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**ASSIGNMENT: WRITE AN ESSAY ON VIOLENT CONFLICT ON THE GEOPOLITICAL ZONE YOU ARE FROM NOT LESS THAN 2 PAGES.**

**What is conflict?**

Firstly, conflict can be defined in many ways and can be considered as an expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory or irreconcilable interests between two opposing groups.

**What is violence?**

**Secondly, Violence** is an act of physical force that causes or is intended to cause harm. The damage inflicted by violence may be physical, psychological, or both. Violence may be distinguished from [aggression](https://www.britannica.com/science/aggressive-behaviour), a more general type of hostile behaviour that may be physical, verbal, or passive in nature.

**What is violent conflict?**

Thirdly, violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests. While a violent conflict may involve only non-state actors, often, the term is used as a synonym for war which involves at least one government.

**Introduction:**

Nigeria consists of 36 states and capital which is FCT Abuja. Under the states which have six geo-political zones namely**:** North-central, North-West, North-East, South-South, South-East and South-West. This geo-political zone is made of six states which are the Niger, Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Kogi and Kwara states. The Federal capital territory is also included in this zone.

**Main point:**

Am from the South- East geopolitical zone in Nigeria. South eastern Nigeria was one of the initial 12 states created during the Nigeria civil war, which later broke into the present Awka-ibom state and cross River state. South East became the name ofone of the six [geopolitical zones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geopolitical_zones) in the country in the 1990s consisting of Abia state, Anambra state, Ebonyi state, Enugu state and imo state. The local language in these regions is Igbo.

Since November 2015, the South East Nigeria, dominated by the Igbo ethnic group,

has witnessed demonstrations by Biafran separatists. On 2 December 2015, the protests

degenerated into violence, when two policemen and at least nine protesters, out of the

thousands that had blocked the strategic Niger Bridge in the commercial city of Onitsha

in Anambra State, were reportedly killed. Several properties including the city’s central

mosque and eight trucks belonging to Dangote Group, a conglomerate owned by northern

businessman Aliko Dangote, were destroyed during the protests. Since the 2 December

2015 incident, several protesters have been reportedly killed in clashes with security forces

in Onitsha, Aba, Port Harcourt, Owerri and Asaba. In June 2016, Amnesty International

accused the Nigerian military of killing unarmed Biafra supporters in Onitsha ahead of

their planned May 2016 commemoration of Biafra. According to Amnesty, “opening are

on peaceful IPOB supporters and bystanders who clearly posed no threat to anyone is

an outrageous use of unnecessary and excessive force and resulted in multiple deaths and

injuries”. To be sure, there is now a history of extra-judicial killings of supporters of Biafra,

which predate the present government. For instance, in January 2013 fifty bodies believed

to be Biafra supporters were found at oat in the Ezu River in Anambra State. Still, none of

the past and present killings have been thoroughly investigated by Nigerian governments.

immediate trigger of the recent protests by Biafran separatists was the 19 October

2015 arrest of **Nnamdi Kanu**, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra **(IPOB)** and director

of web-based Radio Biafra, on charges of sedition, ethnic incitement and treasonable

felony. IPOB and Radio Biafra represent the most high-parole and radical movement

for a separate State of Biafra that currently exists. IPOB and Radio Biafra stepped-up

a struggle championed by the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra.

In September Nigeria’s military launched **Operation Python Dance II**, its second military exercise in South East Nigeria. It was carried out with the intention of quashing any calls for secession in a region with a long history of antagonism with the central Nigerian state. The stakes are high. An attempt in the 1960s to proclaim an independent Republic of Biafra in the same region resulted in the 1967–70 Nigerian Civil War in which 3 million people were killed and millions were displaced.

The desire for independence among Igbo people of South East Nigeria is fuelled by a feeling of marginalization, and historical grievances against a state that they say doesn’t represent them. Feelings have reached boiling point with this latest military action. Python Dance II escalated into a violent confrontation in which supporters of secessionist group the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) claim some of their members were killed, and the home of the group’s leader, Nnamdi Kanu, was raided. Kanu has not been seen in public since the raid on his house.

The new campaign for Biafran independence is largely championed by young people who were born after the civil war, with no memory of the suffering it caused. The first sign of reviving the call for Biafra emerged in 1999 – shortly after the end of Nigeria’s period of military rule – in the form of an organisation called **MASSOB,** the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra. The group was led by Ralph Uwazuruike, who had several brushes with security agencies, and was arrested and imprisoned on charges of treason.

IPOB came to prominence at the centre of the latest wave of Igbo nationalism following the arrival in office of Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari. The tone of the new president towards the people of the southeast was perceived as at best dismissive, and at times hostile. He was accused of favouring his northern constituents, notably in terms of senior government appointments. The president has yet to visit the southeast. With anti-Abuja sentiment growing in the southeast, IPOB seized the opportunity to reactivate the demand for secession.

IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu was at the forefront of these demands. A British-Nigerian political activist, Nnamdi Kanu is the director of London-based Radio Biafra, a broadcast outfit set up to propagate the demands of secessionists. He had been recruited by MASSOB leader Uwazuruike to run Radio Biafra in London. The pair fell out and Kanu later re-emerged as IPOB leader. The station broadcasts daily programmes in English and the Igbo language, including anti-Nigeria and pro-Biafra propaganda.

**Arrests and demonstrations:**

Nnamdi Kanu was initially arrested in Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, on 14 October 2015, during a private visit. He was detained and arraigned in court on charges of criminal conspiracy and treason. The Nigerian government accused him of inciting hatred, threatening state security, and mobilizing for secession – an offence which carries a maximum sentence of death. He was twice granted bail, but security agencies ignored the court’s decisions. Prior to his arrest, Kanu was relatively little-known, without the profile his imprisonment has since generated.

After demonstrations were held across major cities in the south demanding he be freed, Kanu was released on 28 April 2017 under stringent conditions which included an order not to be seen in a gathering of more than 10 persons. But rather than resolving the crisis, his release from detention seems to have heightened tension in the southeast. His supporters staged more rallies, announced that they had set up their own security arm, and clashed with government security forces. Things came to a head with the launch of Operation Python Dance II.

**The results of military action:**

Shortly after the raid on Kanu’s home the military declared IPOB a terrorist organization – a move which was endorsed by the Nigerian government but rejected by many Nigerians and international observers. Critics of the conduct of Nigeria’s military make the point that IPOB supporters are not known to be violent and that the protests have been largely peaceful. During the demonstrations some protestors threw sticks and stones but there were no reports of armed confrontation. The EU and the US rejected the decision but Nigeria maintains it is irreversible and has warned foreign governments and organizations not to interfere.

The government’s response to the IPOB and the situation in the southeast is comparable with its response to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). The home of the leader of the IMN and Nigeria’s minority Shia population, Ibrahim Zakzaky,was raided in December 2015 by the Nigerian army who killed hundreds of his followers and buried them in a mass grave. Zakzaky was seriously injured and detained with members of his family and has not been seen since, despite a court order for his release in December 2016.

Like IPOB, Zakzaky’s group is viewed as a security threat by the government. The state government of Kaduna – home to the majority of Nigeria’s Shias – has banned the group and proscribed it a terrorist organization. Like IPOB, members of IMN are said to have carried out non-violent protests against Nigeria’s government and the treatment of their leader has led to anger and demonstrations against the state.

Such proscriptions and disproportionate responses to groups that express grievances against or oppose the state risk in fact fuelling the causes of these movements and escalating situations – something Nigeria’s stretched security forces can ill-afford.

**The risk of insurrection:**

Indeed, in the southeast, Operation Python Dance II seems to have emboldened rather than silenced IPOB supporters, through adding to the feeling of discrimination felt in the region and by making a martyr out of Kanu. And in any case, IPOB may be the most prominent, but it is not the only group advocating secession. MASSOB is also accused of violence by Nigeria's government, and, like Kanu, Uwazuruike has previously been imprisoned, accused of treason and released. There are several other pro-Biafra groups in the southeast but internal disputes have so far prevented them from presenting a unified front.

The umbrella body of Igbo people, **Ohaneze Ndigbo,** has openly voiced its concerns and is calling for the government to address the grievances of the region. They may not all support IPOB's rhetoric but are vehemently against labelling the group a terrorist organization, and condemn attacks against its members.

Kanu’s continued absence and violent confrontations risk igniting an insurrection that could destabilize Nigeria’s southeast. The federal government’s response and tactics employed by Nigeria’s military should be called into question as forces are stretched on many fronts. In addition to the Boko Haram crisis in the northeast, the military has also been deployed to combat a rise in kidnapping of civilians and violence in the oil producing Niger Delta region. The proscribing of IPOB could in fact lead to a fully armed insurrection, plunging the country into deeper insecurity and sewing further division in this fragmented nation

**Recommendations/remedies:**

1. Nigerian government should establish an independent commission of

inquiry to conduct a transparent, comprehensive, and impartial investigation into

alleged unlawful killings and other human rights abuses of Biafra supporters.

Commission should include, among others, representatives of the pro-Biafra groups

Such as MASSOB and IPOB, international and national human rights groups and so on

2. Nigerian government should prosecute without delay and in accordance with

International fair trial standards all those implicated in the killing and abuse of

Biafra supporters.

3. Nigerian government should conduct quick, open and fair trial of Biafra

agitators in detention.

4. Nigerian government should set up a high-level Peace and Reconciliation

Commission to engage with pro-Biafra groups with a view to devising an effective

approach to the resolution of the agitation for Biafra.

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