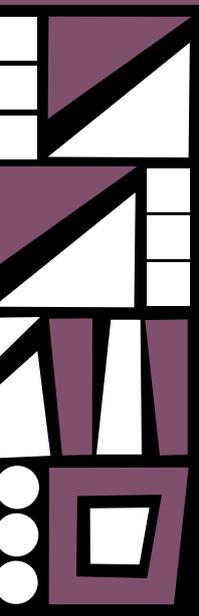




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THE BATTLE OF ENUGU: A HISTORICAL REVIEW AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

The battle of Enugu constitutes one of the fiercest battles in the history of the Nigerian civil war. Shortly after Nigeria gained its political independence, the country witnessed a civil war and series of battles which had great impact on the people. One of such battles is the battle of Enugu which was fought between September and October 1967. This study is an examination of that battle and its implications on Nigeria. There are many studies on the Nigerian Civil War, but none has specifically studied the Battle of Enugu. This study, drawing extensively on secondary sources, demonstrates that although the nation endured immense hardship and agony during the battle and Biafra lost its capital, Enugu, the fall of Enugu did not signify the collapse of Biafra itself.

Keywords: Battle of Enugu, Biafra, Nigerian Civil War, Postcolonial Nigeria, Military History, War and Society, Nigerian History, 1967 Conflict, Civil War Studies.

Introduction

Nigeria's independence, gained on October 1, 1960, came with high expectations that the country would emerge as a model of postcolonial stability. However, the social, economic, and political realities that unfolded during the First Republic revealed deep-seated challenges. Among these was the Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from July 6, 1967, to January 15, 1970. The war reflected the contradictions within the capitalist system as traditional elites, the mercantile bourgeoisie, and the emerging middle class struggled to transition from colonialism to new forms of postcolonial domination shaped by global capitalism.¹

The outbreak of a civil war soon after independence underscored the entrenched ethnic and political divisions—divisions that had been reinforced by colonial policies of separation and control.² The conflict, which pitted the Federal Military Government of Nigeria against the secessionist Eastern Region, represented the culmination of a series of turbulent events that began with the political crisis and military coups of January 1966. Although the Nigerian Civil War has attracted extensive scholarly attention, the specific Battle of Enugu remains underexplored.³ This study, therefore, examines the

¹ *Africa Research Group, The Other Sides of Nigeria's Civil War* (April 1970), 3.

² A. Odoemene, "The Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, 1967–1970: Reconsidering a 'Rejected' History," in *Perspectives in African History*, ed. C. B. N. Ogbogbo (Ibadan: BookWright Publishers, 2011), 91.

³ For studies on the Nigerian Civil War, see E. Uchendu, "Recollections of Childhood Experiences during the Nigerian Civil War" (2007); J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); P. Baxter, "Biafra: The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970," *Africa @ War* 16 (2014); Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012); A. J. Folade, *The Nigerian Civil*

Battle of Enugu in detail, analysing how the confrontation unfolded through a series of air raids and bombardments that culminated in the eventual fall of the city. Unlike previous works, this study focuses on the intensity of the battle—the staccato bursts of gunfire, aerial bombardments, and the resulting destruction of buildings and infrastructure—thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of this crucial episode in the war.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have advanced diverse theoretical perspectives in their attempts to explain the underlying causes of warfare, encompassing political, sociological, and economic interpretations. This study is anchored in the economic theory of conflict, which contends that wars are seldom fought purely for ideological or ethnic reasons but are often motivated by the pursuit of material gain. According to this perspective, political and military elites frequently instigate or sustain conflicts as instruments for consolidating power, capturing wealth, and controlling strategic resources. In this sense, warfare becomes not only a contest of arms but also an economic enterprise—one that enables ruling classes to appropriate public resources, deepen social inequalities, and perpetuate systems of domination at the expense of the wider populace.⁴

Within this theoretical framework, the Nigerian Civil War can be understood as a manifestation of the economic motivations that often underlie armed conflicts, where political and military elites pursued control over strategic resources under the guise of national unity and self-determination. In this context, the conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Biafra was deeply rooted in the postcolonial struggle over the control and distribution of economic resources—such as cocoa, cotton, groundnuts, housing, and industries. This contest reflected not merely a military confrontation but also the enduring legacies of colonial resource politics and the competing visions of nation-building in post-independence Nigeria, where economic interests often superseded human welfare.⁵

Watts’s arguments maintain that the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War must ultimately be understood within the context of the contradictory centripetal and centrifugal forces produced by the disintegration of the regional economic base and the simultaneous centralizing tendencies generated by the rise of petroleum production. In other words, as Nigeria’s political economy shifted from agriculture-based regional production to oil-cantered national revenue, new tensions emerged between regional autonomy and federal consolidation, setting the stage for conflict.⁶ Similarly, Ekundare affirms the economic interpretation of the war’s origins, contending that the principal motive for the

War, 1967–1970: A Revolution? (Ibadan: University Press, 2011), and S. F. C. Daly, *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime and the Nigerian Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), among many others.

⁴ T. T. Ityonzughul, “The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: Issues and Perspectives,” *Romanian Journal of Historical Studies* 7, no. 1–2 (2024): 4.

⁵ S. I. Ugbejili and T. T. Ityonzughul, “The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: Historicising the Social Dimension,” in *History, Globalization and Relations in Africa: Festschrift in Honour of Okpeh O. Okpeh*, ed. P. I. Ukase, S. I. Ugbejili, B. J. Audu, and E. T. Ikpanor (Lagos: Integrity Publishers, 2018), 442.

⁶ M. Watts, *Silent Violence: Food, Famine, and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 383.

conflict lay in the attempt of the Eastern Region to secede under the name of Biafra—a region endowed with vast economic resources, including palm produce, fertile farmlands, textile industries, and oil wells. His view underscores how economic endowments and the struggle for control over them became catalysts for political rupture and armed confrontation.⁷

In a related vein, Umo offers a complementary but nuanced perspective, suggesting that the Biafrans perceived themselves as a persecuted people seeking self-determination. Yet, he observes that political and social dynamics deeply complicated the economic issues at play. For instance, regional rivalries over development projects revealed a pervasive sense of competition and grievance: if the North established a new tin smelter, the West felt marginalized unless included in similar ventures; if the Western Region built a new technical institute, the East immediately demanded one as well. Such examples illustrate how regional jealousies, distributive inequalities, and perceptions of exclusion amplified economic tensions and fuelled political fragmentation.⁸

Whatever polemics surround the historiography of the war, it remains evident that the fear of ethnic domination, the politicization of ethnicity, struggles over resource control, and competition among the political elite were central to the conflict's outbreak. These interlocking factors—economic, political, and ethnic—collectively shaped the background and dynamics of the Nigerian Civil War, transforming it from a regional dispute into a national crisis of statehood and identity.

The Emergence of Enugu as the Capital of Nigeria's Eastern Region

The emergence of Enugu as the capital of Eastern Nigeria can be described as a child of circumstance. The area that became Enugu was among the last Igbo communities to come under British control. Before colonial penetration, the present-day Enugu town consisted of extensive farmlands belonging to the Nike, Ngwo, and Akegbe peoples. European presence in the area began in 1903 when a British geologist, under the direction of the Imperial Institute in London, led an expedition across Southern Nigeria in search of valuable mineral resources. The discovery of coal in the Enugu area marked a turning point in its history and laid the foundation for its rapid development.

By 1917, Enugu had acquired a distinct administrative status under the name Enuugwu-Ngwo, later shortened to Enugu in 1928 to distinguish the township from Ngwo village in Udi Division. By 1929, Enugu had expanded sufficiently to be designated the headquarters of the Southern Provinces, which comprised much of the Igbo heartland. Following the division of the Southern Protectorate in 1939, Enugu became the headquarters of the newly created Eastern Provinces, and later, in 1951, the capital of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The town retained this status until 1967, when it briefly became the capital of the short-lived Republic of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War.

⁷ R. O. Ekundare, *Economic History of Nigeria, 1860–1960* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1973), 13.

⁸ A. A. Umo, "Economic Developments and Policies in Post-Civil War Nigeria" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1978), 51.

Background to the Battle of Enugu

The failure of the Federal Government to implement the Aburi Accord and its subsequent creation of twelve states emboldened the Biafran leadership to challenge Nigeria's political and military authority. These developments became a catalyst for Biafran offensives into the Mid-West, Calabar, and the Delta regions.⁹ Under Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, the demand for Biafra's independence intensified. Many Igbo people supported either a peaceful dissolution of the Nigerian federation or, if necessary, an outright war to secure Biafran sovereignty. Consequently, the Republic of Biafra was formally declared on May 30, 1967.

In response, the Federal Military Government under General Yakubu Gowon launched what it termed a "police action" to suppress the secession. However, this limited intervention quickly escalated into a full-scale civil war.¹⁰ Enugu, serving as the capital and administrative heart of the new Biafran Republic, soon became a key military target.¹¹ To the Nigerian government, Enugu symbolized the epicentre of the rebellion; capturing it was believed to be essential to ending the secessionist movement.¹² This perception was further fuelled by the lingering belief that the January 15, 1966 coup, often mischaracterized as an Igbo conspiracy to dominate Nigeria, had its roots in Eastern Nigeria—although in reality, it did not occur in Enugu.¹³

The Battle of Enugu thus became a crucial confrontation between Nigerian and Biafran forces, centred on control of the Biafran capital. The Federal Government's military campaign was guided by a seven-point strategy, one of whose cardinal objectives was the destruction of Enugu.¹⁴ This strategic directive effectively set the stage for a major offensive against the Biafran stronghold.

Preparation for Military Campaign in Enugu

After the fall of Nsukka to forces under the command of Lt. Col. Olusegun Obasanjo, Ojukwu recognized that Enugu would be the next likely target. Although the civil war is conventionally dated from May 30, 1967, the campaign that culminated in the Battle of Enugu ran from 12 September to 4 October 1967. On the federal side, the 1st Division, commanded by Lt. Col. Mohammed Shuwa, launched Operation Unicord, a programme intended to crush Biafran resistance and bring about the

⁹ Michael Gould, *The Biafran War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria, 1967–1970* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 82.

¹⁰ S. F. C. Daly, *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime and the Nigerian Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 52.

¹¹ F. Ugochukwu, "The Nigerian Civil War and Its Media: Groping for Clues," *Media, War & Conflict* 3, no. 2 (August 2010): 183.

¹² O. S. Osadola and S. B. Asiyani, "The Nigeria War of Unity, 1967–1970: Strategies and Diplomacy," *Polit Journal: Scientific Journal of Politics* 2, no. 3 (2022): 147.

¹³ Frederick Forsyth, *The Biafra Story: The Making of an African Legend* (Barnsley, England: Pen and Sword Books, 2015), 37.

¹⁴ E. Ezeani, *In Biafra Africa Died: The Diplomatic Plot* (London: Veritas Lumen Publishers, 2012), 166.

rapid capture of Enugu¹⁵—a victory the Federal command confidently expected to achieve within days.¹⁶

The federal advance, however, was delayed at Nsukka by a Biafran diversionary offensive. On 9 August 1967, Biafran forces invaded the Mid-West in a bold move intended to seize the strategic initiative, draw federal troops southward, and thereby blunt the attack on Enugu.¹⁷ Col. Victor Banjo led the invasion partly in the hope of winning local support and, if possible, capturing major urban centres such as Benin, Ibadan, or even Lagos.¹⁸ Despite this temporary Biafran success, the Federal Government organized a four-phase campaign to suppress the secession. Capturing Enugu remained the first priority,¹⁹ and reinforcements drawn from the Lagos garrison helped to turn the tide. On the Biafran side, Col. Alexander Madiebo was tasked with Enugu's defence, but the overrunning of the Nsukka sector and the Federal capture of the strategic Opi junction exposed Enugu's vulnerability and placed the town within effective artillery and small-arms range.

To expand its manpower, the Federal Government mobilized thousands of ex-servicemen: roughly 7,000 reservists were called up and four additional battalions raised. Recruitment drives extended into the Nigerian Police Force, and civilians received training in civil-defence duties. To sustain national morale and legitimize the campaign, federal propaganda²⁰ framed the intervention as a necessary act to preserve the nation's unity. Slogans such as "To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done" and public exhortations attributed to General Yakubu Gowon — for example, calls to "Go on with One Nigeria"—were widely used to rally support for the offensive against Enugu.

The Battle of Enugu

The Battle of Enugu began on 12 September 1967, marked by a combined offensive of the Federal artillery and the Nigerian Air Force (NAF). Federal troops, armed primarily with small arms and limited anti-tank weapons, advanced cautiously toward Enugu, maintaining close formation for protection. Their approach brought Enugu within effective firing range, and the ensuing bombardment was intense and destructive. The Biafran forces responded with counter-attacks, deploying their aging Red Devil tanks—pre-Second World War French armoured carriers.²¹ Though imposing in appearance, these machines were slow, difficult to manoeuvre, and highly vulnerable to anti-tank fire and close infantry assaults.²² Despite their efforts, the relentless Federal advance forced Biafran troops to retreat, felling trees to block roads in a desperate bid to delay their opponents.

¹⁵ See O. N. John et al., "The Nigerian Civil War: Historicising the Battle for Onitsha, 1967–1970," *Icheke Journal of the Faculty of Humanities* 19, no. 1 (March 2021): 233.

¹⁶ P. Baxter, "Biafra: The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970," *Africa @ War* 16 (2014): 18.

¹⁷ C. C. C. Osakwe and L. O. Udeagbala, "Naval Military Operations in Bonny during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970," *Advances in Historical Studies* 4 (2015): 237.

¹⁸ H. B. Momoh, *The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: History and Reminiscences* (Ibadan: Keibin Press, 2000), 83.

¹⁹ Gould, *The Biafran War, 1967–1970*, 83.

²⁰ Al J. Venter, *Biafra's War 1967–1970: A Tribal Conflict in Nigeria That Left a Million Dead* (Solihull, England: Helion & Company, 2015), 188.

²¹ O. S. Osadola and S. B. Asiyambi, "The Nigeria War of Unity, 1967–1970: Strategies and Diplomacy," 147.

²² Venter, *Biafra's War 1967–1970*, 191.

The Nigerian Air Force conducted sustained air raids on Enugu using Jet Provosts T51 (NAF701 and NAF702). According to I. R. Iyeje, these attacks devastated the Enugu airfield and destroyed Biafra's B-26 and RB-26P aircraft.²³ The famed shark-toothed B-26R, which had once symbolized Biafran air power, was grounded due to lack of spare parts and limited operational support capacity.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Nigerian Air Force—initially consisting of only two commandeered Nigerian Airways Fokker aircraft, including one F-27—expanded rapidly, assisted by foreign mercenary pilots. It soon operated 18 Minicons and six Harvard T-6 trainers armed with machine guns. A DC-4 aircraft flown by an American gunrunner was also used to transport weapons.²⁵

As Federal pressure mounted, Biafran forces suffered acute shortages of arms and ammunition, exacerbated by the blockade that made resupply possible only through clandestine night flights.²⁶ Ojukwu's administration, despite the deteriorating situation, refused to evacuate valuable supplies that could have prolonged the war effort. By 28 September, the remaining Biafran defenders in Enugu were without food or ammunition. Col. Ojukwu had already left the city forty-eight hours earlier. Federal shelling intensified, causing mass panic as civilians fled, abandoning their belongings and public property. According to eyewitnesses, mortar shells landed indiscriminately around Coal Camp, where explosions tore through the Tinker Market, killing and maiming many.²⁷

On 29 September 1967, Federal troops captured Enugu. A dawn air raid on the Enugu airport destroyed the remaining B-26 aircraft, dealing a severe blow to Biafran morale.²⁸ Ben Gbulie, a Biafran officer, later wrote that the loss of Enugu “shook the very foundation of our much-cherished new sovereignty,” undermining both domestic confidence and international sympathy. Foreign allies and mercenaries played limited roles during the battle. Among them was Friedrich “Freddy” Herz, a German pilot and longtime friend of several Biafran airmen, who volunteered to assist after being contacted by colleagues. After careful vetting, he joined the Biafran air service in Enugu under Colonel Zoki. Despite such help, Biafra's air strength dwindled rapidly under sustained Federal bombardment.

As the situation worsened, the Federal Second Division, commanded by Colonel Murtala Mohammed, pressed from the west²⁹ while Shuwa's forces attacked from the north. The remaining Biafran aircraft—two B-25 Mitchells and one B-26 “Marauder”³⁰—were flown out of Enugu to avoid capture. Subsequent raids left the airfield in ruins and the city defenceless. The Federal strategy, described as a “police action,” was in reality a comprehensive encirclement and isolation campaign aimed at destroying Biafra's capacity to resist. According to Zdeněk Červenka, the early capture of Enugu was expected to have a decisive psychological effect, hastening Biafra's collapse.

²³ I. R. Iyeje, “Air Operations in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970” (PhD diss., Department of History and War Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, 2020), 195.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁵ U. E. Umoh, *Journal of Defence Studies* 18 (2013).

²⁶ F. Oyewole, “Scientists and Mercenaries,” *Transition* 48 (1975): 60.

²⁷ E. G. I. Okorie, *Nigerian Civil War Untold* (Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria, 2013), 32.

²⁸ Oyewole, “Scientists and Mercenaries,” 59.

²⁹ Frederick Forsyth, *The Biafra Story: The Making of an African Legend*, 114.

³⁰ Venter, *Biafra's War 1967–1970*, 127.

Nonetheless, Biafran partisans such as the Biafran Organization for Freedom Fighters (BOFF) and the Rangers sustained local resistance through guerrilla tactics and sabotage. Wealthy chiefs sympathetic to the cause also financed recruitment and training. For many Biafrans, the motivation to fight was driven by three imperatives: to defend their homeland, prevent what they saw as impending genocide, and preserve the territorial integrity of Igboland.

Despite this determination, Enugu's defence was poorly organized and inadequately equipped. The garrison, intended as the Biafran military headquarters, possessed only obsolete World War I Mark III and Mark IV rifles and a few machine guns. Defensive measures such as the natural barrier of Milliken Hill were underutilized. As Federal troops closed in, chaos erupted—thousands fled the city in panic. Although some civil servants briefly returned after the initial exodus, by early October it was no longer possible to remain safely in the city. On 1 October 1967, Ojukwu delivered a radio broadcast vowing to continue the struggle. Yet, after heavy shelling on 5 October 1967,³¹ Enugu finally fell to Federal forces. Its capture marked a decisive turning point in the war, exposing the fragility of Biafra's military capacity and foreshadowing the humanitarian catastrophe that would follow.

Aftermath of the Battle of Enugu

A battle of such magnitude inevitably left devastating consequences on Enugu and its environs. As in most wars, destruction came swiftly, while recovery proved painfully slow. The Battle of Enugu led to the fall of the city, and in the aftermath of its capture, widespread looting ensued. Both federal troops and civilians ransacked major buildings, including the Presidential Hotel and the United States Consulate. The university town was systematically looted and subsequently closed by Nigerian soldiers. According to Ugbegilli and Ityonzughul, this closure spurred Biafran improvisation through the creation of the Research and Production Unit (RAP), a team of lecturers, technicians, and engineers who sought to overcome the shortage of arms by developing locally manufactured weapons.³²

Danjuma described the fall of Enugu as “an anti-climax.”³³ The vast majority of the population had fled, leaving only about five hundred civilians—mostly the elderly, the sick, and young children. Federal officials made repeated but unsuccessful appeals for residents to return. More than a year later, the city remained largely deserted, with Catholic missions caring for the few civilians who had stayed behind. The war also served as a sobering lesson for many wealthy Igbo people. Before the conflict, several Biafrans who lived and worked in other parts of Nigeria had invested in houses outside their ancestral homes. When they fled back to their villages as refugees, they found themselves without suitable accommodation, often pleading to be housed in modest or mud dwellings. Consequently, Enugu suffered an acute housing shortage due to wartime destruction and displacement.³⁴

³¹ Oyewole, “Scientists and Mercenaries,” 60.

³² S. I. Ugbegilli and T. T. Ityonzughul, “The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: Historicising the Social Dimension,” in *History, Globalization and Relations in Africa: Festschrift in Honour of Okpèh O. Okpèh*, ed. P. I. Ukase, S. I. Ugbegilli, B. J. Audu, and E. T. Ikpanor (Lagos: Integrity Publishers, 2018), 446.

³³ “The Nigerian Civil War Makes Enugu a Ghost Town,” *The New York Times*, October 1967, 20.

³⁴ P. Obi-Ani, *Post-Civil War Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970–1983* (Enugu: Great AP Express Publishers, 2009), 62–63.

Even after the war, social dislocation persisted. Many residents faced stigma, confiscation of property, and acts of sexual violence. Reports indicate that some young women, driven by desperation, entered relationships with occupying soldiers as a means of survival. Mothers were often powerless to intervene, and prostitution became a means of sustenance for both young and old women. This period was marked by profound social and moral disruption, as the people of Biafra were dehumanized and treated as second-class citizens. The *Sunday Times* captured the horror of the situation, declaring, “I have seen things in Biafra this week which no man should have to see.” The report described children burned alive, pregnant women mutilated, and entire families annihilated by bombings.³⁵ The breakdown of economic life in Enugu gave rise to theft, robbery, and extortion. Motor parks, where commercial vehicles congregated, became scenes of violent clashes between rival tout gangs competing for passengers and commissions. These conditions made law enforcement difficult and contributed to a general atmosphere of insecurity.³⁶

Air raids by the Nigerian Air Force further compounded the devastation, reducing homes and market stalls to rubble. Starvation soon followed. The federal government’s blockade of food supplies into Biafran territory crippled access to agricultural produce. As Biafra had relied heavily on trade rather than farming, the effects of the blockade were catastrophic. The prolonged conflict caused the deaths of thousands, not from gunfire or shelling, but from hunger. Chinua Achebe vividly described the famine: “As the war raged, the traditional Igbo society of farmers could not plant their crops. Biafran civilians and soldiers were starving, as bodies rotted under the hot sun by the roadside, while vultures circled overhead.”³⁷

The economic toll was equally severe. Funds from the Enugu branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria were diverted to purchase weapons for the Biafran war effort, while portions of the reserves were reportedly transferred abroad to Lisbon and London, where they ended up in the hands of questionable intermediaries.³⁸ Strategically, the fall of Enugu resulted in the loss of vital military supplies and administrative infrastructure. The Ministry of Information was briefly disorganized following the forced evacuation of personnel, disrupting Biafran propaganda and undermining earlier claims that the Nigerian state could not sustain a prolonged war.³⁹ According to Ihu, the fall of Enugu prompted Biafran engineers to construct a network of improvised airstrips in the bush, converting long stretches of straight roads into landing strips for aircraft such as the C-47 Dakota.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Sunday Times*, August 8, 1968.

³⁶ S. F. C. Daly, *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime and the Nigerian Civil War*, 203.

³⁷ S. I. Ugbeili and T. T. Ityonzughul, “The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: Historicising the Social Dimension,” in *History, Globalization and Relations in Africa: Festschrift in Honour of Okpèh O. Okpèh*, ed. P. I. Ukase et al. (Lagos: Integrity Publishers, 2018), 444–445.

³⁸ Daly, *A History of the Republic of Biafra*, 243.

³⁹ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 111.

⁴⁰ R. Ihu, “Illi and Uga Airstrips in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970,” *Journal of History and Military Studies* 4, no. 1 (June 2018): 2–3.

Many Nigerians believed that the capture of Enugu would persuade the Igbo elite to abandon secession, even if Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu himself did not.⁴¹ The First Division of the Nigerian Army temporarily halted operations in the city to rest, regroup, and allow Ojukwu an opportunity to reconsider his stance. The collapse of Enugu also put surrounding communities, particularly in Nkanuland, at risk. The Nigerian army occupied much of the region to enforce security and consolidate control. However, this occupation bred deep resentment among local populations who associated federal troops with the pogroms that had driven many Igbos from northern Nigeria. Despite the loss, Ojukwu swiftly relocated his government to Umuahia, a city deep within Igbo territory, reaffirming Biafra's determination to continue its struggle for survival and self-determination.⁴²

Conclusion

This study is not without its limitations. One such limitation lies in the inability of the authors to conduct oral interviews in the study area. The emotional weight and painful memories of the war still linger among many Biafrans, making it difficult for survivors to openly share their experiences. Moreover, a significant number of direct victims are no longer alive to provide first-hand accounts. Consequently, this study has had to rely heavily on secondary sources. Nevertheless, the study has brought to the fore critical insights into the Nigerian Civil War, with particular emphasis on the Battle of Enugu. It examined the emergence of Enugu as the first capital of Biafra and how this status made the city a central target in the conflict following the federal government's recapture of the Mid-West region. Once the Nigerian forces launched their offensive, Enugu came under intense military assault—marked by air bombardments, artillery fire, and widespread destruction.

Although some soldiers joined the Biafran army in an effort to reorganize its scattered infantry, these efforts were insufficient to prevent the fall of Enugu. This study acknowledges the strategic success of the Nigerian forces in capturing the city but equally highlights the unpreparedness of the Biafran side. The inadequacy of military equipment, weak strategy and tactics, and a leadership unable to match its rhetoric of invincibility all contributed to Biafra's defeat in this critical battle. Ultimately, the aftermath of the Battle of Enugu was both shocking and devastating—not only for Biafrans but for Nigerians as a whole. The human and material losses were enormous, and the war left deep scars on the nation's collective psyche. The conflict cost Nigeria countless lives, vast resources, and a dented international image due to the severe humanitarian consequences that followed.

⁴¹ J. J. Stremiau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970*, 98.

⁴² J. J. De St. Aubin, *The Brother's War: Biafra and Nigeria* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 175.