



# 2016 CSS MUN V Conference Background Guide



## Advanced Historic Security Council Nigerian Civil War

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### **Important Changes in Council Procedure**

This historic Security Council will take place in June 1968. Delegates should keep this information in mind when writing their position papers and participating in debate. Any event after this date should be disregarded.

Since the topic of the Nigerian Civil War is so large in scope we believe the best way to discuss our two topics would be to split this council into two sub-committees; so that is exactly what is going to happen. At the beginning of the day the Security Council will meet together with all double-delegations present. This is in order for each delegation to present an opening statement; please prepare 1-minute long speech briefly summarizing their country's position and arguments on the subject of the Nigerian Civil War and Biafran Airlift. Once each delegation has delivered an opening statement, the council will split and each double delegation will be separated between the two sub-committees. **Each sub-committee will function as if it was a full-sized committee or council.**

Debate and discourse will occur normally, and draft resolutions will be passed as normal. The only difference is that resolutions are *not* to be put immediately into effect, but rather are considered as draft resolutions for the larger council. At the end of the day the sub-committees will reconvene, bringing with them their resolution(s) which they passed for each topic. Then the entire Security Council will hold authorship speeches and vote on the draft resolutions from each sub-committee. Those that are passed are put into effect, and those that fail in the larger council fail as a traditional draft resolution fails.

### **Background**

In order to understand the Nigerian Civil War, one must first understand the long and complicated history of British Nigeria and the First Nigerian Republic. In the late 18th century, slavery was the largest source of revenue for the Nigerian economy, and Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, was the largest trade port in the area with thousands of slaves being bought and sold each year. This system began to collapse when the British enacted the Slave Trade Act of 1807. This act declared that, "the *African* Slave Trade [...] is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful."<sup>11</sup> Though some ships tried to escape the ban, the majority observed it and slave trade in Nigeria began a long and steady decline.

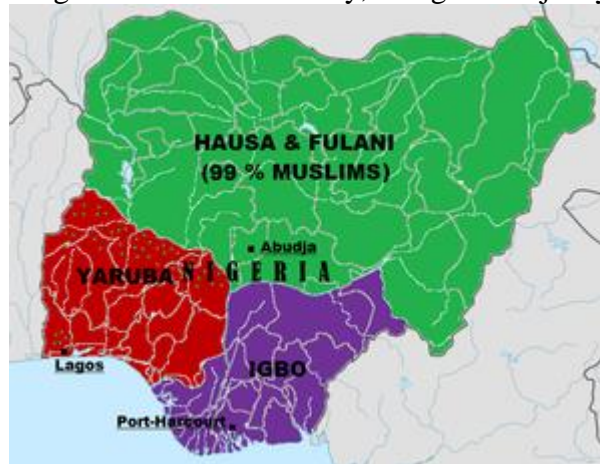
This, however, gave way to the decline of the great powers in Africa, such as the Benin Empire, and therefore gave rise to British rule in West Africa. Throughout the next 100 years the British tightened their grip on the whole of West Africa: seizing cities, increasing diplomatic power, and controlling trade. This surge of British power came to its height in 1897, when an armed British consul attempted to visit the Oba (king) of Benin and was killed. The British then responded by arresting and deposing the Oba, and then razing the capital city to the ground<sup>12</sup>.

With the largest empire in the area defeated, the British were able to combine the Crown Protectorates of northern and southern Nigeria into one colony in 1914, called the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria<sup>13</sup>. However, the borders of Nigeria were drawn such that three groups of people, the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo, and the Yoruba, were amalgamated into one country without



regard for their ancient territorial boundaries. As a result of this blatant disregard for tribal boundaries, Nigeria “has remained a seething pool of diverse — and often conflicting — peoples.”<sup>[4]</sup>

By the beginning of World War II, the ethnic boundaries within Nigeria were set with the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north, the predominantly Christian Igbo in the Southeast, and the half-Christian, half-Muslim Yoruba spread throughout the entire country, being the majority



population in Lagos, the capital of Nigeria<sup>[5]</sup>.

In order to effectively administer and rule such a large area, the British instituted “Indirect Rule”, a system in which native chieftains and rulers were given the right and ability to rule Nigeria if they obeyed British rules and laws. In the North, the Hausa-Fulani were able to keep their ancient traditions, as they were traditionally ruled by Kings and Chieftains. The Yoruba had the same rights and rules, however, the Igbo had no powerful or important administrators, and therefore, the chiefs which Britain had appointed, were not respected or held in high regard by the Igbo. However, in the mixed areas of Nigeria around the borders of each nation, “small groups were forcefully incorporated into larger political units and often ruled by foreign Fulani.”<sup>[6]</sup> Indirect rule forced various ethnicities in Nigeria to incorporate against their will, and only served to strengthen national divides in Nigeria.

Throughout the early and mid-20th century, devolution of power was the primary concern for the British government, and thus a power vacuum was created because of the administrative positions that the British left behind. The power void effectively helped the more affluent chieftains to seize power, and, “Ethnic rivalries led to the situation in which energies were directed at promoting regional rather than national unity.”<sup>[7]</sup> As the British withdrew power, the move to independence for Nigeria became more and more realistic, but it didn’t become a reality until the 1960s when the First Nigerian Republic was established. It was a relatively modern democracy with a multiparty parliamentary system, and, “was indeed regarded as a beacon of hope for democracy.”<sup>[8]</sup>

There were some serious fundamental problems with the burgeoning republic. First and foremost, the majority of the power in the government was controlled by the Hausa-Fulani in the North, but most of the natural resources, including oil, were controlled by the Igbo in the South.



Another flaw in this system was that political power was based on regional population and opinion, with the majority opinion taking all the power. Immediately, three major parties formed in order to seize power in each of the regions, each formed based on their respective ethnicity. The three parties were the National People's Congress (Hausa/Fulani), the Action Group (Yoruba), and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (Igbo).

In 1964 the first national elections were to be held, but many Nigerians in the government, as well as common people, felt that the election committee was corrupt or untrustworthy; therefore, a new party was needed to supervise the elections in order to uphold their integrity. Ultimately, the army interfered in the elections and tipped them in favor of the much larger, power hungry regional parties in Nigeria such as the NCNC. The NPC retained power while the West began to decline into war. Soon enough, the military held a coup, and the First Nigerian Republic collapsed on January 15, 1966<sup>[8]</sup>.

For a year and a half afterwards, Nigeria experienced a state of political chaos as another military coup took place, and violence against Igbo Christians increased. The first coup, the one which overthrew the First Nigerian Republic, was put into action by General Kaduna Nzeogwu, and the Igbo General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi took power soon afterwards. A few months later, another coup took place, but this time the general who led it was General Yakubu Gowon, a Hausa-Fulani<sup>[9]</sup>. Unfortunately, the first coup led to a large amount of resentment for the Igbo living in the North because of the "mixing" that took place in Nigeria's colonial period. As a result of the resentment between the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo, an "Igbo genocide" started in May 1966 and didn't end until the end of the war, in 1970. This final strain in relations has been considered by many to be, "the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, and resulted in the secession of eastern Nigeria [Biafra] from the Nigerian federation."<sup>[10]</sup>

Due to corruption in the elections, the genocides occurring in the North, and the murder of many politicians, the Igbo Colonel and acting military governor Odumegwu Ojukwu and the southern parliament proclaimed the secession of the Republic of Biafra from Nigeria on May 30, 1967. Ojukwu became the leader of Biafra from 1967 to 1970. Many countries recognized Biafra's struggle for independence and the great injustices which had occurred, but only five



nations officially recognize Biafra as a state: Tanzania, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and

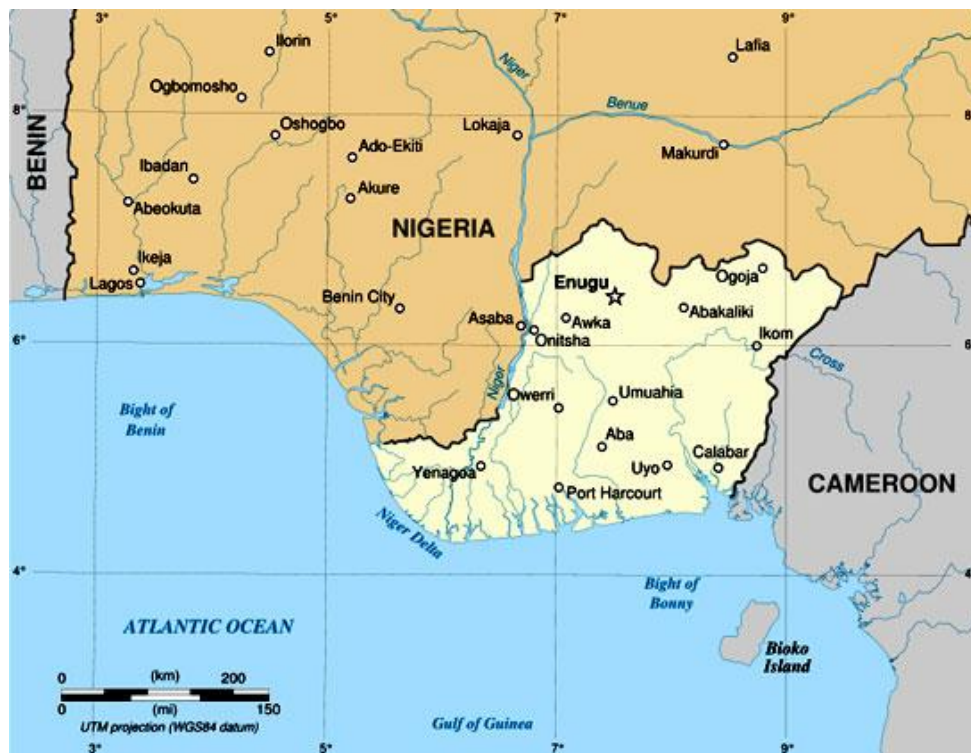


Haiti.<sup>[11]</sup>

In the following two months Nigeria tried to renegotiate and incorporate Biafra through diplomacy, but the diplomatic talks quickly broke down. The ethnic differences were too great, and recent events had broken down any hope of peace between the two states. After only two months, diplomacy failed, and on July 6, 1967 Nigeria launched a full scale invasion in order to reclaim Biafran territory and to lead the Igbo people away from Biafra and back into Nigeria.

### **Military Intervention and Security Concerns:**

Ever since the beginning of the war, Biafra and Nigeria have been trading blows each and every day. Every time Nigeria has taken territory Biafra has fought hard to either regain that territory or to acquire some new territory in Nigeria. However, in recent months the Nigerian military has made many important advances into Biafra, conquering major cities and pushing back the Biafran military.



On July 6, 1967 the Nigerian military initiated the invasion of Biafra by advancing into the North of the country with the express goal of seizing the Biafran capital of Enugu. Within 6 days the Nigerian military had made its way to Enugu and managed to seize the city center, but were repelled by Biafran forces soon after. There were reports of Biafran soldiers purposefully inflicting wounds on themselves and intentionally catching malaria in order to flee before the Nigerian army arrived. By 12 July the Nigerian army had established a foothold in Biafra just north of the capital.

At the same time the Biafran military officials were elected to invade Nigeria in order to dissuade further military action. Like the Nigerian military before them, the Biafran army decided that the prime target would be the Nigerian capital of Lagos. From late July until October the Biafran invasion of the Midwest took place, but it failed to accomplish its goal of capturing Lagos. They did make important advances into Nigeria, but were stopped at Asaba, a city just west of Biafra. It was here in the invasion that the first massacre of the war took place at the city of Okene, where 800 Hausa were killed by the Biafran military.

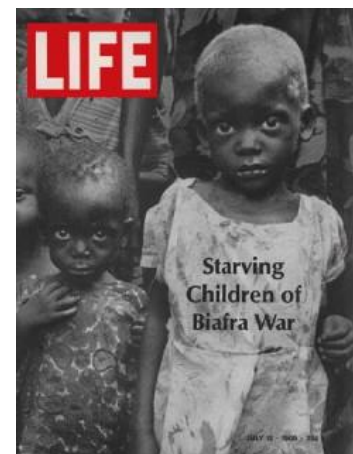
At the same time, Operation Tiger Claw, a Nigerian operation, was initiated with the purpose of taking the city of Calabar in southern Biafra. The Nigerian army threw much of its resources at Calabar, and the Biafran and Nigerian military clashed for most of October until Nigeria eventually overwhelmed the Biafran defenses. Even mercenaries could not stop the advance of the Nigerian military, and the Biafran forces at Calabar surrendered on October 20, 1967. These Biafran soldiers became the first POWs in the Nigerian Civil War.



On January 2, 1968, Nigerian forces crossed the River Niger at Idah after trying and failing to cross the river at Onitsha. The battle for Onitsha would take another 2 months to come to fruition as the Biafran army put up a vicious resistance against the Nigerian army, but after many skirmishes and towns were taken, the Nigerian army arrived at Onitsha on March 20, 1968. After 2 days of brutal fighting and thousands of casualties on either side, the Biafran army had to regroup. The Nigerian army was simply larger and better equipped, and thus the Biafran army had very little chance to win this battle, but their resistance was fierce and unforgiving.



On March 31, 1968, the Biafran military scored a tactical victory by destroying some of the supplies of the Nigerian army, and as a result one of the top commanders for the Nigerian army was reprimanded and taken out of combat.



There was one city that Nigeria needed to take in order to completely crush Biafran resistance: Port Harcourt. Port Harcourt is a very large city whose economy boomed after crude



oil was discovered in Biafra, and thus it serves as the single largest oil refining city in all of Nigeria, and it is a great boon to the Biafran economy. In addition, Nigeria was cut off from the oil supply from Port Harcourt when the war began, and one of their primary goals was to take this important city back. On March 8, 1968, the invasion of Port Harcourt began, and the battle still rages as the fate of Biafra hangs in the balance.

### **Biafran Airlift and Famine in Biafra:**

The living conditions in Biafra during the war were deplorable. After the capture of Enugu, Biafra was a tiny strip of land and a vast refugee camp. It was estimated that over 3.1 million Igbo were killed in the genocide, along with the hundreds of thousands that died of starvation. It was a full blown humanitarian crisis and sparked one of the largest airlifts in history.



In 1968, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria (FMGN) enacted a land and sea blockade that cut Biafra off from the rest of the world. This blockade was one of the main reasons for the widespread famine, as Biafra didn't have the infrastructure or resources to feed such a large population without external support. The FMGN even declared that starvation was a legitimate weapon of war and that it intended to use it as such. Ojukwu knew support from the international community was essential if Biafra was to have a chance at independence, so he reached out to a Geneva-based PR company, Mark Press. This company was the first to send journalists to Biafra and really uncover the atrocities that were taking place in the region. The most infamous photos were of children suffering from *Kwashiorkor*; a form of malnutrition/starvation caused by severe protein deficiency. In these photos children are shown naked and with bloated bellies, almost at the point of death. This flood of photographs and reports coming out of Biafra prompted many to call for international aid and intervention. This was the beginning of the Biafran Airlift.





The Biafran Airlift was an extremely complex operation that lasted over two years and involved over 20 different NGO's and countries. Religious organizations took the lead in providing aid, as many countries were reluctant to contribute because of the political implications. Major powers such as the USSR and Great Britain supported Nigeria, and because Biafra was a sovereign state, it was not in many countries best interests to support Biafra. Even the Secretary-General of the UN at the time, U Thant, did not support the airlifts. The main contributors to the evacuation were Joint Church Aid, OXFAM, ICRC, Save the Children Fund, World Council of Churches, France, Portugal, and the U.S.A.

Almost all the aircrafts were civilian piloted, operated, and maintained. The cargo ships left mainly from the Portuguese colony of Sao Tome, and landed at the only functional airstrip in Biafra: Uli (also known as "Airstrip Annabelle"). At the height of the airlift, Uli became the second busiest airport in Africa, after Johannesburg. All flights were made at night, because of the eminent threat of FMGN planes, seeing that the FMGN had completely banned the airlift operations. Even then, 15-20 flights were made every night, each flight carrying tons of food. It is estimated that 1.5 to 2 million people became reliant on the food brought in from these operations. Other than food, the cargo ships also transported fuel for cooking and transportation and salt. On return trips, materials and goods for export sale were carried out, along with children in need of medical attention. By the end of the war in January 1970, millions of pounds of supplies had been sent to Biafra. The Biafran airlift helped save the lives of millions of people, and laid the groundwork for modern humanitarian organizations, such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).

### **Important Countries and NGOs Involved:**

**Great Britain:** Because Nigeria was once a British Colony, and is still part of the Commonwealth, Britain is providing an enormous amount of support to the NMG for the war effort. The U.K. has provided the bulk of weaponry and ammunition to the Nigerian military during the conflict so far.

**France:** France is Biafra's main supporter, and not only provided humanitarian aid, but also has supplied the Biafran resistance with weaponry.

**United States:** Officially, the U.S. is neutral in the conflict, but the majority of the NGO's working in Biafra are American. So although the government is neutral, the population is supporting Biafra.

**Soviet Union:** The USSR is a huge supporter of Nigeria, and has provided a large amount of weaponry and ammunition during the war.

**Joint Church Aid:** JCA was fundamental in the creation of the airlift. They are the main coordinating body for this operation, and became to be known by the media as "Jesus Christ Airlines" because of their initials.



**International Committee of Red Cross:** The Red Cross is playing a very complex role in this conflict because, though they have provided mass amounts of food, they have not participated in the actual airlifts. This is because they have complied with the NMG's ban on the airlift, and are not directly recognizing Biafra's sovereignty.



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