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Comparative Analysis of the Nigerian Civil War and the Chinese Civil War

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Abstract

Nigeria is a Federal Republic composed of 36 States, and a Capital Territory, with an elected President and a Bi-cameral Legislature. China boasts one of the world's most important ancient civilizations, but still manages to maintain a ferociously progressive modern landscape. From ancient imperial dynasties that were housed in the Forbidden Palace to the tightly controlled communist regime of modern day China, the country has had a fascinating culture and history that demands attention from the outside world. This paper with particular focus on the comparative analysis of the Nigerian Civil War and Chinese Civil War. This study attempts to look at the concepts of Nigeria: past, present and future and it went further to discuss the brief history of China. It also discusses the causes of the conflicts, the main actors and strategies, the outcomes and impacts. The study adopts the documentary method for gathering data from secondary sources and it concludes that these wars serve as important historical lessons on the consequences of internal strife and the complexities of nation-building.

Key Words: Nigerian, Civil War, Chinese, Comparative Analysis, History

Introduction

Nigeria is a Federal Republic composed of 36 States, and a Capital Territory, with an elected President and a Bi-cameral Legislature. It operates the Presidential system of Government with three distinct but complementary arms namely the Executive,

the Legislature and the Judiciary, each acting as a check on the other two.

The Executive arm of Government, at the Federal level, consists of the President, the Vice-president and other members of the Federal Executive Council, while at the State level, it is made up of the Governor, the

Deputy Governor and other members of the State Executive Council.

The Legislature is equally found at the Federal and State levels. The Federal Legislature comprises a 109- member Senate and a 360-member House of Representatives. The two, combined, is known as the National Assembly (the equivalent of the American Congress). At the State level, the Legislature is known as the House of Assembly.

The President, The Governor, their Deputies, as well as members of the Legislature at both Federal and State levels are elected, under the present constitution, for four years, renewable only once. The Senate President is the Head of the Federal Legislature.

The Judiciary interprets the laws and adjudicates in conflicts between the Executive and the Legislature. It carries out these functions through the various established courts. The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land, followed by the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Court, Magistrate Court, Area Court and Customary Court.¹

China boasts one of the world's most important ancient civilizations, but still manages to maintain a ferociously progressive modern landscape. From ancient imperial dynasties that were housed in the

Forbidden Palace to the tightly controlled communist regime of modern day China, the country has had a fascinating culture and history that demands attention from the outside world.²

Nigeria: Past, Present and Future

Long before the creation of the entity called Nigeria, the various peoples that existed independently then had established their own indigenous systems of administration. There were recognized political entities such as the Benin Empire, Kanem Bornu Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, Oyo Empire, to mention a few. The Empires and Kingdoms had established contact with one another and with other peoples, through trading activities.³

Earlier in the 19th Century, the British had conquered the different parts of the present Nigeria at different times, and established control and authority over them. These areas were grouped into Protectorates namely Lagos, Niger Coast (also known as Oil River Protectorate), and the Northern Protectorate. For ease of administration and control, the Northern Protectorate, and the Southern Protectorate (made up of Lagos and Niger Coast) were amalgamated in 1914 by the British. Thus come into existence the country presently known as NIGERIA.⁴

As time went on, British colonial rule, with its attendant alienation and subjugation of the indigenous people, resulted in agitation for self-government. The history of Nigeria was therefore dominated by 'struggle for freedom' between 1922 and 1959. Notable Nigerians like Sir Herbert Macaulay, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Chief Sire Ahmadou Bello, Chief Anthony Enahoro, to mention but a few, are known as the founders and fathers of Nigerian NATIONALISM.⁵

Given this struggle, the British gave some concessions to Nigerians. This gave rise to the series of constitutions that come into existence, to assuage the feelings of the people. The constitutions included the Clifford Constitution of 1922, the Richards Constitution of 1946, the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, and the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954.

Although, with these constitutions, Nigerians were allowed limited contributions in the affairs of their own land, this could not stop the continuous clamour for total independence from colonial rule which had engendered social sufferings, as well as discrimination in the areas of employment, education, health, recreational facilities, coupled with unjust and high taxation.

On 1st October 1960, Nigeria became self-governing from British colonial rule and was administered at the center by the Federal government and three regions Governments in the East, West and North of the country. In 1963, the Midwest Region was carved out of the Western Region making a federation of four Regions. During this First Republic, a parliamentary system of government was in operation. This lasted till January 1966.

The first military intervention in Nigeria occurred in January 1966 when the civilian government was overthrown in a military coup. This effectively marked the beginning and succession of military governments in the nation's political history. Military-rule continued till 1979 when the then Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo handed over power to the civilian government of President Shehu shagari.

In the second Republic of President Shehu shagari, Nigeria adopted the Presidential system of government with an Executive President as the Head of the Federal Government. The administration was in power until 1983 when it was overthrown in a coup and the military once again come into governance. Nigeria again witnessed another round of military governments until 1993 when General Ibrahim Babaginda the head of

the military government, put in place an interim civilian administration charged with conducting elections. This interim administration lasted for only three months when it was replaced in a palace coup by the military. The new military administration was headed by General Sani Abacha.

General Sani Abacha's Government ruled the country from 1993 to 1998 when the Head of State suddenly died in June 1998. It must be pointed out that during this particular regime, Nigeria faced tremendous opposition from the International Community over human rights abuses, culminating in Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth. Indeed, at this period, Nigeria was treated like a pariah nation, tolerated only by a few and abandoned by other countries, including her traditional allies like Britain and Canada.

With the sudden death of General Abacha in June 1998 General Abdulsalami Abubakar headed the new military administration, and was immediately confronted with the Herculean task of drawing Nigeria back from the brink of collapse and restoring her image. Admirably, this administration rose up to the occasion. The issue of human rights abuses was immediately addressed with the release of all political detainees and prisoners. The Government also announced and

implemented a political transition program that ushered in a new civilian government in May 1999. Precisely in less than one year. Thus, General Abubakar administration was able to restore democracy back in Nigeria. Within that period too, Nigeria gradually regained her voice in the comity of nations. The administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was inaugurated on May 29, 1999. Simultaneously, executive governors were also sworn-in in the 36 states constituting the present Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁶

In the Presidential System of Government that is now in place, there is a National Assembly (equivalent of US Congress) comprising two chambers namely the Senate and House of Representatives. There is a State Assembly in each of the 36 States. Also there are 774 local governments throughout the Federation representing the third-tier of government.

It is evident from the above political history that the military had dominated power for close to 30 years. The country is still undergoing a learning process and will continue to strive to nurture democracy and all its institutions to full development. The nation has come to accept that civilian democracy is the form of government that can guarantee full participation by the entire

citizenry, ensure good governance, rapid progress and socio-economic development.

Since democracy was restored in the country there has been a gradual and impressive transformation of the political landscape. In 1999 only 3 political parties contested elections in Nigeria. But in 2003, 25 new political parties were registered by the national Electoral body, bringing to 28 the number of political parties that contested the 2003 elections.

The key test to the political future of Nigeria still lies in an enduring civilian governance. Elections conducted by civilian administration in 1965 and 1983 had failed and led to military interventions. Nigerians are, therefore, now strongly determined, more than ever, to lay a solid foundation for an enduring democracy that would be the pride of future generations of Nigerians. The present civilian government has shown its commitment to even development of the country and cases of marginalization in certain parts of the country.

Today, Nigeria enjoys peace inspired by periodic crises, because consultation in handling issues. The administration is determined to transform the country, in line with democratic principles, into a land of

opportunity, equity, of government's use of dialogue and progress and prosperity for all.⁷

Brief History of China

China is arguably the cradle of Asian civilization, as evidence of human settlements along the Yellow River Valley date back thousands of years. Early China was dominated by feudal lords and warring areas, including the Shang and Zhou dynasties, which were among the most famous early rulers of China.

The country became unified by its First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, in 221 BC. Fifteen years later, China embraced a new dynasty led by Emperor Han, which rose to be the first golden age for the country. Standardized measurement, currency, written symbols, and the invention of significant products like paper and gunpowder helped China experience a period of rapid growth.⁸

For nearly 2,000 years, an imperial system was used in China, until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. This wasn't an overnight surprise though, as decades prior to their demise colonial powers had begun to tear away parts of the vast empire, such as Hong Kong's succession to the British, and Taiwan's succession to Japan.

The Republic of China was founded in 1911 by Sun Yat-Sen, but turbulence followed as the Kuomintang (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) initiated conflicts with each other. KMT eventually gained control of Eastern China and prior to the Second World War, industrialized, strengthened and globalized cities like Shanghai which quickly became Asia's grandest metropolis.⁹

During the war with Japan, China ceded much of its northern territory to the Japanese. Brutal massacres occurred, but with the combined KMT and CCP forces, plus allied assistance, China threw off Japanese occupation in 1945. Not out of the woods, civil war between the democratic and communist parties began almost immediately, lasting until 1949. The KMT were defeated and fled to Taiwan. Meanwhile, on mainland China, Mao Zedong's communist party created the People's Republic of China on October 1.

Despite an up and down economy under Mao's rule, China remains a communist state even today. Nevertheless, following President Mao's death in 1978, new leaders began to establish Special Economic Zones and operate decentralized economic policies that helped cities like Shenzhen, Guangzhou

and Shanghai develop into powerful market economies. Even though these areas make up the country's strongest local economies, China is, politically and governmentally, one of the world's strictest communist nations.

Tourists will be able to find information about China's history through numerous sites most of which are in Beijing. Explore the Forbidden City (4 Jingshan, Qianjie, Beijing 100009) to learn more about preceding dynasties, or take some time to see the National Museum (22 Xijiaomin Alley, Xicheng, Beijing). The Presidential Palace (Changjiang Road, Nanjing, Jiangsu) in Nanjing takes visitors back to China's Nationalist government, which now thrives upon the island nation of Taiwan.¹⁰

Culture

One of China's most alluring aspects is its intriguing, unique culture. There are many branches of extravagance within the country, so tourists should set aside plenty of time to explore them all. Standing as one of the four ancient civilizations, China showcases an abundance of ancient skills including calligraphy, painting, music and martial arts. Even the much of the cuisine can be dated back to one of several dynastic rulers.

Kung Fu is commonly recognized throughout the globe, originating and still widely

practiced within China. Chinese folk dancing and elaborate puppet shows have an important place in modern society too. Major festivals and holidays are renowned for hosting these ancient-origin cultural performances. Also, Chinese culture can be seen through the unique architectural designs of building design. Temples, palaces, pagodas, bell towers and more provide fascinating insights into the beauty of China.¹¹

The Nigerian Civil War and the Chinese Civil War

The Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War) and the Chinese Civil War were two significant conflicts that shaped the history and development of their respective nations. While these conflicts occurred in different times and contexts, they share similarities and differences in terms of causes, main actors, outcomes, and impacts on the countries involved. This essay will delve into a comparative analysis of the Nigerian Civil War and the Chinese Civil War to highlight their key similarities and differences.

Causes of the Conflicts

The Nigerian Civil War, which took place between 1967 and 1970, was primarily triggered by political, ethnic, and economic

factors. The secession of the southeastern region of Nigeria, led by the Igbo ethnic group under the name of Biafra, due to perceived marginalization and discrimination by the central government, was a key catalyst for the conflict. In contrast, the Chinese Civil War, which lasted from 1927 to 1949, was primarily a struggle between the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong, over ideological differences and control of China's future direction.¹²

Main Actors and Strategies

In the Nigerian Civil War, the main actors were the Nigerian government led by General Yakubu Gowon and the secessionist Biafran government led by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. The conflict saw the extensive use of military force, blockades, and siege tactics.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Chinese Civil War saw the Nationalists and Communists engaging in large-scale military campaigns, guerrilla warfare, and political mobilization to gain support from the Chinese population.¹³

Outcomes and Impacts

The Nigerian Civil War ended with the defeat of the secessionist Biafran forces and the reintegration of the region back into Nigeria.

The conflict resulted in significant loss of life, estimated to be between one to three million people, as well as economic devastation and long-lasting ethnic tensions in the country. In contrast, the Chinese Civil War culminated in the victory of the Communist forces, leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The war resulted in the exile of the Nationalist government to Taiwan and the implementation of socialist policies under Mao's leadership.¹⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nigerian Civil War and the Chinese Civil War were two pivotal conflicts that had profound impacts on the respective nations. While both conflicts were driven by internal divisions and power struggles, they differed in terms of their ideological underpinnings and eventual outcomes. These wars serve as important historical lessons on the consequences of internal strife and the complexities of nation-building. Understanding these conflicts can shed light on the challenges and opportunities that arise in the aftermath of civil wars and revolutions.

By comparing and contrasting the Nigerian Civil War and the Chinese Civil War, we gain insights into the diverse paths that nations take in the face of conflict and the enduring

legacies that shape their societies for generations to come.

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