

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THOMAS AQUINAS' JUST WAR THEORY VIS-À-VIS NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR

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Abstract

This article sought to carry out the epistemic examination of Nigeria-Biafra War through the framework of St. Thomas Aquinas' Just War Theory. Nigeria-Biafra War (July 6, 1967 – January 15, 1970) is a genocidal war that violated the ethics of war which led to the mass starvation and death of about more than two million Biafra civilians. Thus, this work is geared to evaluate Nigeria-Biafra War in the light of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Just War Theory. This work makes use of analytical method. Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory encapsulates the three primary tenets of just war tradition. His just war theory is codified in Geneva and Hague conventions which laid the ethical foundation of war in international law. Hence, Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory has great relevant implications on Biafra war. Biafra war is a genocidal war of defence geared to safeguard the life of the easterners especially the Igbos in Nigeria. His just war theory establishes the rationale for nations to wage war of self defence of people's life or territory. Thus, this work postulates that the principle of jus post bellum is to be implemented in order to undo the injustice meted out to the Igbos during and after the civil war.

Keywords: Nigeria, Biafra, War, Just, Theory, Geneva, Hague and Genocide

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria as a multi-cultural country is a product of colonialism. Today, Nigeria is one of the largest countries in the world which is made up of more than two hundred million people. Prior to the coming of Europeans, more than two hundred and fifty different ethnic groups that made up the geographical location of Nigeria existed as independent kingdoms. The amalgamation of northern and southern proleterates by Sir Frederick Lugard in 1914 for

selfish political and economic interests is the root cause of many problems Nigeria is experiencing from the beginning till today, because different people who are incompatible are amalgamated and forced to live together as one country. Hence, the 'Divide and Rule' system of government by the British in Nigeria to protect their economic interests which was geared “to put political power in the hands of the less educated but more “reliable” northern elites while economic powers were bestowed on southerners” brought about shared mistrust of fear of domination among the ethnic groups that resulted to many coups, counter-coups and civil war.¹

After Nigeria's independence on October 1, 1960, the seed of discord planted by the British foisted the tribal battle of political cum military domination of a particular ethnic group over others. However, the Nigerian census crisis of 1963-64, the disgusting electoral malpractices in the first national elections of 1964 and the Western regional parliamentary election of 1965 after independence resulted to serious problem to split Nigeria which the prime minister neglected to the detriment of Nigeria. Moreover, the hosting of commonwealth conference by the Federal Government in the federal capital territory Lagos in the midst of the crises led to the first “bloody coup d'etat” executed by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu on January 15, 1966.

However, the military coup was received with jubilation as a result of incompetence of Nigerian government until the British painted the first coup which brought up the Commander of the Nigerian Army, Major General Johnson Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi as Igbo coup owing to the lopsidedness of the killings. It created “venom of vengeance” against the Igbos by the northerners which led to the murder of General Aguiyi-Ironsi and Col. Adekunle Fajuyi in the counter-coup led by Col. Theophilus Yakubu Damjuma in Ibadan in July 29, 1966. This counter-coup that enthroned General Yakubu Gowon as the new Head of State promoted the pogrom to annihilate Igbo race in the north and other parts of Nigeria. This anomaly made the Governor of Eastern Region, Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to declare the “defunct” Republic of Biafra which led to Nigeria-Biafra civil war that lasted for three years (1967-1970).²

Nigeria-Biafra war is not different from other civil wars in a historical sovereign state in the modern period. Just like other human ventures, war is guided by morality. There are ethics of war which provide “a set of conditions justifying the resort to war”³ as well as moral guidelines to the conduct of war in this present era. Saint Thomas Aquinas was one of the major proponents of just war theory in the medieval period that laid the ethical foundation of war in the international law. Thus, this work is geared to examine Nigeria-Biafra war in the light of Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory.

2.0 Conceptual Clarification of Basic Terms

The two important concepts that are associated with this study are just war and Nigeria-Biafra war. The just war tradition is the moral justification for using military force in the execution of war which examines the means adopted in war and rightful ends of war. Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory is a philosophical deliberation of using human

rationality to determine the universal normative and legal standard endemic in the conduct of war.⁴ His just war theory is rooted in Aristotle and Saint Augustine who laid the foundation of just war tradition that sees war as means to bring about peace.

Another important concept in this work is Nigeria-Biafra war. Nigeria-Biafra war is Nigerian civil war (July 6, 1967 – January 15, 1970) “fought between Nigeria and Republic of Biafra, a secessionist state which had declared its independence from Nigeria in 1967”.⁵ This secessionist state was led by Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. Nigeria's troops, on the other hand, were super headed by General Yakubu Gowon.

Hence, the civil war emanated from “political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions” created by British decolonization of Nigeria. The war was engineered by “a military coup, a counter-coup and anti-Igbo pogrom in Northern Nigeria” in 1966. However, that was the war that implemented a gross violation of the ethics of war that led to the mass starvation and genocide of about more than two million Biafra civilians. Thus, the vandalism of Nigerian troops was targeted at markets, churches, buildings, cities instead of military camps of Biafra soldiers.

The Nigerian civil war was fought concurrently with Vietnam War which was among the first wars to be broadcasted for the whole world. The images of hungry Biafra children on the media of foreign countries led to the increase in the food supply of humanitarian services of religious and non-governmental organizations (NGO). However, Britain, Soviet Union and United States of America supported Nigeria while France, Israel and few African countries like Tanzania, Ivory Coast as well as Gabon supported Biafra.

3.0 Nigeria-Biafra Civil War and Other Wars in History

The Nigeria civil war is not the first civil war to emerge in the history of nations. Right from time immemorial, human relation among people and nations is characterized with conflict, war and antagonism. Nigerian situation of conflict preceding the civil war is not different. Thus, the Igbo pogrom or massacre in Northern Nigeria and other parts of Nigeria including the mass starvation and genocide of about more than two million Biafra civilians in the Nigerian civil war is akin to Jewish holocaust during the World War II. Twenty years prior to this anomaly in Nigeria, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany murdered about six million Jews around “German-occupied Europe” between 1941 - 1945.⁶ This holocaust amounts to killing of “about two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population”. In line with this view point, Julius Nyerere conceives Biafra's effort to break away from Nigeria as the same with the Jews looking for a fatherland as a result of holocaust in Europe.⁷ Just like the Nazi policy of wiping out the Jews, the attack of Nigerian troops was targeted at the civilians in the residential houses, hospitals and the scenes of public gathering.

Geneva Convention that guides warfare in the modern period was established after the Jewish holocaust in the World War II. Notwithstanding, there was serious violations of this law in Nigeria-Biafra war. In a similar manner, the wanton destruction of human lives is experienced in more recent year in the killing of civilians, attack on refugee camps as

well as the bombarding of the foreign humanitarian aids in the Cambodian civil war in Asia when Rhmer Rouge conquered the Republican government of Cambodia in 1975.⁸ But, the war criminals were brought to book after the war.

In the Yugoslavian wars (1991-2001) which are regarded as “Europe's deadliest armed conflict since World War II”, several war crimes ranging from genocide, rape, as well as “crimes against humanity” were recorded and punished. The “ethnic conflicts” or “insurgencies” that gave rise to this civil war brought about the emergence of six independent countries such as: North Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Slovenia.⁹

In Africa, Rwandan genocide was so remarkable like that of Biafra which puzzled the whole world. The Rwandan civil war (1990-1994) erupted as a result of the long existing conflict between Hutu and Tutsi races when “a Hutu-led republic” disposed “Tutsi monarchy” in “1959-1960 revolution” resulting to the exodus of many Tutsi to Uganda.¹⁰ The Tutsi refugee in Uganda later formed a militia of (Rwandan Patriotic Front) aka “RPF” that attacked the Hutu base in northern Rwanda which resulted to civil war.

The “Arusha” peace agreements that were signed by both parties on August 4, 1993 gave rise to the assassination of the Hutu president of the Rwandan government, Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6, 1994. It sparked off the counter attack of genocide of Tutsi group in open areas like churches and schools by many Hutu soldiers and about “250,000 to 500,000” women were raped.¹¹ But, the war criminals were later apprehended unlike the Biafra war.

Again, the civil war in Western Sudan led to “Darfur genocide” which was regarded as the first genocide in this 21st century in April 2003. Over one million civilians of the Zaghawa, Fur and Masalit ethnic groups were “killed, raped, wounded, displaced, traumatized, or endured the loss of parents and families”.¹² In fact, war is evil if it has traumatic and catastrophic effects on people's lives, culture and civilization.

The civil war in Western Sudan arose from two sources. The first is the marginalization of Darfur region by Khartoum government and second is the conflict between “the Christians, the animist black Southerners, and the Arab-dominated government since independence from the United Kingdom in 1956”.¹³ The Sudanese government forces combined with the “Janjaweed” Arab militia to commit genocide, rape and other atrocities against civilians in Darfur.

Unlike the three years Biafra war that ended in fiasco, the conflict that lasted for a decade in Darfur was later resolved through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) organized by the United Nations between the Government of Sudan and Sudan Liberation Movement in Nairobi January 2005. Hence, this agreement accorded the Sudanese with two options either to remain as one country having the interest of

Southerners or separate as independent nation.¹⁴ But, the people of South Sudan exercised their right of self determination and voted massively for separation. Thus, South Sudan became an independent nation on July 9, 2011.

Contrary to other wars that were fought after the World War II, Biafra is the only one that war criminals were not tried. Fifty-three years after the Nigeria civil war, the war criminals were not judged. Thus, this work assesses the Nigerian civil war inline with other wars in the modern period where the just war principles seem to be implemented. Thus, it is important at this point to examine Nigerian Civil War in the light of Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory which laid the moral foundation of international humanitarian laws of war.

4.0 Saint Thomas Aquinas' Just War Theory Vis-a-Vis Nigeria-Biafra War

The just war tradition deals with the issue of moral justification of war. Saint Thomas Aquinas was one of the prominent figures of the just war theorists. Saint Thomas Aquinas postulated the three important conditions of just war in his philosophical work, *Summa Theologica* as: "authority of the sovereign, a just cause and right intention".¹⁵

The first basic condition of just war according to him is 'authority of the sovereign' which conceives that war is declared by a legitimate authority and not a private individual or group. So, the first question to be considered is: Does Biafra war have a legitimate authority? The answer is affirmative because the Biafra war was declared by the legitimate authority, the erstwhile Governor of Eastern Region, Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu on May 27, 1967 which is in line with the decision of the Consultative Assembly of "Ojukwu's Special Advisory Committee of Chiefs and Elders in Enugu". On this note, Chinua Achebe states thus:

It is crucial to note that the decision of an entire people, the Igbo people, to leave Nigeria, did not come from Ojukwu alone but was informed by the desires of the people and mandated by a body that contained some of the most distinguished Nigerians in history: Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's, former governor-general and first ceremonial president; Dr. Michael I. Okpara and Sir Francis Ibiam, former premier and governor of Eastern Nigeria respectively; and Supreme Court justice Sir Louis Mbanefo. Others included: the educator Dr. Alvan Ikoku; first republic minister Mr. K. O. Mbadiwe; as well as Mr. N. U. Akpan; Mr. Joseph Echeruo; Ekukinam-Basse; Chief Samuel Mbakwe; Chief Jerome Udoji; and Chief Margaret Ekpo.¹⁶

There is an Igbo adage that says "there is no smoke without fire". Another important question is: what must have triggered this unanimous decision from elites of old Eastern Region and the Igbo people in general? This unanimous decision will lead to the notion of 'a just cause' which is the second essential criterion of Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory.

4.1 Just Cause

The second important condition of Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory is that "a just

war must have a just cause”. The ethical justification of war considers the rationality of war having a just cause- *jus ad bellum* which is the primary tenet of just war theory. Hence, Saint Thomas Aquinas conceived the notion of 'a just cause' in different ways which can be self defense of people's life or territory, or attack to correct an injury suffered. In the light of the above, Biafra war has a just cause because it emanated in response to the orchestrated plan of General Yakubu Gowon's federal government to exterminate the Igbo race in a pogrom in the northern Nigeria after a counter bloody coup that assassinated the former Head of State, General Aguiyi-Ironsi in Ibadan on July 29, 1966. Thus, Biafra war is a war of defence to safeguard the life of the easterners especially the Igbos in Nigeria.

In addition, many Igbo army officers numbering about one hundred and ninety (190) and “thirty thousand civilian men, women, and children were slaughtered, hundreds of thousands were wounded, maimed, and violated, their homes and property looted and burned”.¹⁷ So, the Eastern Region were faced with the challenge of “resettling” about a million people who returned home from other parts of Nigeria for their safety which created a deep psychological trauma of depression and fear in the minds of the Igbos and well-meaning Nigerians.

Secondly, the failure of General Yakubu Gowon's federal government of Nigeria to implement “the Aburi Accord” to resolve the violence across the nation against the easterners mainly Igbos that informed this unanimous decision for the Igbos to secede from Nigeria. In the words of Chinua Achebe, “a government that failed to safeguard the lives of its citizens has no right for its allegiance”.

Looking at Nigeria's problem before and after the civil war from epistemic or ethical point of view, it is the British that ignited this fire that is burning in Nigeria right from time because of their selfish economic interests. More than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups that made Nigerian society were amalgamated and forced to live together as one country in 1914 by Sir Frederick Lugard. Thus, the introduction of “Divide and Rule” system of government by the British created the battle of domination among the different ethnic groups. The net result is corruption that gave rise to bloody coup, counter-coup and civil war.

However, the army officers that overthrew the government of Sir Abubakar Tafawaberewa in the first republic might not mean evil for Nigeria because if the British has enthroned well educated competent leaders in Nigeria, there would not be room for their action. The narrative of this episode changed when the British painted it as Igbo coup by over ambitious Igbo officers who wanted to take power by all means which created “venom of vengeance” against the Igbos by the northerners.

In fact, it is not justified from ethical and epistemic point of view to murder and overthrow a democratically elected government. But, a situation whereby corrupt and incompetent leaders are piloting the affairs of the state as it is evident in the first republic; anarchy and doom become the order of the day. The perpetrators of this injustice ought to be brought to

book instead of allowing it to escalate to another bloody coup nonetheless the pogrom of Igbo race that led to civil war. Britain under Harold Wilson's government and other world powers ought to have intervened to resolve the internal conflict instead of conniving with Nigeria military government to commit genocidal war against the Igbo race as a result of their selfish economic interests. Having considered this issue, it is good to examine the third essential condition or criterion of Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory.

4.2 Right Intention

Saint Thomas Aquinas conceives the third important condition of just war theory as right intention. Hence, his just war theory is aimed at lasting peace. Unlike the Nigeria-Biafra war that aimed at the total annihilation of Igbo race in order to keep Nigeria one, a just war considers the end in view of war which is geared towards making a lasting peace.

This is in line with the second primary tenet of just war theory- *jus in bello* which addresses the issue of right conduct in war. Hence, the tenet of *jus in bello* is meant to 'lessen brutality, bloodshed and destruction by looking at the future end of war'. Thus, *jus in bello* constitutes the law that governs warfare which must satisfy three basic principles: discrimination, proportionality and necessity.¹⁸

The principle of discrimination prohibits the killing of civilian or non combatant. It conceives that war is meant to be between the two armed forces of the combatant nations and not civilians. In addition, proportionality is another principle of *jus in bello* which stipulates that the means used in war must befit the ends of just war. In other words, it militates against the use of diabolical weapons like atomic or nuclear bomb, poisonous gas or sophisticated ammunitions that are catastrophic to human body including other practices that are detrimental to human beings like starvation, famine, rape, perfidy or terror. Besides, the principles of discrimination and proportionality are related because they militate against the killing of civilians.

In the same line of thought, the principle of necessity places a moral commitment 'on the combatants to choose the least harmful means or alternative possible in the pursuit of military goals'. Thus, the principle of necessity is connected to the principles of discrimination and proportionality by looking at the future end of war. St. Thomas Aquinas' just war theory and other just war theorists laid the ethical foundation for warfare in the international law. In the modern period, the tenet of *jus in bello* that addresses the law or treaties of war is codified in Geneva and Hague Conventions. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) is the humanitarian organization that is the custodian of Geneva Conventions for the execution of international humanitarian law of war.¹⁹ Their duty is to take care of victims of war; provide relief materials and other humanitarian assistance like medical services²⁰; educating people and creating awareness about the existence of international humanitarian laws of armed conflict including caring for the well being of the environment; observing and reporting of any alleged infringement of these international laws guiding warfare of international communities.

Thus, the violation of the humanitarian laws of war is a serious crime which is punishable

by law in the international court of justice, international criminal tribunal or national court. The combatants of warring nations have the moral obligation not to attack any means of transportation such as plane, ship, ambulance and so on bearing the signs (+) (C) of Red Cross during war. It is a war crime to attack any vehicle of transportation bearing these signs. It is important at this point to restate another basic tenet of just war- *just post bellum*.

4.3 Right Intention and *Jus Post Bellum*

Saint Thomas Aquinas' notion of lasting peace as the ultimate end of war implies another basic tenet of just war theory-*jus post bellum* which deals with after war settlement, reconciliation and rebuilding. Hence, it takes into consideration the issue of right ending of war. In other words, it deals with justice after war which includes: peace agreements or treaties, war crime trials and war reparation, rebuilding, reconciliation and so on.²¹

Hence, the tenet of *jus post bellum* is a sine qua non to amend the injured relationships that resulted to war as well as during war.²² It imposes a moral obligation on the victors to ensure that the vanquished are well resuscitated politically, financially or economically and otherwise in order to prevent future agitations that may give rise to another war.²³ Thus, it requires that war criminals be tried and punished.

But, this policy was not implemented in Nigeria-Biafra war. Nigeria-Biafra war is one of the bloodiest wars in history. There was great violation of human rights by Nigerian troops. Chinua Achebe expresses this idea thus: “the Nigeria air force pilots were particularly noteworthy for not respecting Geneva Convention resolutions describing civilian safe havens, such as hospitals, refugee camps and food distribution camps, and centers of religious worship.”²⁴

In addition, General Yakubu Gowon's policy of economic blockade gave rise to mass starvation of more than three millions of civilians mostly the vulnerable like infants, children and women. Many attacks on the humanitarian agencies that provide health care and other relief materials were neglected.

Again, the *jus post bellum* principle was not applied to end the Nigeria civil war because there were no peace negotiations neither by United Nations under the administration of U Thant as secretary general nor African Union. Even, General Gowon's speech on “no victor, no vanquished” at the eve of surrender is not reconciliatory but punitive.

The Civil War gave Nigeria a perfect and legitimate excuse to cast the Igbo in the role of treasonable felon, a wrecker of the nation... a banking policy was evolved which nullified any bank account which had been operated during the Civil War. This had the immediate result of pauperizing the Igbo middle class and earning a profit of £4million for the Federal Government Treasury.²⁵

It is very unfortunate that the Igbo people were unjustly treated after the civil war. For instance, every Igbo depositor in Nigeria bank before the war was given only twenty pounds after the war no matter the amount s/he had. Their landed properties in Port Harcourt were seized as abandoned properties and taken by indigenes. The same thing was applicable in the north.

The *jus post bellum* policy of reconciliation, rebuilding and reconstruction that will prevent further conflict were totally ignored. But, peace building and reconciliation that are endemic in *just post bellum* is important for lasting peace in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria played the lip service of launching the three Rs – for Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Rebuilding in the South East imitating the American Marshal Plan after the World War II that led to the reconstruction of Europe.²⁶ But, this policy was never implemented in the South East.

In addition, justice after war demands that war criminals be tried to addresses injustice and atrocities associated with war. Hence, Alex J. Bellamy rightly observes that “failure to address the war crimes on those who are grievously wronged by aggressions like genocide and other crimes against humanity will lead to the execution of further injustice on the innocents and victims of war”.²⁷ This is exactly what happened in Nigeria after the war. The Igbo people were pauperized through the economic policy of £20. Their properties were confiscated in the different parts of northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria like Port Harcourt.

Even up till now, the Igbos are marginalized politically, economically and other aspects of socio-political life in Nigeria. For instance, it is only the South East socio-political zone that has only five states. Today, the Igbos are still suffering the effect of civil war fifty-seven years after the war because the just war principle, *jus post bellum* was not implemented. In more recent time, herdsmen attack and killing of Igbo youths by the Nigeria military in Abia State by president Muhammadu Buhari in 2017 gave rise to further discord and agitation in South East in form of IPOB/ESN. Today the south eastern Nigeria that was once peaceful has become a hub of violence and insecurity.

Evaluation

Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory as codified in Geneva and Hague conventions in the modern period is tenable. However, the greater task lies in the implementation of it. Nations violate these laws in the execution of war. Nigeria-Biafra war is not an exception. But the only difference is that it is only in Biafra war that war criminals were not judged. The rationale for Gowon Federal Government embarking on war of genocide is to keep Nigeria one. One important question is: Does biased patriotism warrant ethnic cleansing of the whole Igbo race? This is what Roy Wilkins, the leader of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in America (NAACP), meant when he said to

Gowon, “the need to save the lives of thousand starving daily outweighed any military or political considerations”.²⁸ Besides, the crushing of the Igbos in the genocidal war does not solve or restore the problem of national disunity in Nigeria. The military rule that came into power through the first military coup and counter coup in 1966 brought about political instability in Nigeria. Unfortunately, Nigeria military men who were trained to protect the nation against external aggression took over power, and denied Nigeria the good leadership that is characteristic of national development. Nigeria political system after the civil war is characterized by series of coups and political killings to perpetuate themselves in office. It is very unfortunate that it is the same evil trend of incompetent and corrupt leaders after independence that are still ruling Nigeria up till this twenty-first century.

There is need for a positive change in Nigeria politics. One of the ways of ameliorating the ills of civil war and creating a strong bond in Nigeria is to restructure Nigeria confederation into regional government. Making every region independent will motivate them to work hard to generate resources for themselves in order to enhance a healthy competition instead of relying on federal for their survival on national allocations. Nigeria is not the biggest country in the world. United States of America for instance is made up of fifty states but each state is independent to generate their own resources. They pay taxes to federal to maintain the military and other important area of the country. Thus, resorting to regional government will go a long way to stop agitations from different areas to enhance peace and security in Nigeria.

Another important factor that is causing serious problem in the socio-political life of Nigeria is religion. The battle for domination between Islamic and Christian religions has affected every facet of Nigeria socio-political life. Boko Haram insurgency is wrecking many havocs in Nigeria today geared towards Islamizing or setting up an Islamic state in Nigeria. The recent violent activities of Fulani herds men are religiously motivated which pose serious security threat to Nigeria. It is against human right to impose one's religion on others because one of the fundamental human rights is freedom of worship. Besides, variety is the spice of life; so there is need for government to create an enabling environment for people to practice their different religions. Religious tolerance is endemic for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. In addition, justice is a noble ideal cherished by all men especially the poor against the rich. On this note, election and employment into different positions in Nigeria should not be motivated by religious or tribal sentiments. Rather they ought to be according to merit in order to bring about positive change for national development. There is also need for equitable allocation of resources to enhance peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This work has examined Saint Thomas Aquinas' just war theory vis-à-vis Nigeria-Biafra civil war. No human being is perfect. Every misfortune of life is an avenue for people to learn from their mistakes. Life is a lesson. The Igbo people are the major victims of this British amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria. Other regions in Nigeria have

experienced their own woes in many ways. For instance, there is serious violation of human rights and properties in the oil rich areas of Niger Delta many years after the civil war. Moreover, the Boko Haram insurgency has waged serious war by devastating people's lives and property for more than ten years in northern Nigeria. Even General Yakubu Gowon that led the Nigerian troops in Biafra war witnessed the assassination of many military officers from his Middle Belt region after the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed (a significant force in 1966 coup that ousted Aguiyi Ironsi and ushered in Yakubu Gowon's regime)²⁹ in bloody military coup by Col. Bukar Suka Dinka in 13 February, 1976. He also witnessed the mass assassination of his people in recent time by Fulani herdsmen. In fact, the problem of insecurity orchestrated by violent activities of Fulani herdsmen is experienced in many areas in Nigeria in more recent time including Western Nigeria.

Saint Aquinas' just war theory has established the rationale to wage war of defence against unjust aggressor. His third essential criterion of just war conform to the principle of *jus post bellum* of just war tradition which is neglected in Nigeria-Biafra war. There is the need to implement the principle of *jus post bellum* to undo the injustice meted out to the Igbos in Biafra war in order to bring lasting healing to the plight of civil war.

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