

Contestations, Conflicts and Corollaries of Sociohistorical Conditions in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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To cite this article:

Onyeka Ike. Contestations, Conflicts and Corollaries of Sociohistorical Conditions in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*. Vol. 11, No. 1, 2023, pp. 44-55. doi: 10.11648/j.ijla.20231101.19

Received: May 5, 2022; **Accepted:** May 23, 2022; **Published:** February 27, 2023

Abstract: The nineteen sixties were a historical era largely characterised by intense sociopolitical contestations and conflicts on the African continent. Although historians, historiographers, political scientists and even sociologists have, over the years, interpreted and analysed these challenging conditions with divergent academic lenses, Chimamanda Adichie's artistic representations and creative interpretations in *Half of a Yellow Sun* have thrown up enormous fresh insights. The research, therefore, aims to trace and identify the diverse sociohistorical conditions from which certain sociopolitical contestations and conflicts represented or alluded to in the fiction are derived from, and consequently evaluate them. Applying the critical tenets of New Historicism and qualitative research method, the study unveils that quite a number of the sociopolitical contestations and conflicts represented in the novel still subsist in various forms despite the multiplicity of their dire corollaries, mainly on account of the fact that their precursors have not been decisively dealt with. This implies that efforts directed so far to annihilate the ugly trees of incessant sociopolitical contestations and bloody conflicts on the terrain can be said to have been targeted at the branches and not at the roots. The study maintains that for a level of sustainable peace, stability and development to be attained on the continent, the sociohistorical and political conditions that birth and nourish the contestations and conflicts, with their associated corollaries, should be decisively mitigated.

Keywords: Contestation, Conflict, Corollary, Sociohistorical, Sociopolitical

1. Introduction

Onyemelukwe-Waziri [16] posits that "since the 1960s, Nigeria has continuously been in a state of internal conflict, with different ethno-religious groups vying for social, economic and political control. The situation has played out extreme violence..." This position is made in view of some immediate postcolonial conflicts Nigeria experienced soon after the British colonial administration relinquished the reigns of power on October 1, 1960. Some of those conflicts culminated in a thirty-month bloody civil war which ended in January 1970. Onyemelukwe-Waziri [16] also takes her position in view of the current onslaught of Islamic extremist militant group, Boko Haram, in the country. Nigeria's situations right from the early sixties as demonstrated in the novel is similar to that of several other African nations at the same historical period in that the contestations and conflicts are all orchestrated by similar factors like colonialism, neocolonialism, ethnicity, etc. Again, all have similar

corollaries in the domains highlighted. Thus through her realistic characterisations and intertextual parody, Adichie [3] vividly captures and portrays a number of Nigeria's, indeed Africa's colonial and postcolonial contestations and conflicts. This is one of the qualities that make *Half of a Yellow Sun* outstanding as a historical fiction, truly connecting to the of the continent's multifarious foundational and challenges. These representations largely contribute in the novel realistic, humanistic, historical and an endearing aesthetic whole. One can therefore rightly say that the work a concatenation of facts and fiction. This study identifies the sociohistorical circumstances from which certain sociopolitical contestations and conflicts represented in the novel are derived from, and also evaluates these representations in order to sieve out the messages conveyed therein, and to ascertain whether or not such conflicts have been resolved or are still raging like the ones portrayed in her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* [2].

2. Emerging Issues and Discussions

The usual guests have gathered at Odenigbo's house, again, at his University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus residence, and we are told that his devoted houseboy Ugwu steps into the living room and his hands work mechanically, serving kola-nuts and alligator pepper, uncorking bottles, shoveling rice, laying out steaming bowls of pepper-soup. It is amidst the entertainments and discussions going on that we learn, through the voice of Odenigbo, of a major conflict going on in the country when he says, "Nobody is saying that burning government property is a good thing, but to send the army to kill in the name of order? There are Tiv people lying dead for nothing. For nothing! Balewa has lost his mind!"

Here, Odenigbo alludes to a significant historical crisis which occurred between the Tiv people, the 7th largest ethnic group in the country, and the Northern Regional Government led by Sir Ahmadu Bello as well as the Federal Government headed by Prime Minister Balewa who Odenigbo blames for sending troops to quell the crisis by killing the Tiv people. Odenigbo's condemnation of the action is predicated on his belief that the purported offense of the Tiv people does not justify their paying the supreme price of being killed by agents of the government. "For nothing!" he emphasizes. In-as-much as he does not approve of arson and destruction of government properties, he believes that the situation ought to have been handled differently by the government in power. In his "Tiv (Nigeria) Riots of 1960, 1964; The Principle of Minimum Force," Audu [5] elaborates on the underlying reasons and issues concerning this historical crisis thus:

In the opening years of Nigeria's independence, in the early 1960s, Tiv division in Benue province was engulfed by a succession of widespread civil unrest which threatened the stability of the Native Authority in particular and the credibility of the Northern Regional Government in general. The crisis was remarkable for its mutual exchange of recriminations between the government party in the North - the Northern Peoples Congress and opposition United Middle Belt Congress. The NPC blamed the Action Group (AG) and the UMBC, especially the Alliance leader in Tiv division, Mr. Joseph Tarka of undermining legitimate authority and canvassing and agitating for the creation of Middle Belt State out of the Northern Region. This development, the Regional Government viewed as conspiracy with external influences to destabilize its government. This explains Northern government determination to crush any attempt by the UMBC to undermine their "peace" and hegemony. On the other hand, the UMBC saw the riots as an inevitable... The crisis actually began to brew in 1959 during the build up to elections. The UMBC had actively mobilized popular support in the length and breadth of Tivland. As a result of this popular support from the people, the opposition UMBC won 85 percent of Tiv votes cast while the NPC won only 10 percent. ...the native authority exercised power without responsibility just as the native court was simply notorious for flouting due process which operated.

There was widespread arbitrary taxation, victimisation of opposition supporters was exercised without discretion and unwarranted closure of markets became the rule rather than the exception. By the time the first explosion came in August, 1960, the UMBC supporters in Tiv Division had exhausted their patience and tolerance for the local functionaries of the NPC regime. The government having made it impossible for legitimate opposition voices to be heard made itself vulnerable to violent aggression.

The reasons that prompt both the Northern Regional Government and their collaborators at the Federal level under the umbrella of the same political party- the NPC to "send the army to kill in the name of order" and, to use the exact words of Odenigbo, "for nothing!" can be clearly adduced from Audu's [5] presentation above which include: self-determination by the Tiv people, "oppressive and marginalizing policies of the feudal government" of NPC, highhandedness of the Native Authority acting on behalf of the ruling NPC, arbitrary police arrests, detention and imprisonment of innocent citizens, political thuggery and intimidation of dissent Tiv voices, political intolerance, manipulation of court processes, exercising power without a commensurate responsibility to the people, unlawful taxation, reckless suppression and victimization of opposition supporters by the ruling NPC, etc. And since the character of Prime Minister Balewa who in the novel as in historical reality is vested with the constitutional power to deploy the army, it is just convenient to "send the army to kill in the name of order," without any meaningful effort to possibly bring the agitating and dissenting voices to a round table discussion and seek for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. It is a typical case of might is right and winner takes it all which is still a recurring issue in the Nigerian political landscape till today. Again, one can also say that most of the adduced reasons for the Tiv uprising still play out in different forms at different places in the country, even in this current "democratic" dispensation; a clear indication that the political leaders of the country have learnt absolutely nothing from history. Audu [5] vehemently believes that it was simply on account of divergent political opinions that "...exemplary force was employed by the then regional government in power through its agents to punish the Tiv civilian population for supporting the United Middle Belt Congress" thereby resulting to acts such as burning of properties, beatings, torture, murders, and forced population movement. By alluding to this significant conflict through the character and voice of the ebullient Odenigbo, Adichie thematises an important sociopolitical conflict that can be said to be derived from notable sociohistorical circumstances in Nigeria.

Again, it is through the voice of Odenigbo that Adichie equally portrays certain socio-political conflicts resulting from the enforcement of white supremacist ideologies and racial segregation in diverse nations of the world including Nigeria. Like some occurrences in Nigeria which she earlier narrated, these alluded conflicts are also derived from certain sociohistorical circumstances in those nations and shall be

evaluated in order to enable some perspectives to crystallize. As with the case of the Tiv riots, this allusion is traceable to the first part of *Half of a Yellow Sun* which Adichie [3] captions "The Early Sixties." By her captioning of this part and then making vivid historical allusions to events that largely shaped that period in history, the novelist tries to follow the path of historical accuracy, concreteness and clarity. The intellectuals are again gathered at Odenigbo's house at Nsukka as they engage themselves in lively discussions on a variety of issues bordering on their concerns for the newly independent Nigeria, on the sweeping wave of nationalism across the continent of Africa against imperialist domination as well as other global issues when Odenigbo identifies what he refers to as "great white evil" and states:

We are living in a time of great white evil. They are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia, they fermented what happened in the Congo, they won't let American blacks vote, they won't let Australian Aborigines vote, but the worst of all is what they are doing here. This defence pact is worse than apartheid and segregation, but we don't realize it. They are controlling us from behind drawn curtains. It is very dangerous!

The sociohistorical conflicts Odenigbo alludes to at this juncture shall be briefly located and evaluated in order to ascertain whether they are still existing in those nations, as it is the case with some of such situations in Nigeria. First, it is revealing that the vivacious intellectual, Odenigbo, from whose voice those words come identifies these conflicts as "great white evil" and the nineteen sixties as "a time" when those evils largely and brazenly manifested in monumental proportions, particularly in colonized nations of Africa and some others parts of the world. "Great white evil" is the tag given by Odenigbo to these conditions and conflicts. This is one of the rare cases where "evil" is associated with "white" and not "black" which the West stereo-typically label evil (savages) from time immemorial. In view of the current "Black Lives Matter" protests which originated from the United States on account of police brutality and cold murder of George Floyd, and spread like wild harmattan fire across different nations of the world, one cannot really say that the label of evil on black people have been removed by white supremacists.

Having identified and tagged the conditions and conflicts as "great white evil," Odenigbo goes on the trajectory of naming and shaming. The first item on this list of naming and shaming is that "they are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia." It is not surprising that the situation being alluded to in South Africa and Rhodesia now named Zimbabwe is tagged as "dehumanization" because of the similarities of horrendous experiences of black citizens in those countries at certain periods in their political history. It was really a condition which reduced the black citizens of those nations to sub-humans or second class citizens in the hands of their white supremacist overlords, in desperate attempts by those oppressors to retain and control political power as well as the resources of those nations. Although Adichie does not in any part of the novel elaborate on how

this dehumanization process takes place in South Africa and Rhodesia, history is replete with factual accounts of how it originated and was carried out over a long period of time. Since New Historicism as a theoretical model does not presuppose the ranking or subordination of one text to another but rather places the literary text in dialogue with any other text, other corroborative accounts will therefore be useful at this point in bringing such issues to light. And for the purpose of clarity, those occurrences shall be evaluated country by country in the order in which Adichie states them in her fiction, beginning with South Africa.

The tag given to the "dehumanization of blacks" in South Africa as being referred by Adichie in her fiction is "apartheid." Etymologically, the word "apartheid" is an Afrikaans word meaning "separateness," or "the state of being apart." It literally means and implies "apart-hood." Its first known and recorded use was in the year 1929. In its attempt to shed light on the implications and consequences of the obnoxious legislation that gave birth to the apartheid policy, Wikipedia (2020) states:

Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed in South Africa...from 1948 until the early 1990s. Apartheid was characterized by an authoritarian political culture based on baasskap (or white supremacy), which ensured that South Africa was dominated politically, socially and economically by the nation's minority white population. According to this system of social stratification, white citizens had the highest status, followed by Asians and coloureds, then black Africans... Blacks were not allowed to run businesses or professional practices in areas designated as "white South Africa" unless they had a permit - such being granted only exceptionally. They were required to move to the black "homelands" and set up businesses and practices there. Trains, hospitals and ambulances were segregated. Because of the smaller numbers of white patients and the fact that white doctors preferred to work in the white hospitals, conditions in white hospitals were much better than those in often overcrowded and understaffed, significantly underfunded black hospitals. Residential areas were segregated and blacks were allowed to live in white areas only if employed as a servant and even then only in servants' quarters. Blacks were excluded from working in white areas, unless...

Apartheid in South Africa implied in no small measure that the predominantly black population of the country automatically became slaves in their own land and consequently dispossessed of their ancestral inheritance. There was a firm determination by the Afrikaans, who are mainly the descendants of Dutch and British minority settlers and colonizers, not only to subjugate but also to annihilate. It was in an effort to achieve such objectives that all kinds of tactics were desperately applied to ensure that black South Africans were really suppressed to a subhuman level throughout the period that apartheid lasted. *History.com* [4] equally captures some of those horrendous moments thus:

In one of the most devastating aspects of apartheid, the

government forcibly removed black South Africans from rural areas designated as “white” to the homelands and sold their land at low prices to white farmers. From 1961 to 1994, more than 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and deposited in the Bantustans, where they were plunged into poverty and hopelessness. In 1960, at the black township of Sharpsville, the police opened fire on a group of unarmed blacks associated with the Pan-African Congress (PAC), an offshoot of the ANC. The group had arrived at the police station without passes, inviting arrest as an act of resistance. At least 67 blacks were killed and more than 180... By 1961, most resistance leaders had been captured and sentenced to long prison terms or executed. Nelson Mandela, a founder of Umkhonto we Sizwe (“Spear of the Nation”), the military wing of the ANC, was incarcerated from 1963 to 1990... (“Apartheid”).

Mandela’s incarceration, however, sparked international condemnation and helped in drawing attention and support for the anti-apartheid cause. His loyalists would on June 10, 1980 smuggle out a letter from Mandela in prison and publicised it. The critical and historic letter was captioned “UNITE! MOBILISE! FIGHT ON! BETWEEN THE ANVIL OF THE UNITED MASS ACTION AND THE HAMMER OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE WE SHALL CRUSH APARTHEID!” That letter became a significant source of ignition, invigoration and inspiration to his teeming supporters in South Africa and in the diaspora. They continued with the struggle until the obnoxious apartheid system was abolished in 1994. Mandela eventually emerged in general elections held between 26 and 29 April of that same year as the first black president of South Africa. They were the very first elections in which South African citizens of all ethnic groups and races were freely permitted to take part, and therefore can also be regarded as the first held with universal adult suffrage. Like the Nigerian Civil War, apartheid in South Africa has generated a great array of literature in all the genres. Both during and after the system was abolished, literary artists like Athol Fugard [7] (*Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*), Peter Abraham [1] (*Mine Boy*), Alex la Guma [11] (*A Walk In the Night*), Denis Brutus [6] (*A Simple Lust*) and many more have tried to capture the ugly experiences with their artistic lenses.

Odenigbo asserts that black people in South Africa as well as in Rhodesia are receiving the same kind of treatment which he refers to as “dehumanizing” from white supremacists. Now, the sociohistorical situation which attracted that unpalatable vocabulary from Adichie’s repertory shall be succinctly evaluated in order to see the extent it really went at that period. This is because language is a vital tool in literature, and the use of the lexical item “dehumanizing” to refer to those conditions by the author might be for certain effects, intents and purposes. *Advanced English Dictionary* defines the word “dehumanize” to mean “to deprive of human qualities.” In other words, to dehumanize an individual is to deny (often forcefully) such a person or people the human qualities conferred on them by God Himself right from creation. And wherever there is a dehumanized, a dehumanizer exists. A dehumanizer is usually prompted to dehumanize by his

erroneous thinking that the person to whom his dehumanization activity is targeted at does not deserve those God-given human qualities such as dignity, honour, even fundamental human rights and therefore should be striped of them at the dehumanizer’s comfort and pleasure, but certainly at the detriment of the dehumanized. Simply put, Adichie believes that Africa’s colonial experience is nothing short of a dehumanization venture.

In a number of speeches she has delivered on some global platforms, she has consistently associated colonialism in Africa with indignity, deprivation, exploitation and dispossession of the continent. It is, of course, unequivocal that till today, several negative impacts of colonialism are still being felt economically, socially, politically and otherwise. This is to the extent that several years after many African nations are said to have gained independence from their colonial overlords, they are still in one form or the other tied to their apron strings. And without some of such exploitative bonds, many African leaders believe that their nations cannot stand on their own. This underscores the reason why such leaders have remained mere colonial stooges and appendages even with their big official titles as Presidents, Prime Ministers, etc. Adichie [3] vividly refers to such a situation in Nigeria in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when Odenigbo says:

It’s quite clear Balewa did it because he wants to take away attention from his defence pact with the British. And he knows that slighting the French will always please his masters the British. He’s their stooge. They put him there, and they tell him what to do, and he does it, Westminster model indeed. The white man is the only master Balewa knows. Didn’t he say that Africans are not ready to rule themselves in Rhodesia? If the British tell him to call himself a castrated monkey, he will.

Odenigbo’s vituperation concerning the character of Prime Minister Balewa of Nigeria are in his efforts to debunk Miss Adebayo’s suggestion that the Prime Minister broke “diplomatic relations with France” because French people “tested atomic weapons in Algeria,” another African country. For Odenigbo, Balewa’s action in this regard is not in any way an act of patriotism, nationalism or Pan-Africanism but rather a mere pretext “to take away attention from his defence pact with the British” who in reality was a rival colonial power to the French. Again, this conflict situation is a mimicry of historical reality. *Nigerianscholars.com* maintains that:

In the realm of bilateral relations, Nigeria did not hesitate to break diplomatic ties with France in 1961 when France tested an atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert. The action was against the firm warning by Nigeria having observed that the test was going to be injurious to Nigeria and some other African countries.

This account is corroborated thus by Muktari-Janguza [14]:

...for Nigeria’s foreign policy elites, France remains a formidable obstacle to the country’s regional ambition and an enduring threat to national security. Diplomatic

relations were established on October 1st 1960, following Nigeria's independence. Relations however got off to a bad start. In January 1961, in protest at France's third atomic test in the Sahara Desert, Nigeria broke relations with France, sent the French ambassador packing, placed an embargo on French shipping and aircraft and froze French assets in the country. Franco-Nigerian relations reached their lowest ebb during Nigeria's Civil War when France played a leading role in sustaining the rebellion.

By alluding to this significant diplomatic conflict between Nigeria and France as vividly captured in a conversational manner in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie [3] thematises a socio-political conflict which continues to re-echo in the country's sociopolitical history. Students of History and International Relations have continued to evaluate the sociohistorical circumstances that led to those conflicts in order to ensure a crystallization of various lessons that could be useful and relevant in contemporary times.

Again, Odenigbo equally alleges that Prime Minister Balewa said that "Africans are not ready to rule themselves in Rhodesia," now Zimbabwe. The pertinent question is, what really happened in Rhodesia, to the point that Adichie [3] uses the lexical item "dehumanization" to refer to it? Ironically, while Adichie through the voice of Odenigbo describes the occurrences in Rhodesia as dehumanization, another African in the person and character of Prime Minister Balewa is believed to have said that Africans in Rhodesia are not yet ready to rule themselves, meaning that he desires an extension of colonialism in that country irrespective of whatever may be their ordeals in the hands of their colonizers. Colonial experiences in South Africa are similar to that of Rhodesia in several ways including the land use policy. Incidentally, both countries were colonized by the British. In his "A Brief History of land in Zimbabwe: 1890 – today" Mutasa [15] states:

The period of formal colonization in Zimbabwe lasted 90 years, from September 1890 to independence in April 1980, and was marked by European settler occupation of Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), and the dispossession of millions of black farmers of their land. A series of land policies deprived the majority their land rights while granting rights to a few privileged white elites. The black population was deliberately marginalized by a system of state managed repression, segregation and violence. Beginning in 1890, the settlers' colonial government... was characterized by a systematic dispossession realized largely through violence, war and legislative enactments... By 1914, white settlers, numbering 23, 730, owned slightly more than 19 million acres of land while an estimated 752,000 Africans occupied a total of 21, 390, 080 acres of land... Most black communities were forcibly moved to... poor, infertile soils and located in the inhospitable and tsetse – ridden areas of the country, such as Gokwe and Muzarabani. Efforts to address racial discrimination and land inequality suffered a significant setback when, in 1965, the white minority Rhodesian government of Ian Smith... vowed that there would be no

black majority rule in the country for a thousand years.

It is on the basis of this "vow" that the mistreatment of blacks in Rhodesia intensified and indeed degenerated to a level which Adichie through the voice of the character of Odenigbo refers to as "dehumanization." This implies that the Rhodesian people have been or are devalued as humans; reduced from their God-ordained status as humans to that of slaves, or perhaps animals in their own land. Adichie [3] believes that this is one of the numerous negative consequences of colonialism in Africa. Again, Mutasa [15] is not alone in his presentation of the dehumanizing experiences of black people in Zimbabwe by the white minority population. Mutasa's assertions are corroborated by Streater [17] when he states:

...the rights to stolen lands are fruits that grew from the poisonous tree of oppression, racism, and colonialism... in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe. Great Britain knew that 80% of arable land in what became Zimbabwe was owned by 5% of the white population and millions of black people scratched a living on the rest. The land reform programme aimed to remedy the displacement, landlessness and overcrowding of Black Africans... However, Great Britain attempted to continue its colonial domination of the means of land possession and arable production by protecting the illegitimate interest of British expats in stolen land. This phenomenon has been replicated in other post-colonial African states through the maintenance of economic control by former colonial masters, resulting in the obstruction of the internationally recognized legal right to sovereignty and self-determination. In Rhodesia, Great Britain dispossessed Black Africans of their land and gave ownership to white land settlers who controlled the legal, political and economic means of production.

In view of all these sociohistorical conditions black people were subjected to for several decades on account of colonialism, particularly in South Africa and Rhodesia as cited by Odenigbo in Adichie's [3] *Half of a Yellow Sun*, one cannot agree less when he says, "They are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia." In the context of Odenigbo's assertion here, Adichie is saying that Africa's colonial experiences were characterized by dehumanization, and that the continent is yet to recover from the impacts. However, through the intense struggles which cost people's tears, sweat and blood spilled over decades in South Africa and Rhodesia, one can say today, with a measure of relief, that there is relative freedom and sanity. Although the challenges of neocolonialism are still prevalent, they cannot really be compared to the sorrowful experiences of dehumanization and slavery called colonialism.

Odenigbo goes further to observe that "...they fermented what happened in the Congo..." Congo is another African nation that has seen pains right from the time of its colonial contraption. It should be borne in mind that the "they" being referred to remains the colonialists for Odenigbo has started his observations with the opening statement, "We are living in a time of great white evil." While in the case of South Africa and Rhodesia, the lexical item "dehumanizing" is used

in referring to the experiences of black people there, the word “fermented” is applied in reference to the experiences of Africans in the Congo. Both lexical items “dehumanizing” and “fermented” are action-oriented; they are verbs. Apart from being action words, another similarity between the two words is that in the context of their deployments, both do not suggest positive developments. This is to say that both words have negative contextual applications. Some of the definitions of the term “fermented,” according to *Advanced English Dictionary* include:

- 1) a state of agitation or turbulent change or development
- 2) be in an agitation or excited state
- 3) work up into agitation or excitement
- 4) a process in which an agent causes an organic substance to break down into simpler substances; especially the anaerobic breakdown of sugar into alcohol
- 5) go sour or spoil

From these definitions, five key words which significantly shed light on the lexical item “fermented,” especially in the context of its usage in the novel are “agitation,” “turbulence,” “breakdown,” “sour,” and “spoil.” So when Odenigbo says, “...they fermented what happened in the Congo...,” it therefore means that the colonialists made the Congo nation to turn from its former state of stability (before colonialism) to a state of instability and agitation. Secondly, the activities of colonial forces in the Congo is characterized by unrest, disorder or turbulence although those issues were not there, at least in such monumental proportions before their arrival. Thirdly, colonialism in the Congo brings a kind of breakdown, not a build-up, in the political and social system of the Congo nation. Also, the political crisis orchestrated by colonialism in the Congo brings a sour or unpalatable situation to the people. And in view of the keyword “spoil,” it means that the colonialists violently plundered, messed up, ruined, damaged or destroyed the Congo in the process of pursuing their self-assigned agenda of colonization. The pertinent question now is, how did the colonialists perpetrate all these in the Congo? It is also necessary to ascertain whether those ugly issues still exist in the Congo several years after their independence was declared. And if they still exist or persist, in what specific ways do they affect the political and social well-being of the people of Congo in contemporary time? Simply put, Odenigbo’s observation that “...they fermented what happened in the Congo implies that colonialism is squarely responsible for the crisis and problems in the Congo, and should therefore take the blame for those turmoils.

One major spanner deployed by colonialists throughout the nations of Africa that came under the burden of colonialism at one time or the other is the divide and rule tactics. It was a system whereby colonial powers pitched ethnic nationalities or tribal groups in a particular country against one another and consequently exploited their differences for their own economic and political advantages. Being fully aware of the strength and progress that come with the unity of a particular people, colonial powers always ensured that the constituent tribal units of a particular country are divided; often made to

suspect and see themselves as enemies, and in the process fight one another. And when the animosities and antagonisms go on, the colonialists busy themselves in sucking and exploiting the economic resources of the people for their personal aggrandizement as well as for that of their home countries. In trying to pitch the indigenous ethnic groups of a colonized nation against one another, colonial powers usually, first of all, sow the seed of certain political and economic inequalities which they knew would certainly result to suspicion, hatred and antagonism. When they set the stage on fire, they still control or rather manipulate the inferno to their favour from behind the scene. It was through this process that several African nations, particularly in the 1960s, experienced monumental conflicts and bloodshed while the colonial powers carted away their common patrimony to their homelands and to their reservation areas (GRAs) where they made almost as comfortable as their home countries while the majority of the colonized populace lived in ghettos and in squalor.

Odenigbo’s observation and assertion that “...they fermented what happened in the Congo...” is corroborated by *Wikipedia* (2020) which states:

The Congo crisis was a period of political upheaval and conflict in the Republic of the Congo... The crisis began almost immediately after the Congo became independent from Belgium... Around 100,000 people are believed to have been killed during the crisis. A nationalist movement in the Belgian Congo demanded the end of colonial rule: this led to the country’s independence on 30 June 1960. In the first week of July, a mutiny broke out in the army and violence erupted between black and white civilians... The involvement of the Soviet split the Congolese government and led to an impasse between Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu. Lumumba was taken captive and subsequently executed in 1961.

Colonial rule in the Congo began in the late 19th century. King Leopold II of Belgium frustrated by Belgium’s lack of international power and prestige, attempted to persuade the Belgium government to support colonial expansion around the then-largely unexplored Congo Basin. ...On many occasions, ...the state helped companies with strikebreaking and countering other efforts by the indigenous population to better their lot. There was also a high degree of racial segregation. Large numbers of white immigrants...were nonetheless always treated as superior to blacks. The Congo’s rich natural resources,...led to substantial interest in the region from both the Soviet Union and the United States as the Cold war developed...some whites planned to attempt a coup d’etat if a black majority government took power. As law and order began to break down, white civilians formed militia groups known as Corps de volontaires Européens (“European Volunteer Corps”) to police their neighborhoods. These militias frequently attacked blacks...Many Congolese people had assumed that independence would produce tangible and immediate social change,... Lieutenant-General Emile Janssens, the

Belgian commander of the Force Publique...told them that things under his command would stay the same, summarizing the point by writing: "Before Independence = After Independence" on a blackboard. ("Congo Crisis").

This account reveals that the colonial contrivance called the Republic of Congo was first born out of the capitalist and egocentric concerns of King Leopold II of Belgium who was "frustrated by Belgium's lack of international power and prestige" and therefore "attempted to persuade the Belgian government to support colonial expansion around the then largely unexplored Congo basin." Although they came under the pretext of a "civilizing mission," their original motive for interfering in the affairs of the hitherto stable and peaceful Congo basin is bare. The initial driving intention was capitalist and acquisitive; just to also gain international power, recognition and prominence like the other colonial giants such as Britain, France, etc, hence the "scramble for Africa." Upon gaining access to the internal affairs of the Congo people in the name of colonialism, the colonial officials became violent against the indigenous Congolese and also fostered "the ruthless system of economic extraction." In their relentless efforts to perpetuate violence and their exploitative propensities, they frustrated the genuine efforts of the indigenous Congolese to "better their lot" which they have the right to do in their own country, in their own internal affairs and with their God-given resources.

The colonialists in the Congo ensured that they sowed seeds of discord among the various indigenous tribal groups in order to divide them and consequently exploit their differences for their own economic gains. They also projected themselves as being superior to the Congolese on the assumption that the blacks were inferior mortals and therefore deserved neither dignity nor rights, even in their own nation. There was also a clash of interests in Congo's "rich natural resources" by other notable global forces like the Soviet Union, the United States, etc. Thus at the centre of the battle for the soul of the Congo nation is the struggle by the imperial forces to have a substantial share of their God-given "rich natural resources." There was and still no indication of any genuine intention to "civilize" the people or better their deplorable economic conditions in any way hence the Belgians even put stringent restrictions to the acquisition of higher education by the indigenous Congolese. This is substantially on account of their awareness that knowledge is power and that education is a strong weapon with which to resist any form of oppression or tyranny - colonial and otherwise. So the Belgian colonial forces made determined efforts to frustrate the educational advancement of the Congolese people while equally exploiting their rich economic resources for the well-being, growth and development of their home country. Again, apart from being in control of the military forces in the Congo, white civilians also formed militia groups which sporadically attacked black people. Furthermore, to ensure that the Congo is permanently divided along tribal lines, the Belgians took it upon themselves to campaign against Patrice Lumumba, the country's first and charismatic Prime Minister "whom they

wanted to marginalize." They accused Lumumba "of being a communist" with the intention "to fragment the nationalist movement, support rival, ethnic-based parties..." Thus there was every effort by the imperialist Belgium to ensure that nothing really worked well for the Congolese people both during colonialism and after their independence on June 30, 1960. This is why even after independence, "the Republic of the Congo was still reliant on colonial institutions ...to function from day to day" as so many whites still kept their various vital positions and refused to relinquish leadership and power. These conditions resulted to a lot of resentments among the indigenous Congolese who had earnestly hoped that independence would come with a lot of meaningful reliefs to their suffering and downtrodden citizens. The insistence of the whites, the Belgian imperial forces to maintain the status quo despite independence resulted to a monumental implosion which claimed the lives of over 100,000 human beings within a few months and still claiming till today.

The seed of discord planted by Belgium in the Congo had, of course, germinated, grown and continues to blossom in several ways. Since the 1960s, the Congo have been on the world news for all the negative reasons largely on account of the seed of acrimony deliberately planted among them by the imperial forces. So it is quite understandable, even justifiable when Odenigbo's accusatory voice rings out: "...they fermented what happened in the Congo..." *Wikipedia's* account is corroborated by Mounz [13] in his "The Congo Crisis: A Re-examination (1960-1965)" where he equally points out the role played by the American government in particular in destabilizing Congo:

U.S. intervention in the Congo ended with American support for a right-wing dictator not only because of a commitment to contain the communist threat, but also because of a commitment to liberal ideology. The Kennedy administration continued to plot against Patrice Lumumba, the self-avowed nationalist and first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Congo, and employed bribery, blackmail and threats in order to have Cyrille Adoula elected as prime minister in August 1961. The outbreak of leftist revolts in the fall of 1963 occurred because the Kennedy administration failed to treat Congolese leaders as equal partners in the state building process.

It should also be noted that America's interests in the Congo are not only limited to issues related to containing communism and entrenchment of liberal ideology in the country. But like the rest of the Western nations whose eyes were keenly fixed on the Congo's rich mineral resources, America did not lose sight of same. *Wikipedia* (2020) clearly confirms these when it states that "the Congo's rich natural resources, including uranium – much of the uranium used by the U.S nuclear programme during World War II was Congolese – led to substantial interest in the region from both the Soviet Union and the United States as the Cold war developed." Till today, natural resources such as oil, diamond, gold, etc, are at the heart of many conflicts in

several African nations including the Democratic Republic of Congo. In all these conflicts, Western influences have been fingered in one form or the other. Thus, the continent of Africa continues to boil and continues with an unending experiences of sorrows, tears and blood partly on account of instigation and interference by former colonial overlords and other Western nations whose eyes are still fixed on controlling the rich mineral and oil deposits of such nations. Several coups and counter coups in Africa have been traced to the devious instigations by former colonial powers whose stock in trade remains the divide and rule tactics; manipulation and fragmentation along ethnic lines and sociopolitical hierarchies in order to continue to effectively exploit the patrimony of nations. According to Villar [18], Lumumba was targeted and assassinated in Congo in 1961 because of his firm stance that “minerals belong to the people of DRC, it is the responsibility of the State to manage its benefits and to share it among the population. The wealth of a country is the wealth of their people.” Once his determination as Prime Minister to ensure that the people of Congo were not shortchanged from benefiting from their enormous God-given mineral deposits was ascertained, he was branded a communist, targeted for marginalization and eventually wasted at the prime of his life, at age 36, in controversial circumstances. Again, citing the conclusion of a critical research work conducted in 2008 for the African Development Bank entitled “Dealing With the Consequences of Violent Conflicts in Africa” Villar [18] maintains that it is on account of the struggles for the control of mineral resources that:

...in the past 40 years there has been more violent conflicts in Africa than on the other continents. Moreover, the wars in Africa have lasted longer and have been deadlier. Libya, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Central African Republic... So many wars...so many conflicts... so much suffering... Natural resources have been associated with the increase of military spending on the continent. Military expenditure is on the rise, experiencing the highest progression in the world from 2002-2011... Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan... have gone through some of the bloodiest wars and conflicts in recent decades in the world.

By thematising these issues and conflicts in her novel, Adichie [3] demonstrates that although indigenous African leaders have not been particularly leading well after gaining political independence from their former colonial masters, the imperialists still have a chunk of the blame to take for instigating diverse conflicts and setbacks in the continent through various forms of behind-the-scene manipulations aimed at their continual benefit in one form or the other from the peoples' patrimony.

Odenigbo further identifies another form of “great white evil” when he says, “...they won't let American blacks vote, they won't let Australian Aborigines vote...” By disenfranchising people purely on the basis of the colour of their skin, Adichie [3] through the voice of Odenigbo implies that the dominant white American populace and their leaders

who promulgated the relevant laws are guilty of perpetrating “evil” comparable to the devastation associated with colonialism in Africa. She believes that no one chooses the colour of skin at creation, and that it is simply nothing short of “evil” for a fellow man to suppress, subjugate, exploit or deny others their fundamental human right such as the right to vote and be voted for, simply because they have dark skin colour. America remains one of the major countries of the world with a classical historical record of racial segregation, particularly against blacks. Elaborating on the infamous Jim Crow discriminatory laws, *History.com* [4] states:

Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. Named after a Black minstrel show character, the laws – which existed for about 100 years, from the post-civil war era until 1968 – were meant to marginalize African Americans by denying them the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other opportunities. Those who attempted to defy Jim Crow laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence and death. The roots of Jim Crow laws began as early as 1865, immediately following the ratification of the 13th amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. Black codes were strict local and State laws that detailed when, where and how formerly enslaved people could work, and for how much compensation. The codes appeared throughout the South as a legal way to put black citizens into indentured servitude, to take voting rights away, to control where they lived and how they traveled and to seize children for labor purposes. The legal system was stacked against black citizens, with former confederate soldiers working as police and judges, making it difficult for African Americans to win court cases and ensuring they were subject to Black codes...

During the Reconstruction era, ...President Andrew Johnson thwarted efforts to help Black Americans move forward. Violence was on the rise, making danger a regular aspect of African American life. Black schools were vandalized and destroyed, and bands of violent white people attacked, tortured and lynched Black citizens in the night. Families were attacked and forced off... The most ruthless organization of the Jim Crow era, the Ku Klux Klan, was born in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee, as a private club for confederate veterans... laws forbade African Americans from living in white neighborhoods. Segregation was enforced for public pools, phone booths, hospitals, asylums, jails and residential homes for the elderly and handicapped. As the 20th century progressed, Jim Crow laws flourished within an oppressive society marked by violence. (“Jim Crow Laws”).

The depiction of the American society as an “oppressive society marked by violence” even as recent as the 20th century is as revealing as it is startling, especially in view of contemporary oppressive tendencies against black people in a nation highly reputed for its democratic ideologies. Even in this 21st century, black American citizens have continued to suffer, even die unjustly in the hands of white supremacist security agents, particularly the police. Adichie [3] regards

these as “great white evil.” Thus the American Society which disenfranchised black people several decades ago basically on account of the colour of their skin still kills a George Floyd in the most gruesome and inhuman circumstances; still murders an Eric Garner, still unjustifiably shoots an innocent Breonna Taylor to death, etc.

Also, in their “African American Inequality in the United States,” Hammond et al [9] note that:

As former slaves, African Americans did not inherit property or land and thus continued to work as labourers in order to make a living. Almost immediately following the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, several Southern States passed a series of State laws, known as the Black Codes, designed to restrict African Americans’ civic and economic rights and ensure continued access to low-cost labour. The Black Codes required freedmen to have labour contracts, punished vagrancy, and blocked voting rights.

All these inequalities existed and still exist in one form or the other in the United States to the point that even in 2020, black Americans would continue to protest and would re-echo George Floyd’s last words, “I can’t breathe,” when a white supremacist police officer pressed his neck to the ground for seven minutes forty-six seconds with his two knees and consequently murdered him. Floyd’s statement is a reflection of the condition of African Americans in a nation that prides itself as a beacon and symbol of freedom. This is despite its famous Creed at the Declaration of Independence in 1776: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Although black Americans can now vote in an election and have representations in the parliament as well as other notable places in the country, these laudable virtues and values as enshrined in the nation’s proclamation of independence are not yet fully guaranteed, especially for black citizens. When they are given their due recognition and placement on the basis of merit and credibility like any of their white counterparts, it is often portrayed as an exceptional privilege. Like Martin Luther King Jnr said in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech of August 28, 1963, one really hopes that “One day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Odenigbo clearly establishes that there is a similarity in the “great white evil” being perpetrated against black Americans and Australian Aborigines in that in both countries, the whites disenfranchise the two groups of people. The origins of the two disenfranchised groups are mainly traceable to Africa and to the black race. Hill [10] notes that:

In line with the practice in Queensland and Western Australia, the 1902 Commonwealth Franchise Act excluded any ‘aboriginal native of Australia’ from the right to vote. The Act provided that: ‘No aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa or Islands of the Pacific, except New Zealand, shall be entitled to have his name placed on

the electoral roll, unless so entitled under section 41 of the Constitution.’ ...this narrow reading of section 41 restricted the right to vote in Commonwealth elections to those who were already on State electoral rolls in 1902. Overtime, those who were, in fact, eligible either died or were removed from the State electoral rolls for other reasons to the point where the numbers of indigenous Australians with Commonwealth voting rights declined to almost nil.

These are the sociohistorical conflict situations Adichie [3] historicises; situations resulting to deprivations and marginalization on account of racism and white supremacist mentality - conditions which the novelist through the voice of the character of Odenigbo refers to as “great white evil.” The oppression of black people in South Africa, Rhodesia, the Congo, America and Australia are all interrelated by one underlying factor - racism. Racism is the prompting factor for most of the conflicts which have claimed many lives in those nations over several decades and still claiming, especially in America in recent times. The conflicts as pointed out in the novel cut across three continents - Africa, America and Australia. Adichie [3] therefore uses the veritable instrumentality of literature to demonstrate and draw attention to the reality that racism is a global destructive phenomenon which needs to be resolutely arrested if the world must be a better and peaceful place for all to live. Although black people are at the receiving end in all the enumerated cases, racism as practiced and perpetrated by white supremacists have never contributed in any way in making the world a better place to live for any race, rather, it contributes in creating and aggravating avoidable conflicts as it is still currently doing in America.

Furthermore, Adichie’s [3] representation of an excerpt of the actual coup speech of 15th January, 1966 by Major Nzeogwu reflects another significant sociopolitical conflict derived from a definite sociohistorical circumstance in Nigeria. This conflict is between a part of the Nigerian Army represented by Major Nzeogwu and his fellow revolutionists, and Nigeria’s First Republic politicians whom they accuse of “swindling,” “seeking and demanding for ten percent,” “seeking to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office,” “tribalism,” “nepotism,” “making the country to look big for nothing before international circles” and corrupting the Nigerian Society.” It is on the basis of these allegations that the character of Major Nzeogwu leads other soldiers under the aegis of what he calls “the Revolutionary Council” whose mission in carrying out the coup is to “establish a nation free from corruption and internal strife.” The immediate consequences of the coup includes the suspension of the nation’s constitution and the dissolution of “the regional government and elected assemblies.” Later on, we would also learn that the characters of Sardauna, Prime Minister Balewa and the Finance Minister Chief Okonjo who is Olanna’s father’s friend are assassinated during the coup. As earlier stated, these occurrences actually mimic historical reality. They continue to portray how literature and historical facts can come

together in a harmonious relationship.

When Ikejide, Kainene's domestic staff calls Richard's attention: "Mr Richard, Sah! Madam say make you come. There is another coup" and the narrator observes that "Richard hurried indoors. The moist July heat had plastered his hair limply to his head and he ran his hand through it as he went," Adichie [3], again, tries to follow the path of historical accuracy, particularly in stating that this second coup occurs in the month of July. She equally mimics history when Kainene says, "Northern officers have taken over. The BBC says they are killing Igbo officers in Kaduna." This second historicised coup in actuality occurred on July 29, 1966 and was spearheaded by "Northern officers" as a counter to Major Nzeogwu's January coup which was earlier tagged "Igbo coup" because Major Nzeogwu and some other military personnel who planned and executed it are predominantly officers of Igbo extraction. This is also in consideration of the fact that most of the casualties of the first coup are politicians and soldiers of non-Igbo extraction. The lopsided execution of the first coup blurs Nzeogwu's apparent altruistic aim for the putsch which is to "establish a nation free from corruption and internal strife." When the counter coup is executed, Igbo officers, civilians, civil servants and politicians are targeted for extermination by their Northern and Western Nigerian counterparts, with the intention of decimating them to the barest minimum if not wiping them off completely in order to forestall the alleged Igbo dominance of the civil service and other sectors of national life. This situation prompts a mindless wave of killings of all persons of Southeastern extraction in Northern and Western Nigeria - children, pregnant women, all cadres of persons identified as Igbo. The pogrom occurs simultaneously with the looting and burning down of their possessions. Colonel Madu, an officer of Igbo extraction narrates to Kainene how he escapes the pogrom in Kaduna thus:

Ibrahim saved my life. He told me about the coup that morning. He was not directly involved, but most of them – the Northern officers – knew about it. He drove me to his cousin's house but I didn't really understand until he asked his cousin to take me to the backyard, where he kept his domestic animals. I slept in the chicken house for two days. And do you know that soldiers came to search his cousin's house to look for me?... I did not know how bad chicken shit smelt until I slept in it for three days. On the third day, Ibrahim sent me some kaftans and money through a small boy and asked me to leave right away. I dressed as a Fulani nomad and walked through the smaller villages because Ibrahim said that artillery soldiers had set up blocks on all the major roads in Kaduna. I was lucky to find a lorry driver, an Igbo man from Ohafia, who took me to Kafanchan. My cousin lives there. You know Onunkwo, don't you? He is the station master at the railway, and he told me that Northern soldiers had sealed off Makurdi Bridge. That bridge is a grave. They searched every single vehicle, they delayed passenger trains for up to eight hours, and they shot all the Igbo soldiers they discovered there

and threw the bodies over. Many of the soldiers wore disguises but they used their boots to find them.

To demonstrate the level of animosity resulting from both the first and this second coup, Madu also says, "Igbo soldiers and Northern soldiers can never live in the same barracks after this. It is impossible." This demonstrates the extent to which the armed forces, a significant symbol of the country's unity has been balkanized along tribal lines. Then Madu says, "And Gowon cannot be head of state. They cannot impose Gowon on us as head of state. It is not how things are done. There are others who are senior to him." Madu's statements at this juncture re-echoes Ojukwu's position in historical reality, on why he refused to recognize the then Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as Head of State soon after Gowon was installed as Nigeria's ruler after the execution of the 1966 July counter coup. Ojukwu maintained that if the first military Head of State, Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi, had been assassinated by the counter coupists, the next person in the order of seniority in the armed forces who at that time was Brigadier-General Babafemi Ogundipe should logically takeover, not an officer junior to him like Gowon. *Wikipedia* (2020) maintains that Ogundipe "was the de facto second-in-command and first Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters from January 1966 to August 1966 during General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi's military regime." Unfortunately, the executors of the counter coup were not interested in the logic of order of seniority as espoused by Ojukwu. While Ojukwu as military governor of the Eastern Region continued to insist on the order of seniority as a rightful means of succession and refusing to acknowledge Gowon as Head of State, the massacre of Easterners continued unabated in other parts of the country as the narrator observes:

They repeated the news of the killings in Maiduguri until Ugwu wanted to throw the radio out of the window, and the next afternoon, after the men left, a solemn voice on ENBC Radio Enugu recounted eyewitness accounts from the North: teachers hacked down in Zaria, a full Catholic Church in Sokoto set on fire, a pregnant woman split open in Kano.

At the train station at Enugu the pitiable conditions of the survivors are revealed:

Mats and dirty wrappers were spread all over the platform and people were crumpled down on them, men and women and children crying...and tending wounds. Ugwu did not want to go into that ragged bazaar but he steeled himself and walked into a man sitting on the ground with a red-stained rag wound around his head. Flies buzzed everywhere. ...Ugwu did not look to see how deep the knife wound on his head was. The man's right eye was gone, in its place, a juicy-red pulp. The rickety train pulled up, so full that some people held on to the outside of the coaches, clutching at metal bars. Ugwu watched as tired, dusty, bloody people climbed down... those limping and defeated people...

This chaotic and catastrophic situation coincides with Olanna's visit to Kano. It is from her encounters and

experiences with her friend Mohammed that we learn that "Igbo bodies are lying on Airport Road." Then "Olanna realized...that this was not just another demonstration by religious students. Fear parched her throat. She clasped her hands together." The narrator also states that:

A bus drove past, dusty and yellow; it looked like one of those campaign buses that politicians used to tour rural areas and gave out rice and cash to villagers. A man was hanging out of the door, a loud speaker pressed to his mouth, his slow Hausa words resonating. "The Igbo must go. The infidels must go. The Igbo must go."

On insisting that Mohammed should drive her to the residence of her relations at Sabongari so that they can be possibly rescued from the massacre, Olanna meets the greatest shock when she witnesses that:

Uncle Mbaezi lay facedown in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Aunty Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted red lips. Olanna felt a watery queasiness in her bowels before the numbness spread over her and stopped at her feet. The smoke was thickening around her so that she was not sure if the crowd of men drifting into the yard were real or just plumes of smoke, until she saw the shiny metal blades of their axes and machetes, the bloodstained kaftans that flapped around their legs.

In spite of the losses, anguish and wreckage resulting from their savagery, the assailants gloat thus: "We finished the whole family. It was Allah's will." They believe that by annihilating an entire family, looting and destroying their properties, they have carried out Allah's injunctions and therefore are very pleased about it. This perspective reveals the dangers and irony of religious fundamentalism. Religious extremism has cost Nigeria countless precious lives and opportunities and continues to do so in view of the current scourge of Boko Haram in the Northern part of the country.

It is on her way in a train journey back to the East, from that hazardous Kano visit that a co-traveler, a woman, narrates her own ordeal to Olanna through the act of showing. Upon their arrival in the East, the terrified woman simply invites Olanna to "Come and take a look" at the content of the calabash she has been meticulously carrying from the beginning of the journey. Then "Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashey-grey skin and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. The woman closed the calabash." Also, on his arrival at Kano Airport from London en route Lagos, Richard, Kainene's British friend witnesses another gruesome scene of South-easterners in Northern Nigeria during the crisis. This happens when attackers stormed Kano Airport demanding, "*Ina nyamiri!* Where are the Igbo people? Who is Igbo here? Where are the infidels." When they identify their targets, the narrator states how they are gruesomely executed:

Nnaemaka knelt down. Richard saw fear etched so deeply onto his face that it collapsed his cheeks and transfigured

him into a mask that looked nothing like him. He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away. Richard willed him to say the words, anyway, to try: he willed something, anything, to happen in the stifling silence and as if in answer to his thoughts, the rifle went off and Nnaemaka's chest blew open, a splattering red mass, and Richard dropped the note in his hand. Passengers were crouched behind the chairs, men got on their knees to lower their heads to the floor. Somebody was shouting in Igbo, 'My mother, oh! God has said no!' It was the bartender. One of the soldiers walked up close and shot him and aimed at the bottles of liquor lined up behind and shot those. The room smelt of Whisky and Campari and gin. There were more soldiers now, more shots, more shouts... The bartender was writhing on the floor and the gurgle that came from his mouth was guttural. The soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the aeroplane and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them and left them lying there... The security guards folded their arms across their uniforms and watched. Richard felt himself wet his trousers. There was a painful ringing in his ears. He almost missed his flight because, as the other passengers walked shakily to the plane, he stood aside, vomiting.

On his arrival in Lagos, Susan, his friend, in a conversation would reveal that "...hundreds were killed in Zaria alone." All these crises and massacres which follow the July counter coup which the narrator states are executed by "Northern officers" and are a reflection of the historic 1966 pogroms which Madiebo [12] believes claimed over 50,000 lives of diverse categories of people of Southeastern extraction. The inability of Gowon's Federal Military Government to halt the massacres as well as the failure of the Aburi Accord results to Ojukwu's declaration of an Independent State of Biafra.

Fellow countrymen and women, you the people of Eastern Nigeria: Conscious of the supreme authority of the Almighty God over all mankind...aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria; determined to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Republic of Nigeria; having mandated me to proclaim on your behalf and in your name that Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic, now therefore I do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria...shall henceforth be an independent Sovereign State of the name and title of The Republic of Biafra.

At this historicised declaration, Odenigbo succinctly says, "This is our beginning." Then "he took his glasses off and grabbed Baby's little hands and began to dance around in circles with her. Olanna laughed and then felt as if she were following a script, as if Odenigbo's excitement would abide nothing but more excitement." Again, Adichie [3] mimics reality in demonstrating the euphoria which greets Ojukwu's declaration of Biafra's secession from the rest of Nigeria, especially from people of Southeastern extraction. Odenigbo

and his family see hope and freedom from oppression, from mindless massacre of Southerners by people from other components of the Nigerian federation. But this also signals the very beginning of a thirty-month fratricidal civil war which claimed about three million human lives according to Madiebo [12]. Ojukwu's declaration of the State of Biafra as represented in the novel is the same speech delivered by the historical figure of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu on May 30, 1967 on the same occasion at the same place (Enugu) under the same sociohistorical circumstances. Both the pogrom and the civil war which follows it as represented in the novel are all sociopolitical conflicts derived from known and notable sociohistorical circumstances in Nigeria. Adichie mainly fictionalized those occurrences. Again, this is another clear testament that art is neither derived from nor exist in a vacuum, but rather that occurrences in society largely shape the content and form of art emanating from it.

Also, in mimicry of reality, Adichie [3] captions the second and fourth parts of the novel which deal with this significant conflict in Nigeria's sociopolitical history "The Late Sixties." The conflict, in reality, also occurred from the late sixties to the early seventies - precisely from July 6, 1967 to January 15, 1970. Thus in terms of setting, language, character and characterization, Adichie [3] is seen to have mimicked and reflected a great deal of reality with respect to various issues revolving around the Nigerian Civil War. Hamilton [8] observes that "...writers can never completely escape ideology and their social background so that the social reality of the writer will always be part of the text." This observation is apt as it concerns Adichie and her fiction under investigation. Indeed, literary texts often reflect social realities in various forms.

3. Conclusion

Half of a Yellow Sun, Adichie's [3] second fiction, like the first, equally contains diverse conflict-related thematic issues that can be said to be derived from certain sociohistorical developments in Nigeria and beyond. Although the dominant sociopolitical conflict in the work remains the Nigerian Civil War, there are a number of other contestations and altercations that re-echo some other notable historical conflicts. Some of such can be said to have served as precursors to the war. The representations of these conflicts by Adichie in her second novel, again, clearly demonstrate the age-long marriage between literature and society, as well as with history and culture. Thus, society and the kind of history it generates continues to shape the caliber and direction of literature emerging from it. This continues to prove beyond every reasonable doubts that artistic creations are neither derived from nor exist in a vacuum, rather, enduring literary or artistic works have always been products

as well as vehicles of the experiences of a people as shaped by the society and the time which produce it. Unfortunately, quite a number of the precursors of the contestations and altercations mirrored in the fiction are yet to be laid to rest.

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