gmail.com Paths to Self-determination:

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