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Forgive and Forget? Reconciliation and Memory in Post-Biafra Nigeria

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the relationship between memory and reconciliation in the aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra war. It is argued that a deliberate policy of suppression surrounds the memory of Biafra and that this contributes to an incomplete reconciliation. A theory of agonistic memory is applied to the case study, to consider the utility of pluralism in memory for an ethnically diverse society. Finally, it is argued that memory cannot be suppressed and that attempting to suppress the memory of Biafra has opened space for contestation, allowing memory to become a focal point for other grievances against the government.

Contents

Acronyms

HYS	Half of a Yellow Sun
MASSOB	The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Committee

Section One: Overview

1.1 Introduction

On the eve of independence, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a future political leader of an independent Nigeria, stated that:

> 'Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word 'Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not' (Awolowo, 1947, pp.47-8).

The fundamental tension of Nigeria therefore lies in the 'arbitrary collection' (Aka, 2000, p.359) of over 250 ethnic groups, who frequently have 'little more in common than proximity' (Hawley, 2008, p.17), joined together in one nation by British colonial boundaries. Onwubu's (1975) study of Nigerian ethnic groups demonstrates the great disparities between those who found themselves constituting 'Nigeria'. Strengthening or perhaps more accurately creating a shared Nigerian identity has therefore proved a continuing challenge (Bah, 2005, p.6).

The strength of Nigeria's national bonds was to be tested not long after independence, with the secession of the South Eastern states and the creation of Biafra in 1967 (Panter-Brick, 1968, p.256). The secession followed a series of ethnic pogroms in the Northern States targeting Igbos, one of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups alongside Hausa-Fulani (of the northern states) and Yoruba (of the South West) (Onwubu, 1975, p.402). Following a period of political instability which saw coups and counter-coups, existing ethnic suspicions and rivalries grew and eventually focused on the idea of an Igbo plot. The pogroms in the Northern states are estimated to have cost 30,000 Igbo lives and resulted in Igbos across Nigeria returning *en masse* to their 'homeland' in the South-Eastern states, before the secession of Biafra was announced in May 1967 (Korieh, 2012, pp.2-5). The three year conflict which followed gained infamy for extreme civilian suffering and in particular, the use of starvation by the Nigerian government as a weapon of war (Diamond, 2007, p.359).

Biafra rests on unsettled ground. As Ukaogo (2012, p.305) argues, no two accounts of Biafra are the same. Estimates of the Igbo death toll experience wild variations, from under 1 million to over 3 million (for example: Last, 2000, p.320; Amadiume, 2000, p.6). The war is called variously: the Nigerian Civil War, the Nigerian-Biafran war and the Biafra war. As Duruji (2012b, p.536) argues, the war is either an act of 'unity' or of 'persecution' depending

on 'what side of the divide the analysis belongs'. Furthermore, some like Korieh (2012) claim that Biafra represents genocide against the Igbos, a label rejected by others, even in the same volume of work (Bartrop, 2012). These debates highlight the turbulent nature of the memory of Biafra. Moreover, Biafra is extremely under-studied, with scholarship remaining to a greater extent the pursuit of the Igbo diaspora (Korieh, 2012, pp.22-23). As Odoemene stated, Biafra was a watershed moment in Nigeria's history, and yet this moment is also routinely ignored not only in Nigeria, but also in wider reconciliation literature (2012, p.165).

Following the defeat of Biafra in 1970, the Nigerian President Yakubu Gowon announced that there would be 'no victor, no vanquished', and that a programme of 'restoration, reintegration and reconstruction' was to begin (Duruji, 2012a, p.330). Nigeria's post-war reconciliation is sometimes viewed as remarkably successful. For instance, it is often noted that Biafra's leader C. Odumegwu Ojukwu returned to Nigeria in 1983, ran in the presidential elections in 2003, and received a state funeral attended by the then President Goodluck Jonathan in 2012 (Last, 2000, p.316; Adekoya, 2012). However, those like Amadiume and An-Na'im (2000, p3), who pay closer consideration to the memory of Biafra, conclude that rather than a remarkable reconciliation, Biafra continues to haunt Nigeria. It is the conviction of this study that the idea of a successful reconciliation in Nigeria is misguided, and ignores clear divisions in memory. Bakare-Yusuf (2012, p.245) suggests that 'silence' over Biafra suggests a trauma that is yet to be worked through. Yet one must consider to what extent there truly is 'silence'. Although a systematic state directed attempt to forget is evident, for many in Nigeria, particularly Igbos, remembrance of Biafra continues to shape their politics and lives (Korieh, 2012, p.3). Although the states which formed Biafra encompassed several minority ethnic groups, the focus of this study will be on Igbos, whose persecution first led to secession and for whom Biafra has arguably had the greatest lasting impact.

An overriding motif in the memory of Biafra is the perception that the causes of the war have not been resolved (Odoemene, 2012, p.178). Biafra was founded on the belief that the Nigerian project was a failure, already soiled by corruption. It is the perception of many Igbos that little has changed within Nigeria following Biafra's defeat (Odoemene, 2012, p.178; Adekoya, 2012). The link between the memory of Biafra and grievances over perceptions of ethnic marginalisation and corruption are essential to this study. A full discussion of the implications of corruption on democracy and development in Nigeria is beyond the scope of this study, yet it is clear that the lingering resentments which surround the memory of Biafra are inextricably linked to the pervasive nature of corruption and ethnic

exclusion in Nigeria. A consideration of the role which social justice should play in reconciliation is therefore heavily suggested by the Nigerian case. Indeed, Amadiume (2000, p.52) states that social justice should be the 'ends and means of reconciliation'. This study attempts to illustrate this statement through the Nigerian case and argues that the disregard of social justice in the wake of Biafra has been a central cause of the failure of reconciliation.

The question therefore remains; how can a nation achieve reconciliation with such a divided memory? The idea of 'forgive and forget' was strongly encouraged by government policy, yet the evidence suggests that nearly fifty years after the war a large number of Igbos, the majority of whom were not alive during the conflict, have neither forgotten nor forgiven. It is therefore necessary to locate a theory of reconciliation applicable to a context of division and diversity. It is here that the theory of agonistic memory as a tool of reconciliation is advanced. It will be argued that rather than searching for a reconciliation which confers a nation-wide consensus, it is more useful to consider reconciliation as a continual form of engagement between competing adversaries, who may disagree but who ultimately respect the right of others to hold views contrary to their own. Such a theory holds a greater applicability to a nation as diverse and divided as Nigeria and suggests that the promotion of remembrance of Biafra would be essential for reconciliation. The aim of this study is not to engage deeply with the agonistic democracy debate, but to apply agonistic theories to memory in the context of reconciliation. It will be argued that it is not only ineffective to suppress memory in the hope of reconciliation, but that it is counterproductive.

1.2 Structure

Section Two will establish the theoretical framework of this study through a review of reconciliation and memory literature. *Section Three* will present the empirical study of post-Biafra reconciliation and memory in Nigeria. The theoretical framework is applied to this evidence in *Section Four*, which also offers suggestions for further research. Section Five provides concluding remarks.

1.3 Methodology

Qualitative methodology was adopted for this study, as it was deemed the most appropriate method for studying memory and reconciliation. The research design involved a critical

engagement with the literature and the establishment of a framework of agonistic memory as a tool of reconciliation, supplemented by an investigation of media sources.

The study follows Stake's (1994) formulation of an instrumental case study. The focus is therefore on theory and for the case study to provide insights into the theoretical framework of agonistic memory. In terms of the applicability of the study's findings to other cases, Berg (2007, p.232) has cautioned on the dangers of generalisation. Therefore although the Nigerian case suggests important answers to the consideration of agonistic memory, it should not be taken as definitive evidence of the theory's universal utility. Consistent with the arguments of the 'theory-before-research' model proposed by Nachmias & Nachmias (1992, p.46), the empirical research serves to reinforce the central argument. A theoretically focused study was appropriate, as the study is focused on a *lack* of memory and reconciliation, and as a consequence there is no official memorialisation to study.

In line with what Berg (2007, p.190) terms 'unobtrusive data' methods, no fieldwork or interviews were conducted. Instead, evidence of the impact of memory was examined through online media sources in tandem with evidence from the literature. The study of media sources is not exhaustive, but is rather used to illustrate the key themes which emerged from the literature. Caution has been required when utilising online media stories as evidence as, like a portion of Biafran literature, a great deal of bias is evident. This is particularly so in the case of Nigerian online media. Attempts were therefore made only to highlight a point if it was supported by multiple sources and the literature.

Section Two: Literature Review

2.1 Reconciliation

Growing attention has been paid to reconciliation in both political and theoretical circles in recent years. Kymlicka and Bashir (2008, p.1) highlight South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) as the 'birth of reconciliation' on to the international stage and indeed, this TRC dominates a large part of reconciliation literature. TRCs are largely founded on the belief that nations need to establish the facts of a conflict in order to move on and forgive (MacGinty and Williams, 2009, p.109). Moreover, Minnow (1967, p.67) contends that TRCs provide a way to commemorate and interpret divisive social experiences in order to achieve lasting reconciliation. The non-retributive nature of TRCs is singled out as a key strength by Nytagodien and Neal (2004, p.469), who maintain that TRCs are therefore

able to condemn past violence without threatening negotiated transitions. Not only do reconciliation processes aim to deal with past trauma; it is argued that such processes also aim to create a sense of national unity. As Hirsch (2011, p.167) highlights, the aim of reconciliation processes is to re-create a 'shared sense of belonging, a being-in-common' to unify a society following a violent past. It is therefore believed that through collective acts of apology and forgiveness, reconciliation can be achieved. This perhaps represents a paradox in reconciliation processes; of investigating divisive histories in the hope of a united future (Leebaw, 2008, p.96).

Aka (2000, p.328) defines reconciliation as the successful restoration of harmony following a conflict. However, reconciliation remains a contested term (Schaap, 2006, p.263). The definition of reconciliation as a return to pre-war harmony simply does not reflect those cases to which frequently it is applied. One need only look at historical relations between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda or apartheid in South Africa to see that rather than a return to previous harmony, reconciliation in fact aims to create a new relationship. Reconciliation is therefore 'transformative rather than restorative' (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008, p.19). A further important distinction is the difference between peace and reconciliation. As Mendeloff (2004, p.366) highlights, although South Africa has avoided war, few would argue that a successful reconciliation has taken place since the TRC. It is therefore essential that an absence of violence is not taken to denote an effective reconciliation.

The utility of testimony is a central concern of reconciliation literature, particularly in terms of whether testifying aids reconciliation. Norval (1998, p.251) states that events in former communist countries in the early 1990s first sparked interest in truth telling as a method of reconciliation. As previously suggested, TRCs are largely founded on the assumption that knowledge of the past will lead to reconciliation (Gibson, 2004, p.201), or that the 'truth' will lead to psychological healing, not only for the individual but for the nation (Chirwa, 1997, p.479). Gibson's (2004) study of reconciliation in South Africa following the TRC suggested that those who accepted the 'truth' were more likely to hold 'reconciled' attitudes and that in addition, the truth did not create 'irreconciliation', countering the fear that 'dredging up the past' would contribute to increased racial tensions. On the other hand, Mendeloff (2004) is highly critical of the importance placed on testimony in reconciliation, particularly what he perceives as the lack of empirical evidence supporting the utility of truth-telling. However, it can be argued that a great number of Mendeloff's claims rely on the assumption that truth and memory can be suppressed. This study aims to demonstrate that suppressing the truth is neither feasible nor desirable, an argument strongly

supported by the case study of post-Biafra Nigeria. Nevertheless, great debate remains over whether testimony can truly set trauma to rest (Moon, 2006b, p.165). This is especially so in the case of 'national trauma', a phrase disputed by some. Ignatieff (1996, p.110) is highly critical of the tendency of reconciliation processes to treat nations like individuals, as nations cannot 'heal' like individuals and no collective psyche exists (Hamber and Wilson, 2002). Although 'healing the nation' and 'restoring community' are often invoked during reconciliation, Schaap (2006, p.258) questions the presumption of unity as a social good, and highlights the importance of questioning how 'unity' has been achieved.

The nature of 'truth' must also be questioned in several ways. First, one must consider whether a 'truth' can be final, or in other words, 'whose truth' is being promoted through reconciliation? Moon's (2006a) study of the use of narrative at the South African TRC suggests that testifiers were not fully free to speak 'their truth'. Rather, a remembrance of select memories at the expense of others and a focus on forgiving was encouraged, while stepping outside this narrative was discouraged. Therefore, although there is a general perception that TRCs discourage forgetting, one must question if the process only encourages remembrance of select memories. As TRCs like South Africa's take place in the wake of negotiated transitions, it is vital that they present a narrative of forgiveness and regret, even if this is not the case. However, as MacGinty and Williams (2009, p.119) suggest, asking victims to forgive perpetrators may be asking the impossible. Staub (2006, p.882) highlights the case of Israel and Palestine, where two intractable 'truths' painfully co-exist and are unlikely to ever change. Although greater listening across a divide may increase understanding, two such incompatible memories will not be brought together solely through truth telling, suggesting that successful reconciliation demands more than the truth alone.

The argument that public acknowledgement and truth are essential for victims to move on finds great favour in the literature (Norval, 1998, p.254), yet Hamber and Wilson (2002, p.37) argue that this alone is not enough and emphasise the important role of justice in reconciliation. The perception of a lack of justice can leave victims feeling that the past is 'unfinished'. Hamber and Wilson (2002) exemplify this through the case of the *Madres* of the *Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina; a group of mothers who refuse to end their protest on behalf of their 'disappeared' children. More than a search for truth, the case suggests that justice is essential for reconciliation. Justice may not necessarily entail legal justice, but can refer to reparations or social justice. Lorey and Beezley (2001, p.xiv) therefore pose the question of whether justice or truth should take precedence in reconciliation. Although Borer (1999, p.303) contends that one must be exclusive of the other, this is countered by Leebaw (2008,

p.105), who suggests that reconciliation must take account of both. It is the view of this study that compromising justice for reconciliation is not only unnecessary but also counter-productive as, without justice, historical grievances are made to feel like 'unfinished businesses'. Moon (2006b, p.163) states that tension existed at the South African TRC between the focus on testimony and victims' desire for reparations. The focus on testimony was perceived as hindering reconciliation by continuing inequality and limiting a proper examination of the structural effects of apartheid. For those whose lives were lastingly impacted by apartheid, a 'justice' based on apology was insufficient. A further critique of testimony lies in the perception of the method as fuelled by Western notions, in conflict with local practices. Moon (2006b, p.169) highlighted this tension in terms of local South African practices of 'retributive' responses and likewise, Shaw (2005), argued that the emphasis on testimony during Sierra Leone's reconciliation process was greatly at odds with local traditions of forgetting.

2.2 Agonistic Reconciliation

Agonism is a theory which suggests the positive potential of certain forms of political conflict (Hirsch, 2013, p.4). It is the view of this study that the theory of agonism suggests a solution to many of the aforementioned faults in reconciliation. Hirsch states that although no single 'doctrine' of agonism exists; there is considerable overlap in agonistic theories. The clearest of these overlaps is an appreciation for the role of conflict in democracy. The assumption of pre-war harmony is therefore 'anathema to agonists' (Hirsch, 2011, p.171). As Schaap (2006, p.257) states, agonism's emphasis on the central role of conflict in politics suggests that searching for a unified and settled outcome is the wrong route for reconciliation. This is particularly the case in diverse societies where, as Mouffe (1999, p.752) argues, pluralism is naturally conflictual. Agonists are therefore critical of reconciliations which attempt to 'resolve the irresolvable' (Hirsch, 2011, p.167). Disagreement is not a divide for reconciliation to overcome, but is instead a natural aspect of social and political life (Kymlicak and Bashir, 2008, p.10). It is the role of democracy to facilitate diverse values even if these values appear irrational, as any limit on individuals' opinions is perceived as inherently political (Schaap, 2006, p.269). A central component of Mouffe's (2000, p.103) theory of agonistic pluralism lies in the distinction made between enemy and adversary. Agonistic reconciliation aims to transform enemies in to adversaries, who may still disagree, yet who do not undermine the right of the other to hold competing views. The pursuit of

reconciliation after violent conflict is therefore a natural fit with the agonistic process of turning enemies in to adversaries (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008, p.12). Agonism therefore provides an alternative way to view reconciliation: not as a restoration of an imagined community, but as a route to 'turning enmity in to civic friendship' (Schaap, 2006, p.268).

A clear debate in the literature lies between deliberative and agonistic democrats. As Kapoor (2002, p.460) states, the central question of both of these traditions is how to represent difference democratically, with deliberative and agonistic democracy seen as the models which provide the greatest opportunity for historically marginalised groups to be heard (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008, p.5). The selection of agonism over deliberative democracy as the framework of this study stems from the critique concerning the manner in which difference is erased under some deliberative models. Hirsh (2013, p.3) contends that deliberative democrats such as Rawls and Habermas attempt to cope with fundamentally irresolvable conflicts by ignoring difference. Rawls in particular is criticised for his suggestion of achieving reconciliation by removing the most divisive issues from the political agenda (Hirsch, 2011, p.168). This blindness to difference, while intended to promote cooperation, in fact serves to weaken further the position of the disadvantaged. On the other hand, agonism, by encouraging the expression of difference, prevents what Hirsch (2013, p.4) terms the 'politics of resentment' generated by inequality.

The notion of 'consensus' therefore attracts great ire from agonists (Dryzeck and Niemeyer, 2006, p.636). Mouffe (2000) in particular highlights consensus seeking as a politicised means of suppressing competing views. Mouffe (2000) argues that the perspectives of marginalised groups are likely to greatly differ from dominant groups, yet it is dominant groups who are most likely to inform a consensus. The search for consensus is therefore viewed as inherently political (Schaap, 2006, p.262), as it serves the most powerful and hides oppression of minorities behind a concern for controlling dissent (Dyrzek and Niemeyer, 2006, p.637). Pertinent to the Nigerian case at hand, Schaap (2006, p.255) suggests that in a 'context of deep distrust', marginalised groups have good reason to be wary of consensus building projects. Chakravarti (2013, pp.11-12) suggests that testimony, when expressed freely, is the clearest example of 'an agonistic moment' as it voices competing narratives and political critiques which may otherwise not be heard. Testimony thus provides a vital tool through which to challenge a consensus. Agonism highlights the danger of a premature closure of contest and debate (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008, p.20). Through the lens of agonism, reconciliation processes which appeal to national unity are revealed as a political

process to create a new community dominated by elite ideas, rather than restoring an existing one (Kymlicka & Bashir, 2008, p.20).

A prominent criticism directed at agonism is that some level of consensus is necessary for democracy to function. More than ensuring that 'decisions can get made' (Dryzeck, 2005, p.221) it is argued that some measurement of a contribution's legitimacy to political debate must exist, to exclude illegitimate or dangerous viewpoints (Kapoor, 2002, p.479). Dryzeck and Niemeyer (2006, pp.643-644) highlight a central paradox in Mouffe's arguments: consensus is politically constructed and therefore contestable, yet the distinction between enemy and adversary suggests that not all views are equally legitimate. It has been contended that Mouffe's account of how to transform enemy in to adversary remains unclear (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008, p.21). This is a pertinent criticism, and one to which Schaap (2006, p.270) believes agonism is most vulnerable. By affirming the centrality of conflict, agonism 'postpones the moment of decision' thereby suggesting the possibility of indefinite debate. Furthermore, Kymlicka and Bashir (2008, p.20) argue that for reconciliation to take place, 'some notion of a 'we'' must already exist. In an attempt to resolve pluralism and consensus, Dryzeck and Niemeyer (2006) suggest a form of 'meta-consensus', enabling pluralism in values and beliefs, supported by a meta-consensus on such matters as the right to hold opposing ideas. In the case of reconciliation in Nigeria, one could suggest a meta-consensus of the need for peace and development, coupled with an appreciation of the diverse experiences and opinions within the nation. Although the issue of elite manipulation of consensus remains, the case for a minimum level of consensus remains strong.

A further criticism stems from the work of Kapoor (2002) who, in noting the lack of consideration given to the applicability of agonism in the developing world by theorists like Mouffe, considers the utility of the theory to the Global South. Kapoor (2002, p.479) notes that agonism does hold great applicability to the Global South in terms of contending with the rise of ethno-nationalism and identity politics. However, it is also argued that the greater levels of inequality in the Global South make it more likely that elites will be able to impose a consensus on weaker groups. Moreover, Kapoor (2002, p.472) is critical of Mouffe's assumption that all social movements are positive forces, and highlights the prevalence of regressive grass roots movements who could abuse a more pluralistic debate. Additionally, Schaap (2006, p.270) considers whether encouraging clashes and debates may simply entrench existing oppositions, a critical point to consider in the context of ethnic divisions. These are key points to consider when applying agonism to the Nigerian context. Indeed,

Nigeria's staggering inequality (Bakare, 2012) combined with the growth of violent movements, must engender a level of caution in proscribing an entirely free pluralistic agonism. The idea of a 'meta-consensus' of non-violence and equality could therefore stand as the marker in the divide between legitimate adversary and illegitimate enemy.

2.3 Memory

Memory studies remain to the greater extent a pursuit of history, yet its relevance to the political sciences is increasingly noted (Bell, 2009, p.349). Indeed, Norval (1998, p.251) highlights the critical importance of memory in reconciliation, by stating that 'dispute over the past is a struggle for control over the future'. The focus of TRCs on creating a single shared memory (MacGinty and Williams, 2009, p.109) suggests the existence of a collective memory and the ability to mould this memory. However, it is argued that rather than collective, memory is individual (Bell, 2008, p.150; Brown, 2012, p.445). Olick (2003, pp.5-6) suggests that memory is a continually contested process; always fragile and provisional. From the agonistic perspective, Schapp (2006, p.267) warns that assuming the existence of a collective memory limits the ability of citizens to contest dominant memories or identities. Moreover, the battle for a pre-eminent interpretation of history is capable of acting as a further source of conflict (Lorey and Beezley, 2001, p.xiv). However, although the existence of a single national collective memory can be disputed, the power of memory in forging group identities must be recognised (Norval, 1998, p.254). Bell (2008, p.148) suggests that although memory itself cannot be passed down through generations, its impact can, or as Soyinka (2000, p.21) termed it, 'memory is not governed by a statute of limitations'. Therefore, although younger generations may not have witnessed an important or traumatic historical event themselves, the ability to feel an incident's repercussions and associate its impact with the original event remains. Ultimately, Ignatieff's (1996, p.114) assertion that no single impartial or definitive national memory exists holds an important question for reconciliation processes: how can a nation manage competing memories while forging post-conflict unity?

Moreover, although reconciliation processes may attempt to promote collective memory as a tool of unity, the potentially destructive force of memory must also be noted (Odoemene, 2012, p.168). The idea of a shared memory often plays a critical role as a founding myth of movements, particularly in ethnic conflict (Cairns and Roe, 2003) or to

divide further already diverse societies (Brown, 2012, p.445). MacGinty and Williams (2009, p.110) highlight the extreme case of Croat and Serb leaders evoking historical grievances dating back to the 14th Century in their pursuit of ethnic cleansing in the 1990s. Nevertheless, Bell (2009, p.358) cautions against viewing memory as a cause of conflict, and notes that, like ethnicity, memory causes violence only when manipulated by elites. Reconciliation is likely to be hindered by both dwelling too much on memory and yet also by ignoring it completely, suggesting a delicate balancing act for post-conflict nations (Norval, 1998, p.254).

If memory holds such a potentially destructive impact, it is understandably the instinct of some to suppress it. Nietzche (1983, p.60) argued that to be able to live, humankind must abandon the hope for historical justice and learn to forget. Shaw (2005,p.9) added credence to this view with her study of Sierra Leone, which argued that silence on the violent past enables healing. However, this study seeks to disprove the idea that forgetting is a route to reconciliation and suggest that it is neither possible nor desirable. As Ignatieff (1996, p.121) states, 'crimes can never be safely fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance'. More than forgetting being an impossibility, Lorey and Beezley (2001, p.xv) note that failure to resolve lingering memories and resentments can fuel new violence. Pearce's (2015, p.112) study of Angolan memory demonstrates that rather than creating unity, the government's suppression of competing memories opened space for contestation, fuelled by the knowledge of the government's lies. Politically created narratives of memory therefore count for little beyond the elites who seek to benefit from the manipulations (Pearce, 2015, p.118). Buckley-Zistel's (2006) study of reconciliation in Rwanda argues that although the suppression of memory may allow for co-existence in the short term, underlying tensions persist. These arguments are of great importance for the study of Nigerian memory, where it can be equally demonstrated that suppressing memory has had the counterproductive impact of generating suspicions towards the government. As Werbner (1998, p.9) argues, individuals can recognise when they have not been allowed to remember. Rather than a solution therefore, the suppression of memory leaves the past unfinished, 'festering in the present' (Werbner, 1998, p.9), driving people to continue to call for resolution.

Furthermore, deWaal and Ibreck (2013, p.2) note that memory has become integral to human rights struggles, particularly in Africa where public memory was traditionally an elite activity. Werbner's (1998, p.7-8) account of 'buried memory' in postcolonial Zimbabwe

illustrates the political nature of memory, as the question of whose suffering is to be remembered is frequently linked to power. This is expanded upon in Bell's (2009, p.352) discussion of the 'political economy of memory', which highlights the influence of power in moulding collective memory. Similarly to the agonistic perception of the manipulation of consensus by elites, it must be perceived that the promotion of particular collective memories is a political endeavour. The suppression of memory is therefore linked to inequality (deWaal and Ibreck, 2013, p.22) with a more plural memory seen as of benefit to democracy (Bell, 2009, p.359). Leebaw (2008, p.107) states that forgetting damages democracy, and for illustration highlights the negative impact on democracy in the United States, of the lack of awareness among white Americans of the lasting impact of slavery and segregation on African Americans. Forgetting thus undermines the valid grievances of victims, and lessens their power (Obiezu, 2012, p.194). As Kymlicka and Bashir (2008, p.6) argue, the task of including marginalised groups in reconciliation is made more difficult if there are forgotten or unresolved historical wrongs.

Werbner (1998, p.8) states that in postcolonial Africa, popular counter-memorialisation is increasingly on the rise. If reconciliations are to be successful, nations must therefore recognise that memory cannot be suppressed and acknowledge the competing narratives which threaten to undermine stability. It is in this endeavour that agonistic memory as a tool of reconciliation can be considered. It has been argued that making space for all legitimate narratives is integral to any reconciliation (Hamber and Wilson, 2002, p.40). Agonistic theory naturally supports the idea of competing memories: in the words of Hirsch (2011, p.179), forgetfulness amounts to a 'thinly veiled impulse toward suppressing difference' or a 'form of surrender'. Memory stands as the guardian of this difference (Wolin, 1990, p.40). Norval (1998, p.261) argues that agonistic memory suggests not so much a pluralist memory, but an endless contestation of memory. In such a case, elite control through one dominant memory is discouraged, in favour of the competing voices of all affected. Similar to the debate concerning consensus in agonism, it must be noted that a limitation on illegitimate memories, such as Holocaust denial, is necessary (Bell, 2008, p.160). Brown (2012) has previously suggested the utility of agonistic memory for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. By studying 'local memory work', including murals and exhibitions, Brown (2012, p.454) demonstrates how competing narratives can co-exist 'within less than a hundred metres of each other', bringing the theory of agonistic rather than antagonistic relations to life. Importantly, an agonistic framework allows competing memories to be used to lobby

state narratives, giving power back to victims. The utility of local memory work as a key source of individual healing has been further highlighted by Chirwa (1997, p.481). Thus, as Brown (2012, p.465) states, 'if conflict cannot be removed from the everyday politics of memory, perhaps it could instead be utilised as part of a pluralist process that will affirm the centrality of conflict within democratic politics'. Some caution is necessary however before considering the transfer of Brown's ideas to the Nigerian context, for, as Brown (2012, p.464) highlights, even with the higher level of prosperity and equality which Northern Ireland enjoyed throughout the 'troubles', establishing the correct balance of competing memories proved challenging.

2.4 Nigerian Case Study

The above discussions suggest that agonistic memory as a tool for reconciliation should be adept to address cases of great division and diversity. Post-Biafra Nigeria is therefore an ideal case study to examine through this framework. In addition to existing ethnic diversity and inequality, Nigeria is of particular interest due to the complete lack of memorialisation and widespread suppression of the memory of Biafra. As Dickson and Preye (2014, p.86) state 'the multi-ethnic composition of Nigeria compounds collective memory, making it vulnerable to controversy'. Whereas the majority of memory and reconciliation studies investigate the memory work which has taken place, a central question of this study is what the implication is of an attempt at complete suppression of memory? This line of inquiry; of studying non-existent memorialisation, may be viewed as a limitation of the study. However, it will be argued that although lacking in public memorialisation, the impact of the memory of Biafra can be located in other arenas. Moreover, the nearly fifty-years since Biafra also suggests a response to the observation that 'time heals all wounds'. Although those such as Lorey and Beezley (2001, p.xxviii) contend that generational change is central to reconciliation, the Nigerian case suggests that the passing of time has done little to dampen remembrance of Biafra in certain sections of society.

The Biafra case also provides an ambiguous memory. No transition took place following the war, creating a situation similar to Angola; of suspicion that elites suppressed memory to maintain power. Moreover, the question of who is victim and who is perpetrator remains blurred and persistently prompts politicised answers. Peculiarly for a 'civil war', the lasting impact of Biafra was felt to the greater extent only by Igbos and other Easterners,

creating an even greater divide in memory in Nigeria. Not only is Biafra little remembered within Nigeria, the war and its aftermath are routinely overlooked in reconciliation literature (Koreih, 2013, p.2-3). It can be argued that this omission stems from a misunderstanding of what constitutes a successful reconciliation. The silence over Biafra may be taken by some as a sign of a past effectively dealt with, but for this study, which is concerned with the use of memory as a political tool, it is clear that the Igbo story of Biafra has been suppressed and that a successful reconciliation cannot be said to have taken place. Combined with the discussions of Igbo marginalisation to follow, the agonistic framework suggests that a consensus has been promoted which seeks to undermine Igbo narratives. The aim of reconciliation should not be to overcome these divides by merging them in to a single union. Instead, agonistic memory suggests the utility of competing narratives for promoting reconciliation and understanding as well as to encourage democracy. Under such a theory, the role of reconciliation processes such as TRCs would not be to bring struggle over the past to a close, but to begin the process of creating space for the expression of competing memories.

Section Three: Empirical Study

3.1 The Suppression of Memory

Official attempts to suppress the memory of Biafra are overwhelmingly evident in the literature. Odeomene (2012, p.164-166) speaks of a 'silent but firm' government policy of deliberate collective amnesia, resulting in a 'lopsided, contradictory, largely biased and often contested' history of Biafra. This distorted memory, Odeomene claims, is the product of the memory politics of the federal government. These sentiments are echoed by Okonta (2014, p.360) who notes an 'unofficial ban' on the word 'Biafra'. Writing for The Guardian newspaper, Ike (2012) spoke of his childhood as an Igbo in post-Biafra Nigeria, where 'Biafra was only talked about in hushed tones, in an atmosphere of an unspoken fear that talking about it could bring reprisals.' Indeed, reports suggest that those who break this unspoken law may face harsh reprisals, including being charged with treason (Hirsch, 2012; Pulse, 2015). Parallels can be drawn with the criticism directed at the post-genocide Rwandan policy of 'divisionism', which encouraged individuals to think of themselves only as Rwandan, and not as Hutus or Tutsis (Staub, 2006, p.889). Staub argues that this policy deprives groups of a voice through which to understand their experiences, thereby weakening reconciliation. Likewise, for the Igbos of Nigeria, the suppression of the memory of this

traumatic event serves only to 'increase pain rather than heal wounds' (Dickson and Preye, 2014, p.81).

For tangible evidence of suppression, one need only look to the renaming of the 'Bight of Biafra', the southern stretch of Nigeria's Atlantic coast, as the 'Bight of Bonny' following the end of the war (Odeomene, 2012, p.171). Further indication is found in Nigerian education, where Biafra cannot be found on the school curriculum (Bakare-Yusuf, 2012, p.247) and hides in the recesses of history courses at Nigerian Universities, with the teaching of it actively discouraged (Odoemene, 2012, p.169). Indeed, unverified Nigerian reports suggest that history in general has become an endangered subject, with multiple sources suggesting that history has been removed from the school curriculum or at least subsumed in to wider social science courses (Vanguard, 2014; Mohammed, 2014; Ogunlesi, 2014). These reports, though unconfirmed, certainly suggest an unsettled and contested history. The importance of education in achieving reconciliation is widely agreed (Cole, 2007) and if not utilised correctly, education can serve to entrench existing divisions (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2011, p.13). The geographical division of ethnicities across Nigeria limits the functionality of the 'contact hypothesis' (Gibson, 2004, p.202) as a route to reconciliation. McGlynn et al's (2004) study of the positive impact of integrated education in Northern Ireland therefore raises a troubling issue for those seeking reconciliation in Nigeria; that due to the geographical division of ethnic groups in Nigeria (See Figure 1), young people are unlikely to enjoy integrated education except at university, a level of education reserved for the minority (World Education News and Reviews, 2013). In their study of reconciliation through education in Japan, Hundt and Bleiker (2007) conclude that reconciliation should be viewed as an ongoing process of deliberation in which education is an essential element. Nigerians have thus been lacking the means with which to engage in an effective discussion of the past.

3.2 The Continuing Impact of Biafra

Bakare-Yusuf (2012, p.245) speaks of the amnesia surrounding Biafra as an 'active forgetting'; surely a paradox, as through the very effort of forgetting, Biafra is remembered. Odeomene (2012, p.166) quotes a Nigerian radio presenter as saying "everyone knows that there was once a civil war, but few know very little about it [sic]'. Indeed, studying media sources referencing Biafra suggests that rather than a forgotten memory, Biafra lingers

uncertainly in the Nigerian conscience. An Aljazeera journalist based in Nigeria commented that the admiration he once felt at how well Nigerians had seemingly dealt with the memory of Biafra gradually turned to suspicion, as he found himself reporting on endless unrest, atrocity and protest (Phillips, 2014). It is elementary to show that the federal government's attempts to suppress the memory of Biafra are therefore a failure. A 2012 BBC report met with a group of men in Enugu State, South-Eastern Nigeria, who were raising a Biafran flag, singing pro-Biafra songs and even drinking a Biafra themed beer (Ross, 2012).

More than the fact that the Biafra flag continues to fly over many Igbo cities (Okanta, 2014, p.363), Biafra is a recurring theme in political, economic and social discussions in Nigeria, particularly at moments of great tension (Oloyede, 2009, p.2). Even in the non-Igbo areas of Nigeria, where the war had the least lasting impact, one can observe the resonating power of the memory of Biafra through the panic which surrounds it. In 2014, a Nigerian journalist posed the question 'Are we scared of our own history?' (Ogunlesi,2014). His comments followed the release of the film adaptation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's successful novel of the Biafra war 'Half of a Yellow Sun' (HYS). In the week before the film's release, screenings were postponed, with little explanation given (Mark, 2014; BBC, 2014). Although the exact circumstances around the delay remain unclear, it was heavily suggested that fears of the film 'whipping up tribal [sic] sentiment' (Mark, 2014) convinced the Nigerian film board to reassess its release. The film's director Biyi Bandele made the pertinent observation that 'one of the reasons Nigeria is more divided today... than it was before the war started, is because we have refused to talk about the elephant in the room' (BBC, 2014). HYS is not the only cultural work concerned with Biafra to court controversy for, as Dickson and Preye (2014, p.81-83) note, although Biafra has spawned an incredible artistic legacy, the works are frequently subjected to accusations of bias and of fanning ethnic tensions. However, it can be argued that cultural works have an essential role to play in reconciliation, as in the absence of formal reconciliation processes, it is through creative endeavours that 'the poison of the past' (Hawley, 2008) can be digested.

In 2015 Muhammadu Buhari, a Northern Muslim of the Fulani ethnic group, replaced Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian Ijaw, as President of Nigeria (BBC, 2015a; BBC, 2015b). Buhari's victory was remarkable, as although Nigerians typically vote along ethnic or religious lines, Buhari received widespread support outside the Muslim North (See Figure 2; BBC, 2015b). Except that is, in the South Eastern areas dominated by Igbos, who voted overwhelmingly for Jonathan. Figure 1 shows the location of Nigeria's ethnic groups, with

the Igbos located in the South Eastern region, while Figure 2 illustrates the overwhelming support Jonathan's PDP party received in Igbo areas. The suspicion surrounding the election of Buhari harks back to the Igbo pogroms in the North of 1966 which prompted Biafran secession, a memory which separatist Igbo discourses are quick to invoke (Daily Post, 2015; Nigerian Bulletin, 2015). The suspicion surrounding Buhari's election has been most evident in the broadcasts of 'Radio Biafra', a station whose output is largely anti-Nigerian, anti-government and pro-Biafran. The vehemence of Radio Biafra's broadcasts certainly panics some, with conflictual reports circulating that the government had blocked the station's signal (Uduchukwu, 2015; Uzoma, 2015). President Buhari was forced to deny that he had spoken anti-Igbo sentiments in an interview with BBC Hausa, (Nigerian Bulletin, 2015; Premium Times, 2015a) and anger was sparked by the apparent re-location of Boko Haram prisoners to Igbo states (Premium Times, 2015b; Naij, 2015), two claims promoted by Radio Biafra.

Dryzeck (2005, p.231) states that extreme media, such as Radio Biafra, polarises existing divisions and is an inherent negative for reconciliation, with reference made to the horrific results of radio broadcasts during the Rwandan genocide. However, Radio Biafra is not creating these tensions; rather it, very vocally, plays on existing fault lines. Neither do the station's broadcasts call for murder or violence; they are more often than not expressions of Igbo frustrations at Nigeria. Under an agonistic framework, Radio Biafra could therefore be seen as a legitimate competing voice, promoting Igbo narratives and grievances. This is by no means to say that Radio Biafra is an ideal; its broadcasts frequently spiral in to irrationality, yet in what could be called 'functional revenge', the broadcasts allow the expression of
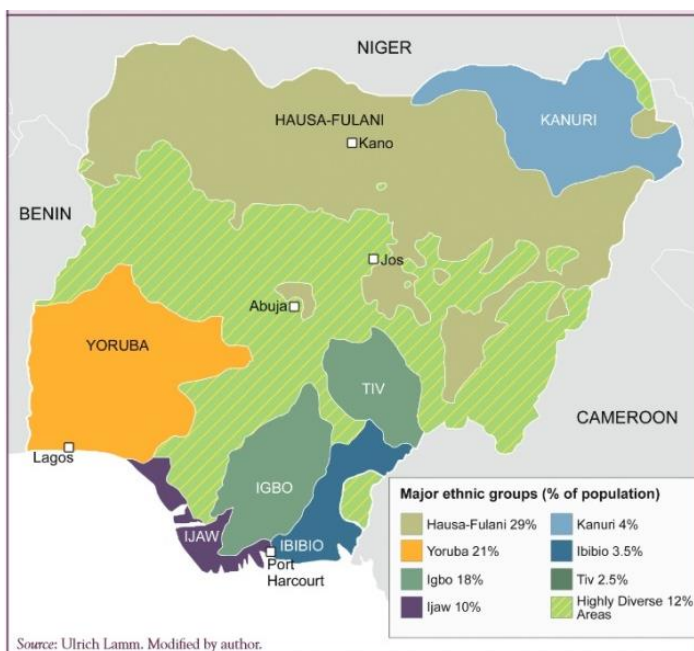

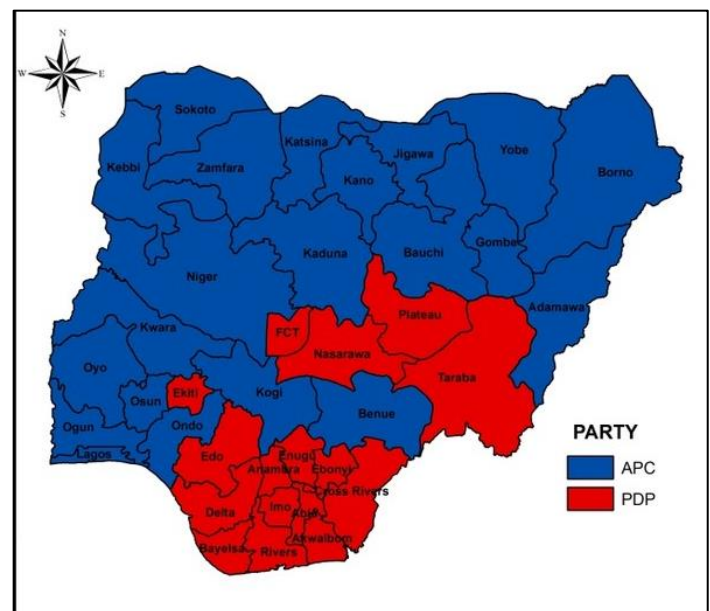**Figure 1** Showing location of Nigeria's ethnic groups (Africa Centre, 2015)

Figure 1 Showing 2015 elections results by party (Naira Land, 2015)

resentments and fears built up over 40 years of repressed memory. Hamber and Wilson (2002) suggest that 'revenge' can in the right circumstances aid reconciliation, and should be viewed as an impulse as legitimate as forgiveness, which too often 'subverts individual needs to political expediency'. If Radio Biafra's broadcasts become more provocative, the legitimacy of their contribution must be re-considered, yet revenge through mockery and scorn on a radio station must surely be seen as more desirable than a return to violence.

Radio Biafra were not the first to publically call for a new secession: on the 13th of September 1999, The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was founded by the lawyer Ralph Uwazurike (Duruji, 2012b, p.530). MASSOB aimed to take a non-violent approach informed by Ghandi to remove the Igbo people from a union where they claimed to be unwanted and despised by the other ethnic groups (Duruji, 2012b, p.531). MASSOB's non-violent foundations did little to calm the Nigerian government's response. Although the response has been inconsistent (Smith, 2010, p.197) it has frequently been regressive (Hirsch, 2012). However, as Duruji (2012b, p.545) argues, this repressive response has been counterproductive, radicalising younger members who have formed violent factions. The fact that membership of MASSOB is particularly strong among young men is important to note. Lorey and Beezley (2001, p.xxviii) argue that generational change benefits reconciliation, a claim surely disproved by the Nigerian case. Nigeria is an incredibly 'young' nation: 45% of the population are under fifteen years of age, and over half are under thirty (CIA, 2015). Yet the memory of a war which ended over forty years ago lives on, both through membership of groups such as MASSOB and through young writers like Adichie, supporting Bell's (2008, p.151) claim that the impact of memory can be felt for generations. More than this however, it can be argued that the young membership of MASSOB reflects a key aspect of Biafran memory: the linkages made to perceptions of corruption and marginalisation. It is of little coincidence that MASSOB finds such favour among the poor men of urban Igbo areas (Smith, 2010, p.197). Perceptions of marginalisation in the distribution of power and resources have encouraged the growth of separatist movements (Okanta, 2014, p.360). MASSOB's role as a pressure group for equality and justice is exemplified by their repeated calls for an end to their marginalisation in Nigeria (Godwin, 2015). The renewed demand for Biafra must therefore be seen as a rejection by Igbos of their post-war socio-political and economic status (Duruji, 2012a, p.332).

To investigate the origins of widespread Igbo perception of marginalisation, one can consider the nature of the 'reconciliation' policies implemented post-Biafra. General

Gowon's administration announced a policy of 'no victor, no vanquished' and of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (3Rs) immediately after the war, yet the authenticity of these policies is greatly disputed (Duruji, 2012a, p.330). It is highlighted that all Biafran people's assets were frozen in 1970, with Igbo families given just twenty Nigerian pounds upon re-entering Nigeria (Duru, 2012, p.245). Little reconstruction took place in Igbo areas, and families who fled during the war struggled to regain their property on their return (Aka, 2000, pp.339-340). A general perception exists therefore that Igbos were deliberately punished and re-entered Nigeria as second class citizens, a punishment with implications to this day. As Smith (2012, p.192) states, 'Igbo preoccupation with their marginalisation is profound'. The fact that no Igbo has been president since the war provides a particular point of contention (Smith, 2010, p.12; Ross, 2012). Establishing the existence of deliberate marginalisation is beyond the scope of this study, yet it is evident that in terms of the distribution of political power and resources, a case can be made for bias against Igbos and that moreover, ethnicity as a whole plays a dominant role in Nigerian political and economic life (Aka, 2000, p.331 and 339). It could be suggested that in a nation typified by ethnic rivalries, one is likely to find perceptions of marginalisation and favouritism among most groups. However, memory of Biafra and of the suffering of Igbos both before and after the war adds an additional level of grievance to Igbo perceptions of marginalisation.

The issue of marginalisation is given added potency by the perception of endemic corruption in Nigeria. Transparency International's 2013 Corruption barometer found that 94% of Nigerians felt that political parties were corrupt and that 78% felt that corruption was an issue in the public sector in general (Transparency International, 2013). Smith (2010, p.192) suggests that Nigerians both recognise that corruption undermines development yet that also wealth and power are achieved through corruption. The perception that one's group is being left out of beneficial relationships and deals therefore generates resentment. In his study of Rwanda, Staub (2006, p.884) suggests that survivors' poverty was a continual reminder of the genocide and intensified their trauma. Similarly for poor Igbos, memory of Biafra provides a framework through which to understand their struggle. Igbo ethno-nationalist movements can therefore also be understood as anti-corruption movements, with the ethno-nationalist narrative opening up a new channel of contestation of government policies (Smith, 2010, p.192). One therefore sees how competing memories can, as Brown (2012) suggests, become a tool of lobbying. While it is agreed that many Igbos do not necessarily support the separatist aims of movements such as MASSOB or Radio Biafra

(Smith, 2010, p.194), this does not lessen the validity of the grievances expressed in these alternative narratives, nor the resonance which such narratives have with those who seek to understand their lessened situation in life.

Section Four: Discussion

The memory of Biafra, although officially silenced, evidently continues to play a role in destabilising relations in Nigeria. Applying an agonistic lens to post-Biafra Nigeria suggests why the suppression of memory has been unsuccessful and how agonistic memory could aid reconciliation. First, agonism demonstrates that pluralism is natural and that the creation of a consensus is an inherently political project which leaves some voices silenced (Dryzeck and Niemeyer, 2006, p.637). The enforcement of an elite constructed consensus is precisely the nature of post-Biafra memory in Nigeria. Igbo memories have been discounted, in favour of not just an alternative narrative, but silence. The dismissal of Igbo memory has in turn delegitimised Igbo post-war grievances and thus led to the accumulation of resentment towards the federal government.

It is necessary to avoid entering the realms of 'counterfactual history' in this case. One cannot say that if the memory of Biafra had not been suppressed, that the reunion of Igbos to Nigeria would have been more successful. Nevertheless, it can certainly be argued that turning Biafra in to a 'taboo' subject has given the memory a power which the federal government could not have foreseen. Rather than shutting down an avenue of contestation and division, the suppression of memory has stunted reconciliation and turned Biafra in to an ever present spectre. It was perhaps an understandable impulse of the federal government to suppress the memory of the most turbulent time in Nigeria's history, particularly for a nation fraught with ethnic divisions. Yet as seen in Angola (Pearce, 2015) government suppression of memory does little other than delegitimise the state and open space for contestation. Thus the utility of agonistic memory has already become evident. Allowing a pluralistic memory of Biafra may provide greater legitimacy to the government as well as allowing the valid grievances of Igbos to be fairly heard. Therefore, the memory of Biafra cannot truly be said to be silent. The reaction across Nigeria to mention of Biafra suggests a memory not yet complete and a fear of what that memory could unleash.

What has emerged prominently from this study is that, more than the suppression of memory alone, reconciliation has been hindered by inequality and corruption in Nigeria. Rampant corruption has long threatened the legitimacy and stability of the Nigerian state

(Ogundiya, 2009, p.182). In her study of the memory of Biafra, Amadiume (2000, p.52) argues that social justice is central to any reconciliation. Likewise, Miall et al (1999, p.206) state that the ability to trust is essential for the effective functioning of any political system. It is this trust which Nigeria is lacking, not only due to corruption, but due to the compounding impact of the knowledge that Igbos have not been allowed to remember their past. Thus, the memory of Biafra is inextricably linked to issues of post-war marginalisation and corruption. In 1999 military rule ended in Nigeria, and the intermittent transition to democracy began (Aka, 2000, p.334). However, as Kymlicka and Bashir (2008, p.5) warn, democratisation processes which do not provide recognition for diversity inevitability become a form of domination of one group over another. Rather than taking the opportunity to open up debate, Nigeria's policy of silence continued. Coupled with shrinking economic opportunities and mass unemployment (Duruji, 2012b, p.537), it is little wonder that the memory of Biafra retains such a potent impact. What Duru (2012, p.193) terms an 'inbred sense of distrust and suspicion' will continue to hinder reconciliation unless the memory of Biafra is allowed to be spoken and the concerns and grievances of Igbos are heard.

As Ikpeze (2000, p.90) suggests, marginalisation is a phenomenon endemic in societies filled with antagonistic relations. The question is therefore how to transform these antagonistic relations in to agonistic relations. It is the contention of this study that rather than seeing the voices of Radio Biafra, MASSOB or literary works like HYS as threats to stability, one can view them as legitimate contributions to a debate over the past, and future, of Nigeria. As per the agonistic memory framework, all contributions must meet the meta-consensus of non-violence and a desire for equality which, with the exception of MASSOB's extreme breakaway factions, this study believes is met by the aforementioned cases. Allowing these discourses in to the arena of legitimate debate can reveal the valid grievances which lie behind them; not only of the pain over the silence of Biafra but also of the struggle in post-war years. Remembering violent pasts is essential for legitimatising the rights of those who suffered (Odoemene, 2012, p.178) and moreover, for preventing the development of a level of resentment and distrust now evident in Nigeria. Currently, Igbo narratives are considered sectional and oppositional (Obiezu, 2012, p.193). Under an agonistic framework, these narratives would be accepted as valid contributions to a debate over the nature of Nigeria.

Achieving reconciliation in Nigeria should therefore not be viewed as an attempt to create national unity or a consensus over the past. The agonistic framework illustrates that the

implementation of a false consensus in post-war Nigeria, rather than enabling reconciliation, has created further divisions. The nature of Nigeria, of great ethnic diversity, necessitates a route to reconciliation which embraces pluralism, over the illusion of returning to pre-war harmony. An agonistic framework does not entail the abandonment of grievances or differing opinions, but rather an acceptance of the naturally pluralistic character of Nigeria, to combat the mistrust now endemic in the nation. Nevertheless, the applicability of agonistic memory to Nigeria remains limited in several ways. The rise of militant groups like Boko Haram has led to a heightened sensitivity to all forms of ethno-nationalism, causing even greater difficulty in having valid ethnic grievances heard (Premium Times, 2015c; Juju, 2015). Moreover, the level of inequality increases the probability of a consensus being imposed by elites. Although Mendeloff (2004, p.376) remains to the greater extent sceptical of the functionality of truth-telling in reconciliation, he does suggest that if the truth is to be effective, it is more likely to be so in relatively stable states, with a minimum level of democracy. The quality of Nigeria's fledgling democracy remains uncertain, although hopes may be justifiably raised following the first democratic removal of a sitting president in Nigeria's history (Aljazeera, 2015). The causes of the continuing underdevelopment of some areas of Nigeria are beyond the scope of memory and reconciliation to address. However, agonistic memory provides an essential means through which Nigerians can express their dissatisfaction at the state of their nation.

This study of Nigeria holds several implications for wider reconciliation processes. First, although TRCs are to be commended for encouraging remembrance, it is essential that those testifying at a TRC are allowed to voice their opinions freely, even if this is to state that they do not forgive. No impulse to adhere to fixed narratives, as Moon (2006a) highlighted in South Africa, should exist. Moreover, TRCs should not be viewed as marking the end of the debate over the past, but instead utilised as the beginning of a pluralistic debate. As Gillis (1994, p.20) states, it must be the role of democratic societies to publicize the memory of different groups. Reconciliation is not therefore to be equated with national unity; as such unity is frequently achieved through the suppression of competing narratives. The enemy and adversary distinction suggests that to channel conflicts towards democratic ends is better than suppressing rivalries in the hope they will fade. Furthermore, reconciliation processes which claim to re-instate pre-war harmony are revealed to be falsehoods. Conflicts are rarely unexpected eruptions of violence, and the Nigerian case is illustrative of the existing ethnic divisions which lead to war and which are unlikely to suddenly vanish post-conflict. Neither

is an absence of war indicative of a successful reconciliation; as preventing violence must not be the sole aim of reconciliation processes. One must thus consider how reconciliation is to be measured. The assumption that silence over Biafra represented a successful reconciliation is revealed as a falsehood once the role of memory in reconciliation is taken in to account. It is paramount that social justice plays a central role in the post-conflict, to ensure that an elite consensus is not imposed and to prevent continuing inequalities from feeding the growth of resentment. Attempting to close the door on discussions of the past limits the examination of a conflict's causes, thereby allowing those causes to continue unchallenged. For Nigeria, the inequalities and corruption which contributed to Biafra's secession remain to this day. The evidence of punitive measures directed at Igbos following the end of the war is symptomatic of the negligence of the federal government in ensuring that Igbos were made to feel like welcomed and valued members of Nigeria, rather than defeated captives. Allowing remembrance of Biafra would be a crucial first step in promoting greater pluralism in Nigeria, lessening Igbo resentment and creating a wider understanding of the lasting impact of Biafra. One need only remember the history of Biafra to comprehend the trauma associated with its memory. It is little wonder therefore that suppressing the memory of Biafra has so endangered reconciliation.

Section Five: Conclusion

> "What mattered was that the massacres frightened and united the Igbo. What mattered was that the massacres made fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians" (Adichie, 2014, p.205)

This study has explored the relationship between memory and reconciliation in post-Biafra Nigeria through a framework of agonistic memory as a tool of reconciliation. It was not the aim of the investigation to point to a solution to Nigeria's deep seated divisions. However, it is clear that public silence over Biafra has negatively affected reconciliation and contributed to the resentment and suspicion which has come to characterise inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. It is suggested above all that the expectation that former Biafrans would re-enter Nigeria carrying no 'baggage' made unreasonable assumptions about the ability to suppress memory.

Ultimately, to forgive and forget is not the route to reconciliation. The agonistic framework suggests that rather than forgiving past enmity, oppositional forces can channel their energies in to adversarial debate to the benefit of democracy. Although the validity of

agonism as a political reality remains disputed (Dryzeck, 2005, p.238) it is evident that the model provides a useful insight in to how a diverse memory can be utilised in reconciliation. The forty years distance from Biafra, coupled with the prevalence of young men in Biafran separatist movements, demonstrates that silence in public cannot ensure silence in private. Moreover, the makeup of groups like MASSOB highlights the link between memory of Biafra and inequality in Nigeria and the important role of social justice in reconciliation. Of course, it must be remembered that poverty in Nigeria is not a fate reserved solely for Igbos. Yet, the resentment generated by existing at the negative extreme of Nigeria's inequality is exacerbated by remembrance of Biafra: by both what might have been and by what has followed. The federal government's silence on Biafra has served to delegitimise their position and open space for contestation, exacerbated by the prevalence of corruption. Silence has therefore made the truth more powerful. As Odoemene (2012, p.181) states:

> 'The possibility of genuine reconciliation in post-civil war Nigeria will remain a chimera unless the detailed histories, memories and unfortunate vestiges of that war are adequately acknowledged.'

Reconciliation in Nigeria therefore cannot be viewed as a success due to the suppression of memory and of Igbo grievances. Groups such as MASSOB and Radio Biafra are a symptom of this failure and yet also a suggestion for how it can be remedied. Agonistic memory suggests that allowing the expression of legitimate competing viewpoints and memories is essential for a reconciliation not dominated by elite consensus. As memory cannot be suppressed and competing voices cannot be silenced, utilising agonistic memory to promote debate and democracy may be a more effective means through which to manage diversity. Therefore, reconciliation can only be achieved when Nigeria begins to embrace the many narratives of its past and considers the grievances which lie behind them. Events such as Biafra are not so easily forgotten and forgiven.

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