

Philip Ademola
OLAYOKU

**Memorialisation Principles,
Post-Civil War Reintegration
and the Quest
for Sustainable Peace
in Nigeria**



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ABSTRACTS

Mnemonic devices have remained integral to human learning processes through history, as man continues to grapple with his existential experiences. Such epistemological consideration considers knowledge as a universal experience of recall, whereby events, objects, texts and processes are committed to memory. However, threats to Nigeria's sociopolitical life has been the reverse of this logic with the erasure of History from the curriculum of secondary schools until the recent attempts at its restoration.

It is such neglect that prompted this study's examination of the need to revive the consciousness of the importance of historical lessons in the consolidation of the country's democracy by adopting a memorialisation policy. It conceptualizes memorialisation within the framework of creation of public memorials as important for national integration and peacebuilding through references to extant memory initiatives. It then proceeds to situate the eight principles of memorialisation - as proposed by Impunity Watch - within the global context while drawing from an array of literature within the humanities and social sciences.

In relaying this to the Nigerian context, the paper focuses on relevant historical events and discussions around the Nigerian Civil War with the purpose of demonstrating how memorialisation can be adopted in facilitating peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria, as a means to address different secessionist bids in a sustainable manner.

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Philip Ademola Olayoku is currently a Senior Research Fellow of the Institut Francais de Recherche en Afrique (IFRA-Nigeria). He has a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ibadan, where he also taught as an adjunct at the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies and the Cultural and Media Studies Programme. He is also the Project Manager of Information Aid Network and a Member, Nigerian Armed Forces Resource Centre, Abuja. He won the Harry Frank Guggenheim Young African Scholar, 2015 and The African Studies Association Presidential Fellowship, 2017. He belongs to several international organisations including The Perpetrators Studies Network, West African Research Association, Society for Peace Study and Practice, African Political Conference Group, the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Network, and the Internet Society. His doctoral research was focused on ethnicity and transitional justice with the case study of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission of Nigeria. His other research interests include ethno-religious conflicts, Media and Ethnicity, African Diaspora and Afro-Asia relations. He has published in the *African Security Review*, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, *African Notes* and *African East Asian Affairs*.

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The cover design and illustrations for this monograph were made by Mr Temitope Ojo of 1001Media Wright. Website: <http://www.1001mediawright.wordpress.com>

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To the unsung and forgotten heroes of the Nigerian Civil War, who defied the divides to be their
neighbours' keepers

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About the Author

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Introduction

In April, 2013, the demise of Margaret Thatcher, the first female British Prime Minister, stimulated polarised discussions among some British citizens regarding her conservative mode of governance. There were those, like David Cameron, who believed that the late former prime minister rescued Britain and its declining economy (Mason, 2013). Others, by contrast, argued that she destroyed the middle class and widened the poverty gap with her pro corporate policies; the best known example of this being miners whose divisive revolt against the closure of mines in 1984 led to police brutality at Orgreave, South Yorkshire (Czernik, 2013; Hope, 2013)¹. However, the memory of Thatcherism which lingers on in Merseyside is dominated by the Hillsborough disaster² which has become synonymous with Liverpool Football Club. Within the same month, the death of Anne Williams, a leading figure in the struggle for truth and justice for her son (Kevin) alongside ninety-five others killed in the disaster, received a contrasting reaction (especially in Merseyside) to the death of the 87 year old Thatcher who preferred to lay the blame at the feet of the casualties, as revealed by the first inquest into the causes of the Hillsborough incidence (Shaw, 2013).

The tribute on 15th April 2013 to mark the 24th anniversary of the Hillsborough Disaster through oration and a minute of applause before the Liverpool/Chelsea match on 21st April, 2013 (Carroll, 2013) coupled with the Liverpool Council's order that the flag flown at half mast for Anne in the city³ clearly shows the importance of memory in creating an ambience of unity among a people. This is especially so as the tribute was held before a keenly contested match which was laddened with post-match controversies. In the same vein, the remembrance of the ninety-six has become an integral part of the recent history and identity of Liverpool Football Club, which among other things, includes a memorial service every 15th April and the laying of wreaths of flowers in honour of the deceased fans even as the struggle for the truth continued. The memorialisation of this event,

¹In contrast to the view of some other miners, Patrick McLoughlin's position is that the autocratic attitude of the president of the miners' union was to blame for the troubles rather than Margaret Thatcher who advocated for a consensus among the miners. Also see the Letter of Professor F. A. Hayek titled 'Trade Union Privileges' in *The Times* 2nd August 1977

² The Hillsborough Disaster happened on 15th April, 1989 in which 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives during an FA Cup semi final match between Nottingham Forest and Liverpool.

³ See: Crowds to Line Streets for the Funeral of the Much-Loved Hillsborough Campaigner Anne Williams. In *Liverpool Echo*. 25th April, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/2013/04/25/crowds-to-line-streets-for-funeral-of-much-loved-hillsborough-campaigner-anne-williams-100252-33232044/>

coupled with the intensified struggle for justice for the 96, led to the reversal of blame after fresh inquests into the killings at Chesham between 31 March 2014 to April 26 2016. The Jury had maintained that the David Duckenfield, the match commander at the time was to blame for negligence of duty that led to the unlawful killing of the victims.⁴ The foregoing reflects that the memorialisation of past events could be used as a formidable tool in the creation of group identity, by integrating and uniting distinct factions through a unanimous show of their respect. More importantly, it helped in redressing thwarted historical facts⁵. The former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, had commended the initiative for ensuring justice while alluding to layers of injustices against the victims whom, according to him, had their security compromised at every level during the period of disaster (Gibson, Conn and Siddique; 2012). In this respect, the memorialisation of the deceased 96, amongst other things, included the search for truth in order to pacify the bereaved families, bring the conspirators to justice and prevent the reoccurrence of such neglect of duty in the future. The example of the Hillsborough agitators for justice justifies the category of victims who refuse to remain silent in ensuring, that people are enlightened by their experiences through open action (Jelin, 1994: 44) so that justice may take its course. Memorialisation, thus executed, serves to ensure restorative justice as a ‘truth therapy’ for the victims and their bereaved families. Beyond this, a recent initiative of honouring the victims with the Freedom of the City of Liverpool on 22nd September, 2016, is important for the erasure of the falsehood of their culpability. On the other hand, it serves to emphasize the need for accountability, especially as a deterrent for the negligence of duty by public service holders. Consequently, the preventive function of memorialisation ensures deterrence for intending perpetrators of harm, and its application to different national contexts has helped in ensuring justice for victims and building sustainable relationships as shall be examined below.

While there have been memorialisation efforts in the aftermath of the Civil War⁶ in Nigeria, these efforts have been arbitrary, and they are often not properly coordinated, thereby failing to yield the

⁴ See Hillsborough Inquests: What You Need to Know. *BBC News*. 26th April, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-35383110>

⁵ The struggle had also been to establish that about forty-one of the ninety-six victims may have been saved if there had been an effective response from the security/rescue agents where victims, like Kevin, were said to still be alive for as long as forty-five minutes after they were all reported to have died due to the crush on Sheffield Wednesday’s ground.

⁶ The Nigerian Civil War is also known as the Biafran War. Both terms are used interchangeably in subsequent sections.

desired results. The object of this paper is therefore to expatiate on the memorialisation mechanism within the global context and how this could be adopted as a national policy in Nigeria to serve the aforementioned purposes while particularly focusing on the experience of the Nigerian Civil War.

Conceptualising Memorialisation

Redemption from evil through atonement is very much a Jewish belief. The most sacred holy day of the Jewish calendar is the Yom Kippur-the Day of Atonement. It is a day wherein each Jew annually takes stock of his actions and atones for misdeeds as a prelude for a reconciliation with God. Peoples and states in the same way must take account of their past, reviewing it and confronting it honestly. This is what defines accountability and only with accountability can there be the possibility of reconciliation...

(Prutschi and Weintraub (2000: 22)

The above citation from Prutschi and Weintraub aptly captures the importance of digging into the past to ensure accountability and reconciliation within a society. This has indeed been the goal of transitional justice and its advocates, and across different societies, there have been attempts to confront the past through different means; including the use of religious, social, political, cultural and legal mechanisms, or a combination of these. Within the legal framework of action, there is both the adversarial or non adversarial means. The former includes court system and tribunals of inquiry, while the latter encapsulates truth commissions, lustration, amnesty and memorialisation to mention but a few. The focus on memorialisation herein, as a non adversarial means of redressing the past, is therefore aimed at examining how it could help to complement other transitional justice mechanisms (Impunity Watch, 2010) in ensuring accountability, justice, truth, reparation, reconciliation and non-recurrence of human rights violations. . In discussing the French example of Paul Touvier's trial and conviction for his role in Rilleux assassinations, Arnold Klarsfeld (one of the prosecution counsels), reflected on the importance of using memory to redefine the context of the assassinations (using the deposition of Touvier's⁷ subordinates), and also to expose the complicity of the executive and judiciary in perverting justice by delaying the trials (see Merchant, 1995). This landmark reflected how the application of memory to judicial

⁷ Paul Touvier was the first French national to be tried for crime against humanity in the post WWII era.

trials could help exhumate the distorted facts of history as well as ensure justice. Within the Nigerian context, however, it is arguable that very little has been achieved in terms of the official adoption of memorials as a means for attaining restorative justice in complementing other mechanisms of transitional justice. The Nigerian example of transitional justice was the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) which has remained undervalued. A retrospective view of this commendable initiative by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the aftermath of years of military misrule suggests that memory initiatives would have served to enhance the impacts of the commissions work in ensuring restorative justice and enabling that the citizenry learnt from history. This paper is thus proposed to advocate for the incorporation of memorialisation into the Nigerian geo-polity to advance historical lessons for conflict prevention, ethnic integration and other peacebuilding efforts.

What then is Memorialisation?

Hogan (2013) simply defines memorialisation as the creation of public memorials. While focusing specifically on sites of conscience, she opined that these sites help to stimulate dialogue by civil society and the general public on general social concerns in post-conflict societies. The revelation that governments tend to ignore certain disadvantaged groups within the society, as was the case with the ‘war children’ and their mothers in Europe after the WWII (Valderhault, 2011: 14), necessitates the need for memory initiatives to help stimulate discourses which would restore dignity and engender fairness to such class of people, especially in terms of historical truth and identity.⁸ It is important to note that the focus here is not on individual memory but that of the collective, where groups such as human rights movements (as was the case in Argentina) struggle against ‘collective forgetting’ and explore the ethical, emotional, ideological, institutional and cultural implications of infusing public memory initiatives into the society’s political culture and identity (Jelin, 1994: 49, 50). What this implies is not the suppression of individual memory, but its importation to the public realm in order to create a negotiated but formidable public collection of private experiences with a force of determining societal and state actions in ensuring truth,

⁸ Reinsich (2011) expatiated on Europe’s post-WWII’s classification of survivors and perpetrators through the recalling of their roles and how this influenced the kind of perception and treatment gotten from the public, different governments (Austria, Germany, England, USA) and international organisations such as the United Nations through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). The role of memory in identifying and classifying these survivors herein helped in taking policy decisions on how to go about combating post-war challenges.

justice, reconciliation, non-recurrence and reparation. According to Stephan Parmentier, it entails a recalling and repositioning of the past and its reconstruction into the future (Impunity Watch, 2010). From these propositions, I contend that this has been the missing link in reintegrating the victims of the Nigerian Civil War into the Nigerian socio-political life. While there have been various attempts at erasing the memory of the war, as will be shown below, the lack of recall of the past in understanding present challenges in order to restructure the future (as is the case in the suppression of the memory of the civil war) is one of the major latent causes of suspicion among people with different ethnic affinities in Nigeria. This is why an adoption of the principles of memorialisation is necessary to serve as a basis for enabling sustainable peace in Nigeria.

The Impunity Watch (2013: 3) in its policy brief opined that though memorialisation has traditionally being believed to denote commemoration, the non-recurrence of violence and symbolic forms of reparation, recent discourses have extended its relevance in dealing with the past to initiatives that enhance the search for truth and justice. According to Hogan (2013), the advocates of memory initiatives allude to its importance in helping to build the foundations of national identity on human rights and dignity. It entails a remembrance of the victims of past atrocities with the sole purpose of building blocs rather than bringing culprits to justice. Based on this restorative nature, it could subsequently be employed *a posteriori* in complementing other transitional justice mechanisms in the bid for social reconstruction (Hogan, 2013). Its relevance can better be appreciated if one considers the short-comings of other transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions, which often do not readily guarantee the presentation of facts. Instead, facts are often distorted or hidden by unrepentant perpetrators who eventually escape the arm of the law (prosecution or lustration) due to the non-implementation of reports, as was the case in Liberia and Nigeria⁹ amongst other countries (see Weah, 2012; Kukah, 2011; Nwogu, 2007; Omo-Bare, 2008). Another major challenge is that memorialisation efforts were being thwarted at the national level by regimes (in countries like Burundi, Guatemala, Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) whose members had been indicted for past atrocities (Impunity Watch,

⁹ While Weah aligned his account to the display of power and intimidation by the perpetrators before the Liberian TRC, in the case of Nigeria, the non-appearance of the three former heads of state: generals Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babaginda and Abdusalami Abubakar reflected how accused perpetrators could seem unrepentant and antagonistic to national unity and reconciliation by using judicial means (hitherto subverted during their reigns) to thwart the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission's process.

2013: 4). The adoption of the eight principles of memorialisation in post conflict contexts, as highlighted below, could help mitigate these challenges and ensure the success of other transitional justice mechanisms.

Though the direct goal of memorialisation is not ensuring justice is done to the victims, it does so by default as an anodyne to victims who are assured, through the acknowledgement of events of the past, that their pains cannot be forgotten; as is the case with the Hillsborough memorials cited above (Hogan, 2013). Viable initiatives along this line include the African Union Human Rights Memorial's (AUHRM) efforts of memorialising the Ethiopian Red Terror (1997-79), the Rwandan Genocide (1994) and the Apartheid in South Africa (which spanned through decades till the Mandela era beginning with his release by F. W. de Clerk on 2nd February, 1990¹⁰). As Prutschi and Weintraub (2000: 17-18) proposed, memory (memorialisation) is a tool that connects us with the sufferers with an assurance that we are not apathetic but empathetic to their sufferings.

Though the experience of genocide cuts across national boundaries, there is a dearth of scholarship in terms of extant literature on 'historical evaluations and practical policy evaluations within the African context' (Hogan, 2013). This remains the case with the genocide claims of the Igbo of Nigeria during the Civil War, whereby the official attempts by the Nigerian government to assuage the pains of families who were victims of several massacres and erase the memory of the war have not been sustainable. This is made explicit in the agitation by secessionist groups in the South Eastern Nigeria including the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and lately, the different factions of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

The need for countries transitioning from war or violent conflict situations to adopt a memorialisation policy was implicitly captured by Louis Bickford in expatiating on the four obligations of the state as stipulated by international law. These responsibilities include establishing the truth, ensuring accountability by perpetrators, reparation for the victims and prevention of future occurrence through institutional reforms (Hogan, 2013). These state duties can be accomplished by the creation of public memorials as complementary to other transitional

¹⁰ See: Education and Training Center/International. 2010. *United State Institute of Peace Certificate Course in Negotiation and Conflict Management*. Retrieved from www.usip.org/training/online p 87

justice mechanisms. The South Korean example is very informative in this light. The National Committee for the Investigation of the Jeju 4.3 Events¹¹ was set up to collect evidence, publish a report, and establish an archive, alongside identifying and honouring the civilian victims and their families. The aftermath of the commission's release of its report in 2003 was the official apology rendered by the President Roh Moo-Hyun in 2004 and his attendance at the memorialisation of the events through a commemoration service in 2006 (Kim, 2009: 407). Borgersrud (2005) also reveals how a girl was able to discover her true identity as a deported 'war child' from Norway rather than being a survivor of the Nazi concentration camp, as she had been made to believe, through recourse to the Swedish National Archives (see Valderhaug, 2011: 14). These examples strengthen the arguments on the role of memorialisation in establishing the truth about events of the past, people's identity and reparation for past injustices. In the case of Nigeria, the institutional framework for the prevention of future occurrence of conflict situations through memorialisation has been underutilised. This is such that the efforts at attaining transitional justice through the HRVIC failed to yield the desired effect of reconciliation, rehabilitation and restitution.

As proposed earlier, in certain instances, memory initiatives, as a transitional justice mechanism, could also face the challenges of rejection and suppression by incumbent regimes (see also Kutz, 2004) due to the possible indictment of their members. This was the case during the period preceding the establishment of a truth commission in South Korea. Hitherto, there had been no public mention of the 4.3 events for over two decades, until the events were memorialised through the novel *Aunt Suni* by Hyun Ki-Young in 1978.¹² This was followed by the use of cultural media such as memorial services (both private and public), poetry, traditional plays, literature, picture and art exhibitions amongst other traditional cultural festivities and rituals for public sensitisation (Kim, 2009: 412 - 414)¹³. It is also pertinent to point out that the South Korean instance portrays a practicable example of how memorialisation can serve as the foundational basis for other transitional justice mechanisms by stimulating the conscience of people to demand for the search

¹¹ Jeju 4.3 events was used to capture the violent armed uprisings and counter insurgency which took place on Jeju Island, South of South Korea between 1948 and 1954. 4.3 follows the tradition of naming events after their dates of occurrence; in this case 3rd April, 1948 (see Kim, 2009)

¹² Hyun Ki-Young was arrested and tortured by government agents and his novel was banned.

¹³ The identification of hidden spaces for memorialisation within oppressive contexts may also include oral historical evidence which may have been facilitated by civil societies who adapt to the societal context of their operation (Impunity Watch, 2013: 4).

of the truth of history. Also within the Asian Context, Chang's (1997) effort to raise awareness of the hitherto neglected "Rape of Nanking" involving about 20,000 abused Chinese females whose plights were not factored into the post war trials defines another paradigm shift in considering crimes against humanity. While the active roles played by novelists, journalists and historians in Norway in revisiting the conditions of 'war children' during the 1980s, after about 40 years of official neglect and hidden truth, is very instructive. Their importance was reflected in the 1986 legislation on the right of this group to know their real biological parents —through visits to the archives. These efforts eventually led to the struggle for justice and restitution for past discriminations through the Norwegian Association of War Children, which in turn stimulated several government interventions in the form of research projects, apologies and payment of reparations (Valderhaug, 2011: 18).

The Norwegian context was hinged on the Lebensborn Records which helped to confirm the social construction of the 'war children' whose mixed parentage was central to their identity and their toleration by the Germans (Valderhaug, 2011: 16). The negative impact of this archival records was in providing the Norwegian authorities with the 'documentational basis' for discrimination against this group. This was not possible in other occupied countries where there were no Lebensborn Archives (Valderhaug, 2011: 17). It is thus important that there are official government policies to prevent the negative utilisation of the records. In the United Kingdom, the above cited continuous demand for justice, through the creation of memorials for the victims of the Hillsborough Disaster, resulted in the quashing of the earlier inquests by the James Jones' chaired Hillsborough independent Panel in 2012 (see Gibson, Conn and Siddique, 2012). More so, as depicted in the story of Anne Williams in the introductory section of this paper, the memory initiatives ought not be restricted to unpleasant events, but also include creating memories for positive heroic acts as well. Examples of such acts during the WWII are given by Prutschi and Weintraub (2000: 18) as those of:

the German John Rabe...who, as the "good man of Nanking", defied the Japanese Imperial Army and saved thousands of the city's Chinese inhabitants. Or the Japanese Senpo Sugihara who, as Consul of in Kovno, Lithuania in 1940, also in defiance of his government, issued thousands of visas saving more than 31,000 Jewish refugees. Or the Chinese Consul in Vienna, Dr. Feng Shan Ho, between 1937

and 1940, once again without permission from his government, issued thousands of life-saving transit visas to Jews desperate to flee from Austrian and Nazi persecution.

The remembrance of such humanitarian acts can therefore be a fillip to the entrenchment of ethical values within a diverse and multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. Thus, the creation of memorials of the Nigerian Civil War must take cognisance of the benevolent acts of both Igbos and non-Igbos who ensured the safety of lives and properties of ‘the other’ during the war years. In doing this, the youths, who are an essential part of the memorialisation process, can also be inspired to emulate such acts. While the government can institutionalise suitable mechanisms of encouraging such heroes as a means of building sustainable peace within the Nigerian society.

Contextualising the Principles of Memorialisation

Eight guiding principles for memorialisation or memory initiatives were developed by participants at the 2012 *International Memory Initiatives Exchange Forum* held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The principles which were proposed for the initiatives include: Context; Critical Self-Reflection; Participation; Complementarity; Process; Multiple Narratives; Youth; and Politicisation (Impunity Watch, 2013: 1). This section will expatiate on the eight principles by drawing from a body of literature within the humanities and the social sciences across different continents.

The *Context* in which a memorialisation project is introduced needs to be given appropriate consideration due to the failure of uncritical adoption of memory initiatives across different national contexts (Impunity Watch, 2013: 4). The distinctiveness of hierarchical layers and socio-cultural nuances across different societies ought to be considered in order to create comprehensive memory initiatives. These are fundamental to understanding the peculiarity of the root causes and nature of conflicts in different spaces, and develop appropriate strategies for the management and termination of conflicts; thereby countering their lasting legacies and shaping the socio-political context in transitioning societies. The implication of this is that of creating relevant blueprints for structural and institutional reforms for incoming regimes in such societies (Impunity Watch, 2013: 4)¹⁴. For instance, the Norwegian context within which war children were deported and publicly

¹⁴ The variations in meaning of the display of bones across Guatemala, Burundi, Cambodia and Rwanda is very informative in this regard (Impunity Watch, 2013: 5)

discriminated against (on the assumption that they constituted social problems and were inferior citizens having sprung out of underdeveloped parents) (Valderhaug, 2011: 15) was very important in advancing a memory initiative for their resettlement. Likewise, The 4.3 Research Institute in South Korea had to play a vital role in recapturing the memories of the 4.3 events as the evidence had been purposively destroyed by the past regimes (Kim, 2009: 414-415). It achieved this by unearthing the list of the court-marshalled persons, while the discovery of the Darangashi cave provided enough evidence and was relevant in the parliamentary approval of commemoration projects such as the building of the memorial cemetery, park and museum, (Kim, 2009: 422, 421).

The role of the archivist in aiding memorial initiatives is also relevant here. This is because of the need to go beyond making archival facts available to inquisitors to detailing them with the context within which these facts were produced (Valderhaug, 2011: 20-21). This would go a long way in achieving a holistic presentation of history and aid the adoption of the right memory initiatives. Again Prutschi and Weintraub (2000: 23) supported the need for this when they proposed that ‘what is needed is not only authenticity in the preservation of memory but also memory anchored in purpose and meaning.’ This is important to preclude negative reactions from sympathetic non-participants in the catastrophic events. For them, beyond accuracy of the accounts provided, understanding the meaning within the context of occurrence of these events is the most fundamental objective of memorialisation. Also, there is the need to understand the contemporary value context within which memorialisation takes place to avert the danger of ignoring important events which may be deemed irrelevant to the present but have symbolic implications for the future (see Jelin, 1994: 50). The role of researchers and academics in understanding the context of developing memory initiatives cannot be overemphasized. Scholars and researchers in the fields of History, Archaeology, Chemistry, Anthropology, Transitional Justice, Law, Political Science and other such relevant fields, including the medical and biological sciences have roles to play in deciphering the actual contexts of violations. This multidisciplinary approach would endeavour near accuracy for documentation of events and aid the relevance of archival materials for initiating memorials. Finally, the initiation of memorial projects ought to also consider the different contexts of perception of stakeholders who could be third party observers, victims, perpetrators, rescuers

and bystanders.¹⁵ The integration of their diverse perspectives helps to sustain and implement memorialisation policies within relevant spatio-temporal contexts.

The second principle discussed was that of *Critical Self-Reflection* which must be given basic consideration by all parties, especially the third parties. This principle focuses on the ethical implications of instituting risk-laden projects for the purpose of memorialisation. The what, why, where, when and how of the memory initiative should then be critically examined to maximize the effect of the memorialisation process. Following from the above, external actors in the memorialisation project must avoid untoward attitudes to the societal context and refrain from imprudently imposing stereotypical versions of historical truth, which delineates the act from its teleological mandate of justice attainment (Impunity Watch, 2013: 5-6). The observation of Miller (2008: 272) about the possible ‘coherence of blindness’ to methodical limitations resulting from the indiscriminate importation of transitional justice mechanisms, without appropriate transmutation to suit the relevant national and local contexts, is very instructive herein.¹⁶ Therefore, irrespective of the global normative status which the transitional justice mechanism (in this case memorialisation) may have attained (Teitel, 2003: 89-92), the adaptation of memory initiatives should be a primary focus of third party interventions. This is because, as Jelin (1994: 39) explained, the memorialisation of past violations denotes ‘a social and cultural operation involving a symbolic power struggle of considerable magnitude’. It is recommended that outside actors consult with local ones, as well as those topmost in the societal hierarchy, in understanding the power dynamics within local contexts, with the view of developing an integral memorialisation policy in line with acceptable universal norms (Impunity Watch, 2013: 5-6). The domestication of this transitional justice mechanism is therefore very important especially as communities have their unique ways of remembering that is suitable to their contexts. The consideration of local symbols, customs, traditions, social arrangements, and their historical relevance is key for determining the appropriateness of memory initiatives. This would help in preventing exploitation

¹⁵ Bell and Bucher (2010: 678, 677) in the study on the impact of justice sensitivity on source memory outlines the importance of these different contexts in the perception of injustices. The contexts are also applicable within the memorialisation discourse as they could help initiators understand the variance in accounts of past events given by different individuals as well as the memorial initiatives suggested by different groups.

¹⁶ Miller (2008: 272-278) focused on the subjugation of the economic factors (poverty, inequality and structural violence) within both the literary and institutional frameworks for the exercise of transitional justice mechanisms. This omission makes for the impossibility of practical socio-economic and cultural transformation which is very vital in transitioning societies, and could be addressed through ethical considerations by third parties.

of victimhood where the display of memorials do not address critical issues but are manipulated for political and economic gains.

The third principle is that of *Participation* in which the members of the grassroots form an integral part of the memorialisation process. This principle projects a situation wherein there is the actual qualitative participation of important stakeholders in local communities, rather than they serving as mere consultants. The politicisation of the post war trials of Nuremberg and Tokyo, in which the transitional justice mechanisms were designed to address perpetrators of national conflicts to the detriment of individual experiences of the victims (especially women victims of rape and sexual violence), led to the muting of the latter's experiences (Henry, 2011: 2). This exclusion of individual experiences often leave the most vulnerable groups with the trauma of reliving this experiences without any help in assuaging the pain. This principle is therefore important to ensure the bridging of gaps between hegemonic narratives and individual accounts while still respecting the socio-cultural traditions, needs and rights of the people. It also encourages empowerment of the locals through a sense of ownership with the responsibility of guiding the memory initiatives. Ensuring this within the relevant social context will facilitate sustainability of the process (Impunity Watch, 2013: 7). In the creation of memorials for societal integration and peacebuilding, specific attention ought to be paid to women, children and people living with disabilities who are often kept at the periphery of the transitional justice project. There is thus the important need to engage all the relevant stakeholders in determining the suitable forms of justice (whether retributive, reparative, distributive or corrective)¹⁷ in precluding dissociation (see Gwyn, 2011)¹⁸ by major stakeholders in the memorialisation process. The integration of this most vulnerable groups in the society will help in addressing issues of power, exclusion, gender, equity and justice in transitioning societies.

¹⁷ Christopher Kutz gave a philosophical analysis of how to attain justice within specific contexts of post-conflict situations and this is also important in determining the memorialisation of events which should be teleological and ultimately tended towards the attainment of justice (See Kutz, 2004).

¹⁸ Gwyn evaluated the bicentenary commemoration of the abolition of transatlantic slave trade by Britain across heritage sites organised in 2007, which was too centered on the role of William Wilberforce (and the abolitionist movement), thereby diminishing the agency of Africans in the abolition of slave trade. This led to the disclaimer by certain Black communities who viewed it as neo-imperialism and the 'White academia' who criticised the neglect of the discourse on apology and reparation by the organisers. A more participatory and integral approach would have been sufficient for more acceptability as was shown in the case of the Welsh official response and the Historic Houses.

Closely linked with the principle of participation is that of *Complementarity* which is about combining memory initiatives with other transitional justice mechanisms, to achieve truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence of violence, both at the individual and community levels. The true transformation of transitional societies can only be attained when the social, political, legal, cultural, economic and institutional reforms are made possible through the adoption of various transitional mechanisms suitable to particular contexts. Memorialisation is considered as a transitional justice mechanism that could be combined with other mechanisms to achieve transformation of the post-conflict society, especially where perpetrators of past crimes remain in power and tend to manipulate other mechanisms to preclude institutional and political reforms (Impunity Watch, 2013: 8). An example of a memory initiative could be shaming of perpetrators when they make public appearance as a persistent way to demand for justice. The Hillsborough example also reflected the impact of memorialisation as a complement to the inquests into the killings of the 96 Liverpool fans which resulted in their exoneration from their culpability during the disaster that resulted in their death. In another sense, the principle of complementarity could be applied to participants where individuals come from diverse cultural, political, religious and ideological inclinations, as was the case with Argentina's Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights) (Jelin, 1994: 40). This could enrich their contributions and effects on the memory initiative.

One other major principle is that of *Process*, whereby memorialisation is regarded as a long-term process leading to individual, institutional and structural transformations in post-conflict societies, rather than as an end in itself. Within this scenario, the focus is on the sustenance of the involvement of local actors through intergenerational dialogue. The relevance of this lies in the fact that memorialisation is central to the post-conflict formation of identities and alliances by defining interactional models between individuals and communities in dealing with the past. (Impunity Watch, 2013: 10). The three conditions which affect memory initiatives discussed by Jon Elster in his 'Memory and Transitional Justice' are important for consideration in defining the process of memorialisation. They include the spontaneous decay of emotion; the increase in difficulty of documentation of wrongdoings and sufferings with time; and decay of memory of events through generations. These mechanisms are said to affect the decline of the severity of punishment and the generosity of compensation (See Elster, 2003). These could be countered by

timely involvement of local actors across generations within the memorialisation process in order to make it positively enduring. However, due to the evolutionary nature of memory (see Roberts and Roberts, 1996: 23-24)¹⁹, there is also the need to factor in apposite timing and sequencing of memory initiatives in the bid to achieve the transformation of interactions over time (especially in societies where dealing with the past is still covert) rather than serve as mere collectives of ills of the past. Within this context, building of monuments as a memory initiative must be enlivened through organisation of activities around the symbolic moment or events which they memorialise. Inferentially, appropriate timing and sequencing of memorialisation activities should be done in such a manner that its effects are maximised (Impunity Watch, 2013: 10). For example, the Jeju 4.3 events Committee was set up as the aftermath of different memory initiatives to fit into the context of resistance. The unravelling of events went on for much longer periods (close to a decade as at 2009) than had been the experience within other contexts (Kim, 2009: 408). The right interpretation of monuments is also very important because of upcoming generations who may not have been first hand witnesses of the memorialisation process. Extant challenges in bringing down monuments, such as the “Rhodes must fall” campaign at the University of Rhodes in South Africa, and the recent “Ghandi must fall” campaign at the University of Ghana,²⁰ signifies the importance of ensuring objective creation of memory initiatives and the enduring interpretation of these initiatives in post-conflict societies.

Another vital principle discussed is that of *Multiple Narratives*. This principle is based on the supposition that social discourses need to embrace diverse views from unique experiences of different actors. This is vital in order to get the most basic truths through the right timing and within the appropriate context(s). This principle is founded on the fact that multiple narratives are constructive; and secondly, that they bring hidden narratives to the fore by opening up the space for an all-inclusive conversation about the system of repression and the individuals concerned. It also helps in putting past atrocities within the objective historical perspective in the understanding of the present (Impunity Watch, 2010: 4; Impunity Watch, 2013: 11, 12). This principle is

¹⁹ Here, the functional definition of memory as “a dynamic social process of recuperation, reconfiguration, and outright invention” is of relevance.

²⁰ The point here is not to critique these campaigns but to stress the importance of ensuring that the process of creating memorials is not done arbitrarily.

important within the Israel-Palestine contest of geographical boundary definition. Scholars such as Blaut (1979) and Falah (2005) had contested the official Israeli version of Palestine's geography, which had been enforced by the Israeli government through the academia. This, according to them, was an alleged attempt by Israel to institutionalise state ideology as historical truth. Therefore, the academia on both the Israeli (Jewish) and Palestinian (Arab) axes are critical to creating narratives which would “speak the truth to the powers” (Falah, 2005: 1037) and eschew political sentiments within the context of ensuring enduring truth, justice, reparations, peacebuilding and non-recurrence of past atrocities in the volatile disputed region. As Valderhaug (2011: 19-20) advocated, the Norwegian example reflects the need to go beyond accounts by public documentation (as contained in the Norwegian National Archives which were meant to justify the oppression of war children), and move towards the documentation of the unheard voices of these children as contained in personal memoirs, letters, diaries and photographs of relevant non-state actors. The diary of Frank (1967), a twelve year old Jew whose family became victims of Nazism, is a testimony to the relevance of individual narratives that captures the aspirations and anxieties of victims through every day lived experiences. Such details, which are relevant for objective historical representations are often neglected in official narratives. Another important area in which narratives from different sources can be utilised is in the bid to counter the errors of distortion which could occur when memory is engaged, especially in giving Post Event information. This is because memory error could have fatal consequences in terms of forensic evidence (Wright, Self and Justice, 2000: 199) and archival documentation.²¹

The next principle is based on the *Youth Population*, as the sustainability of any memory initiative is dependent on youth participation. Therefore, beyond the focus on major players in the atrocious events of the past, the younger generation must be enlightened and given the appropriate orientation as regards the preclusion of future occurrence of past crimes. Memory initiatives ought to be geared towards recruiting agents of change in transforming the social, cultural, legal, institutional and political spheres of the transitioning society (Impunity Watch, 2013: 12). In line

²¹ Though the study of Daniel Wright et al (2000) was based on how misinformation can impact on memory dependent eyewitness accounts used as forensic evidence in courts, it validates the need for multiple narratives from independent sources and eventually ascertaining the veracity of the accounts by discussing the discrepancies. Within the context of the Nigerian Civil War for instance, the narratives of the allegations of massacres against both Nigerians and Biafrans ought to be juxtaposed with independent narratives of families who helped both Hausa and Igbo victims escape death and victimisation during the war.

with this, Prutschi and Weintraub (2000: 18) described the role of memorialisation in connecting subsequent generations with the survivors of past atrocities. It thus creates a connection between the youths and the victims, with whose sufferings and struggle for justice they come to identify. Such youth engagement could also aid the youth population in putting the inherited identity and ideologies of the present within the right historical perspective (Impunity Watch, 2013: 13). Jelin (1994: 50) quoting Yerushalmi (1989) stressed that the very act of remembering must necessarily entail the purposive handing on of past events to the younger generation through “the channels and repositories of memory”. The youths are then enjoined to accept and internalize these the significance of the transmitted heritage and then charged with the eventual transmission to subsequent generations. There is no gainsaying the fact that such transmissions have the potential of creating sustainable home grown peace cultures if properly implemented.

Finally, the principle of *Politicisation* was also expounded to reflect the malleability of the memorialisation process. Politicisation could either be adapted to aid the restoration of the rights and dignity of victims of violations, or employed to claim legitimacy for a regime which has failed to break with the past, thereby sustaining violence. The latter is often the case in situations where ethnic affiliations and alliances have been politicised, whereby memory initiatives assume a hegemonic nature of either suppression or distortion of certain historical truths (Impunity Watch, 2013: 13-14). The need for non-state actors to spearhead devising policies for recalling historical events through memorials is thus pertinent. Labour Unions, Non Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations as well as influential individuals ought to be integrated into initiating and implementing such policies. This would serve to put a check to the overbearing influence of the state in monopolising such initiatives. From the economic viewpoint, Miller (2008: 287) discusses the neglect of narratives on economic causes of violence within communities. This neglect does not factor in the social costs of ‘the role(s) in conflict of powerful outside states or multinational corporations, making transnational structural imbalances seem irrelevant with regard to internal violence or repression.’ Therefore, advocates of the memorialisation policy could assume the role of political activists in helping to transform the political, social, cultural, institutional, economic and legal order by deposing regimes (both internal and external) to tackle impunity and ensure that the demands for truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence are impartially met (Impunity Watch, 2013: 14). They have a duty to ensure that regime transitions are accompanied by

necessary institutional and structural reforms to enable the completion and sustainability of the transitioning process.

Memorialisation and the Peacebuilding Project in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

From the foregoing, it is obvious that memory initiatives (when properly implemented) are important complements of other transitional justice initiatives. They are important for both effective and sustainable peacebuilding projects through conflict transformation among hitherto belligerent groups. The need for this in Nigeria has become imminent with continual secessionist agitations in different regions of the country. The ongoing agitations (as at September 2016) by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), The Niger Delta Avengers, and also Boko Haram remain potents threats to peaceful coexistence of Nigerians in the country. Within this national context, it imperative that peacebuilding efforts encompass medium and long- term conflict intervention efforts aimed at reconciling opposing ethnic interests, addressing the structural causes of violence and providing enabling environments for peaceful and equitable development across the different regions (see Wils et al., 2006: 1). In essence, it ought to reinforce the efforts of peacemaking and peacekeeping, as is currently been carried out by the Nigerian armed forces and security agents, as a preventive measure for future agitations. The restoration of sustainable peace in the country must go beyond the application of coercive power of the state to ensuring that economic, social, cultural and humanitarian structures are put in place to create a stable society (Ghali, 1992; Miller, 2005). Amongst other things, these peacebuilding efforts which entail the establishment of non-violent modes of conflict management/interventions, will help to promote reconciliation among warring parties and heal psycho-social trauma of victims of grave crimes (Miller, 2005: 57) committed during such agitations. In the subsequent sections, I propose that the quest for ethnic reintegration and sustainable peace in Nigeria ought to entail the adoption of an official memorialisation policy and appropriate implementation of memory initiatives suitable to the Nigerian context in line with the above-discussed principles.

The Nigerian Civil War (July 29, 1967- January 12, 1970) in Perspective

The need for reconciliation of divergent interests presupposes the existence of differences among hitherto opposing groups. These differences are sometimes institutionalised and sustained by structures in post conflict societies when there is incomplete transitioning from previous regimes

(Valls, 2003). Within the Nigerian historical context, the Nigerian Civil War, which took place from 1967-1970 was the climax of ethnic polarisation, where there was sustained aggression between the Nigerian soldiers and the Biafrans. As was characteristic of the era of Nigeria's first republic, the roots of animosity are traceable to the structure of colonialisation and the failure of ethnic integration within the Nigerian state after independence (see Clark, 1991). The immediate antecedents of the Civil War are arguably traceable to the infiltration of the political administrative ambience of Nigeria by the military in the ill-fated coup, popularly attributed to the five majors (Gbulie, 1981; Ademulegun, 1981; Siollun, 2009: 58-74), who were reacting to supposedly salvage the corruption infested polity of the Nigerian State.²² Unfortunately, the high expectations of the Nigerian populace, who were disenchanted with the misrule of the First Republic politicians, soon evaporated with the crystallisation of bitter ethnic politics within the military, which plunged the nation into three years of civil war.

Though there have been massive documentations of the events of the Nigerian Civil War, with diverse accounts presented by individuals and groups - ranging from key military and political actors (both on the Nigerian and Biafran side), victims, and Nigerian/foreign observers (one of the most recent being Chinua Achebe's highly controversial *There was a Country*), these efforts have largely been isolated individual accounts with the Nigerian state yet to officially harness this as a didactic narrative for the younger generation. Nonetheless, there has been no mincing of words regarding the atrocities that were committed before and during the war, especially as was perpetrated against members of the seceding Biafran State. In introducing his manifesto laying out the blueprint for the modus operandi of the administrative and institutional sectors of Biafra, the late leader, Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, praised the "supreme sacrifice" of his fellow Biafrans, which entailed enduring the dispossession, blockade, bombardment, starvation and massacre meted out on them by the Nigerian State. These he popularly termed acts of genocide against a "defenceless and weak people" who had been threatened with total destruction by "an enemy

²²These majors included Kaduna Nzeogwu, Timothy Onwuatuogwu, Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Adewale Ademoyega and Chris Anuforo. This mission was asserted in a radio broadcast by the General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Army, Major-General Johnson Thomas Umunakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi on Radio Nigeria on 16th January, 1966 (a day after the aborted coup).

unequalled in viciousness.”²³ In more precise language, Ojukwu made allusions to the arbitrary killing of about 50,000 Igbo from 28 May, 1966 and over a million more during the war, including the killing of the entire male population of a village. He subsequently alleged the insensitivity of the ‘world’ to the plight of the Igbo on racial grounds.²⁴ The Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, a Pan Igbo group which describes itself as the ‘the Apex organization of the Entire Igbo people in Nigeria’ similarly traced the Igbo plight to the pogroms before the Civil War. In its petition submitted to the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission in October, 1999, the body held, amongst other things, that the ‘genocidal massacres’ of May 29, 1966 ‘are indefensible and unjustifiable’. Before this assertion, the body had declared that the pogrom was based on an unfounded assumption that the coup of January, 15, 1966 was an ethnic coup planned by the Igbo. It maintained that there was indeed no civilian involvement in the coup, which was a counter coup to one slated for January, 17, 1966. They emphasized that the coup was intended to install Awolowo (a non-Igbo) as the prime minister of Nigeria. The group asserted that the escape of top Igbo politicians was as a result of the poor execution of the coup and the suppression of the revolt by the Army, while it also tried to justify the unitary system of government introduced by Major-General Thomas Umunakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi (Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, 1999: 10). While there have been variations of interpretations of this facet of Nigeria’s history, in terms of the supposed myth of Igbo conspiracy in the coup plot, it remains controversial that the escape of the aforesaid politicians was mainly among a particular ethnic group, as there was indeed a similar trend even within the military ranks, with Gen. Ironsi surviving to take over the reins of power and keeping the coup plotters in prison.

It could be said that from the variants of extant literature on the war, the coup was poorly planned or failed because of the escape of General Ironsi, the General Officer Commanding the Nigerian army. This appears to be more than coincidence if one considers that firstly, the four most senior army officers (Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari, Colonel Kur Mohammed, Lt-Colonels Abogo Largema and James Pam) were eliminated with success; and secondly, that the Eastern region was

²³ See: Ahiara Declaration: Ojukwu’s Manifesto for a Biafran Revolution, dated 29th May, 1969. This date is coincidentally currently adopted as Democracy Day by the Federal Government of Nigeria, being the day that the Fourth Republic was ushered into the country.

²⁴ Ibid. This allegation could be considered an overgeneralisation as Johannes Harnischfeger (2011) established that there were reactions in Europe and America by the citizens concerning the plights of the Igbo as well as intervention of international organisations. See: Harnischfeger, J. 2011. Igbo Nationalism and Biafra. *Afrikanistik Online*. Vol. 2011, par. 49

the safe haven for some of the fleeing coup plotters (see Amali, 1967; Ademoyega, 1981; Gbulie, 1981; Clark, 1991; Siollun, 2009). A close look at the petition by the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo reveals that there were some issues that were left unattended to in their defence of General Ironsi. These included, among other things, the selective promotion of Igbo majors to Lieutenant Colonels, and his failure to try the coup plotters who were still being paid while in detention (see Siollun, 2009: 114). The attempt at denial of the Igbo association with the coup is implicitly supported by Chinua Achebe's attempt to present Major Kaduna Nzeogwu as being more Hausa than Igbo due to his dressing habit and fluency in Hausa, in his personal history on the war (Achebe, 2012). The position of the Igbo with reference to the coup highlights the perennial manipulation of ethnic sentiments by Nigerian elites to suit their hegemonic version of events, thereby distorting historical truths. This is a great disservice to upcoming generations as it denies them the opportunity to learn from history in avoiding the mistakes of the past. One could only imagine what the success of the first military coup in Nigeria may have yielded, especially if their reported ideals of genuine national reformation of the polluted Nigerian polity were to have been sustained and implemented.

For one, there could be no downplay of the ethnic origins of participants in major events in a multiethnic country like Nigeria, especially in terms of its political ambience. For example, it would be most intriguing for the North to deny the Northern origin of General Sani Abacha, much maligned for his many atrocities against Nigeria and her citizens. Rather than embark on the denial game in an attempt to achieve sanctimonious ethnic justification, it would have been most beneficial if all groups within the Nigerian State accepted their responsibilities in contributing to the state of affairs of the country today. Only then can there be a basis for moving away from the errors of the past and charting a future course. It is based on such attitudinal transformation that the murder of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, The Sarduna of Sokoto, the slain military officers and ministers,²⁵ (during the first coup), the killing of Aguiyi-Ironsi and 300 other Igbo officers, and the Asaba Massacre amongst other war atrocities can be put within the right perspective and addressed in a progressive manner. This is, without doubt, what this paper

²⁵ Samson Amali (1967) discussed what he regarded as an indiscretion by some people of Igbo extraction who flaunted pictures of Major Nzeogwu in the North in celebration of the murder of the Sarduna, Sir Ahmadu Bello (who championed the Northernisation policy) to the chagrin of Northerners.

proposes in bringing forth the adoption of the memorialisation policy and its rightful implementation in Nigeria.

One of the gravest memories of the Civil War was the Asaba Massacre, led by General Murtala Mohammed who is regarded as the ‘Butcher of the Asaba’ by the Igbo (see Harnischfeger, 2011). It was an event which is reported to have capped the ‘food shortages, hunger, malnutrition, starvation, disease and death’ prevalent during the war (Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, 1999: 18). There were also reported cases of arbitrary extermination of fleeing unarmed civilians in Aba, numbering up to about 2000, and the horrifying case of the 300 Apostolic church members who were brought out, tied and executed by the then Col. Murtala-led forces. There were also reported actions in Uyo, Calabar, Oji River and Okigwe (see Ohaneze ndi Igbo, 1999). This paper takes a cursory look the Asaba event, and the course of its memorialisation, because of its context of ethnic victimisation and genocide, which resulted in massive losses ranging from 700 males to about 3000²⁶ civilians. Bird and Ottanelli (2011) noted the underreportage of the Asaba Massacre, and attempted a reconstruction of the events from the survivors’ perspective. The attempt of these scholars ought to be applauded as a great foundational step for the memorialisation process of a major event during the Civil War in the bid to bring about genuine peace and national integration among different ethnic groups within Nigeria. That their exposition is done from the survivors’ perspective gives credence to the objectivity of their efforts, in opposition to the conventional hegemonic accounts which often dominate narratives of symbolic historical events in Nigeria. It is instructive to note that the occupation of the Delta region across the Niger with the declaration of Biafra had endangered the life of the Igbo resident therein (Bird and Ottanelli, 2011: 4). The nature of Ojukwu’s declaration of the secession of Biafra has also been rife with controversies, regarding his actual intentions: whether it was ‘demarcation of a line’ as reported in an interview (See Bird and Ottanelli, 2011) or the takeover of the Nigerian government with his occupation of the Mid West and the aborted advance to Lagos. This makes it really difficult to determine if his plans were to secede the Eastern region under his command, expand the region’s territory to the Midwest and

²⁶ Elizabeth Bird and Frazer Ottanelli (2011) put the figure at between 373 and 1,000 while stating that the exact number of the casualties remains unknown.

secede, or take over the Nigerian government.²⁷ This is important in putting the Nigerian Civil War in perspective as there is the need to juxtapose events with the rhetorics of the major actors.

The position of the 'Asaba Igbo' ought to be clarified as well in terms of their 'Igbo identity' in the pre- and post- war era. More so, as it has become grossly insufficient to hinge the position of their elders in support of 'One Nigeria' as that of the majority of the people (see Bird and Ottanelli, 2011: 6, 9). It would be interesting to objectively document reasons why the Asaba would not support the cause of their fellow Igbo with whom they shared similar cultural and linguistic experience. In the same vein, the identity tag of 'non- Igbo' for civilians who were collaborators with the Federal troops in the Midwest in hunting down and slaughtering the Igbo, as documented by Bird and Ottanelli (2011: 6-7), is too general and portends danger for the interpretation of such sensitive events of the war. It gives a misleading impression that non-Igbo conspired against the Igbo and had plans to exterminate them. This broad categorisation of opposition and actions often lead to undue essentialisation of evil acts, which often neglects the overlaps between actors and their actions in terms of war. For instance, certain narratives about the war confirm that there were Nigerians from other extractions who empathised with the Igbo during the war, including those within the rank and file of the Federal troops (see Bird and Ottanelli, 2011: 17; Alabi-Isama, 2013). As a matter of fact, war records have shown that not everyone who fought on the Biafran side was Igbo (see Siollun, 2009). From another perspective, Ben Okafor's allegation of betrayal of the Boys' Company by a top Biafran officer, who switched sides and gave information to the Nigerian troops is very informative. This betrayal that had resulted in the molestation of Biafran soldiers, whose eyes were plucked out as they were sent back to Biafra, is very revealing as it helps to unearth some of the intrigues which took place within the top echelons of the Biafra army.²⁸ Such are the complexities which the memorialisation of the Civil War needs to confront in unravelling the truth of events as they happened. This is very necessary to attain the "Never Again" goal of

²⁷ See Achebe (2012). The reason of distracting the Nigerian forces from the Biafran Capital of Enugu might be insufficient, with Achebe's account of Lt. Col. Banjo's sabotage of the plan to take over Lagos and the eventual execution of the latter due to an alleged plan coup against Ojukwu's government.

²⁸ See Ben Okafor Remembers the Biafran War. Being an Account of his Interview on Witness organised by the BBC world Service. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18707808> Last Updated 5th July 2012. The Boys' Company involved the use of child soldiers aged between 12 and 15 who were engaged in combat for the Biafrans and this corroborates the fact that they were greatly under-resourced in terms of humans, materials and capital. One of the positives of the war is that Ben, now a reggae musician, campaigns against the use of child soldiers in war.

sustainable peacebuilding and genuine national integration for unity of Nigeria's diverse ethnicities in the post war era. The need to learn and move on from the past has become necessary as the Igbo still feel alienated from mainstream politics in Nigeria. This is reflected by the clamour for an Igbo president since after the war, and the need for the Igbo to hold key positions in terms of political appointments. In their words, 'the abortive attempt at ethnic cleansing directed at the race through a civil war has ever since transformed into an on-going policy of systematic disempowerment in all sectors' (Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, 1999: 8).²⁹

It would be falsehood to claim that there have been no attempts at documenting the events of the Nigerian Civil War; but the historicisation of these efforts for their sustainability leave much to be desired, especially with the continuous inaction of the Nigerian government at the federal level. An official attempt at memorialising the Civil War is in the shift of the colonially inherited Armed Forces Remembrance day (otherwise known as the 'Poppy Day') from the 11th of November to the 15th of January. The initial date had been declared in commemoration of the soldiers who fought during the First and Second World Wars, and also others involved in peace support operations. The 15th of January is important as the day on which the Biafra soldiers surrendered to the Nigerian State through Lt. col. Philip Effiong.³⁰ However, the military focus of this date distances civilian victims from integration into the memorialisation space, albeit both pro-Nigerian and pro-Biafra loyalists respect the memory of the heroics of soldiers who fought on either side. In Asaba, an attempt at memorialising the event of the genocide was made through annual memorial services in honour of the victims of the massacre. These memorial services were, however, erroneously suppressed by the order of the Nigerian Federal Government. In spite of this, survivors still find ways of sustaining the memories their experiences through oral tradition (Bird and Ottanelli, 2011: 14) and documented text.³¹

A commendable effort at the memorialisation of the Biafran War is the building of the War Museum in Umuahia which houses the relics (war equipment, military uniform, galleries of the

²⁹ This position was again reiterated emphatically in Achebe (2012).

³⁰ This date is also significant within the Nigerian Polity as it marks the anniversary of the first Nigerian Military Coup by revolutionary soldiers, Majors Chukwuma, Kaduna Nzeogwu and Emmanuel Ifeajuna.

³¹ One great example of this is Emma Okocha's *Blood on the Niger* with a latest revised edition of 2012.

antagonists, protagonists and war victims, and remains of the Voice of Biafra³²) of the war. The museum is being managed by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) for the Nigerian Military. The Museum was initiated by General Theophilus Danjuma, launched by late Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon on 15th January, 1985, and commissioned to the public on 14th September, 1989 by Lt. Col. Domkat Bali (rtd). The location of the museum is laudable for its historical relevance as it was sited on the Voice of Biafra Bunker and Ojukwu Bunker. The latter was reported to have been built in 90 days, and is a great heritage which showcases the industriousness and creativity of the Igbo at their very best (Akasike, 2011).³³ The museum is also important in recounting the events that led to the Civil War, with a photo gallery of the five military majors who plotted the first Nigerian Coup,³⁴ and a library for researchers and students with interests on the war (Akinade, 2005). The holistic conceptualisation of this initiative via the incorporation of arts and literature is commendable. Specifically because it counters the attempt to undermine the historical linkages between the Civil War and the first military coup in Nigeria. While it may be difficult to rightfully situate these majors as either heroes or villains,³⁵ especially as their attempt was unsuccessful, it would be a great disservice to the future and history of Nigeria if the events are not objectively and properly documented. This memory initiative is thus important to help the upcoming generations relate effectively with the country's past.

In reference to the first Nigerian Coup, an important memory initiative is the Arewa House, which houses the Centre for Research and Documentation, and is located on Rabbah Road, Kaduna. The documentation centre is properly maintained for research as an annex to the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. Its symbolic importance is in the preservation of the life and legacies of the Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, an important religious, cultural and political actor during the first republic. Interestingly, his birth place was on this same road where he also lived and was

³² The Voice of Biafra was the radio service which the Biafran government used during the war to relay the plight of the suffering victims of the war to the outside world

³³ See also Charles Ajunwa's account titled *Inside the National War Museum*. Retrieved from <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/inside-the-national-war-museum/144954/> Accessed 15 May, 2013

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Major General Kaduna Nzeogwu was for instance buried with full military honours after being killed by the Federal troops on 29 July, 1967 while he was fighting on the Biafran side. The controversy still lingers on whether he was supposed to be alive to fight the Biafran War having committed treason or the need for his immortality as is being championed by his kinsmen and some other Nigerians. Major Ifeayinajuna, however, despite his exploits at the Olympics for Nigeria, remains unrecognised because of his role and failure during the coup (See Nzondur, 2013; Siollun, 2009: 36)

killed. With a rich resource library and archives, the centre also boasts of artefacts of the 19 Northern states and personal belongings of the Sardauna including his office table, kettle, mat, prayer beads, wristwatch, Quran amongst other things (Nzondu, 2013). The importance accorded the centre remains predominant in the North because of its status as being a Northern initiative, with no particular identification by the Southern government or its people. It however remains a great resource for scholars and researchers who are interested in Nigerian and Northern Nigerian history in particular. While regional initiatives are to be commended and encouraged, memorial initiatives with more national outlook would better aid peacebuilding and national integration in the country. An example has been the creation of Museums for National Unity in Ibadan and Enugu which display cultural heritages from different parts of the country. A replication of such an initiative with focus on the Nigerian Civil War would be invaluable in teaching about lessons learnt since the war.

The attempt at memorialising the role of Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, mainly credited for his revolutionary ambition in initiating the coup, was made in his home town through a statue located at the Okpanam roundabout in Delta State. This roundabout, christened Nzeogwu Square, has not generated the kind of impact which it ought to, as it is considered a mere politicisation of an important project. Consequently, indigenes of the town still clamour for an appropriate memorialisation of their son who is considered a symbol of true nationalism, honesty, transparency, frankness, impartiality, great work ethos and vision.³⁶ This goes to corroborate the position above that memory initiatives go beyond mere erection of structures to a holistic approach involving different stakeholders in ensuring that it generates the right meaning and impacts it deserves.

In adding his voice to the debate on reintegration in the post - Civil War period, Professor Edlyne Anugwom of the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, in an interview, lamented the lack of attitude of the Nigerian leadership to inculcate the lessons of the war in the upcoming generation through purposeful education rather than the manipulation of ethnicity, which has become a ready

³⁶ See: Immortalise Our Son, Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu's Kinsmen Plead. *Nigerian Pilot*. Retrieved from <http://www.nigerianpilot.com/immortalise-our-son-major-chukwuma-nzeogwus-kinsmen-plead/> Posted 27 July, 2012

divisive tool harnessed to canvass for votes during elections. For him, there is a connection between the Biafran struggle and the Niger Delta militancy, as in both cases young people (as well as adults) struggled against suppression of the oligarchs who exploit them in all spheres.³⁷ With the recent resurgence of militancy by the Niger Delta Avengers and the secessionist agitations of different factions of the Indigenous People of Biafra, the need to reposition structures and institutions of power in post-war Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The persistence of these agitations have been due to biased and isolated narratives which have precluded the transformation of mutual suspicion among Nigerians of different ethnic extractions. An important step would be creating official all-inclusive narratives of the Civil War in confronting multiple discourses which could serve to further polarise the Nigerian multi-ethnic society (see Impunity Watch, 2013: 5).

Consequently, there is need for the Nigerian nation to realise the futility of attempting to erase the memory of the Civil War through the bulldozing of historical sites of the war, the ban of the use of the term Biafra, and the change of nomenclature of sights and symbols of the war events (Brooke, 1987) since this has not yielded positive impacts. If anything, the more they had tried to bury the Biafran corpse, the more the proverbial leg of the corpse had continue to show on the burial site. In 2012, the BBC reporter, Will Ross, observed the clandestine hoisting of the Biafran flag and singing of the anthem even after about a hundred people were arrested just a month earlier for a peaceful march with the Biafran flag in Enugu. This was as a result of the lingering trauma of war and the claim that the Igbo are yet to be reintegrated into the mainstream of the Nigerian polity. The Igbo causes are being championed by different associations, both within Nigeria and in the diaspora. Notable among these groups are the Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM), the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which to intensify the struggle for an independent and sovereign Igbo nation. Since the middle of 2015, there have been open protests in the South East region of Nigeria which sometimes resulted in confrontation between protesters and law enforcement agents. The continuous detention of the leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu has remained one of the major reasons for restiveness in the South East and South South of Nigeria. Apart from the confrontational approach, the Igbo have also employed different initiatives to reinvigorate the Biafran memory

³⁷ See; From War in Biafra to Oil in the Niger Delta. *JGU Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.magazin.uni-mainz.de/589_ENG_HTML.php dated 9th, May 2012.

within their social space. For instance, local bars have become spaces for memorialising through the Biafran logo of the rising sun on the local beer called *Hero* (Ross, 2012).

It is important to emphasise the importance of civil society organisations, Nongovernmental organisations and private individuals in the memorialisation process. In making success of memory initiatives in Nigeria following the eight principles discussed above (namely Context; Critical Self-Reflection; Participation; Complementarity; Process; Multiple Narratives; Youth; and Politicisation), there is need for a public-private collaboration between the government and these other non-state actors. Memorialisation examples from Hillsborough, Rwanda, Cambodia, South Africa and South Korea, among other countries, reflect that the sustenance of memorialisation projects is largely dependent on private individuals and organisations whose skills, consistency, bravery and funds were committed to the peacebuilding process. There is then the need to initiate and harness collaborative efforts within the right historical perspectives in creating official initiatives by the Nigerian Federal Government.³⁸ This would help to enliven as well as certify the assertion of ‘no victor, no vanquished’ by Major General Yakubu Gowon. The inclusion of all stakeholders within this memory project will help complete the mission of ‘healing the nation’s wounds’ through ‘reconciliation in full equality’. These steps are important for genuine reintegration of the aggrieved yet to be achieved since since the war ended over four decades ago.

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Conclusion

Akinade (2005: 332) expressed the need to build a “culture of peace” by annexing the cultural and natural potentials of the country. This is in order to engage “softer, non-inciting, non-inflammatory” methods of transforming conflict situations. One feasible means of achieving this is for the government, in partnership with the private and non profit organisations, to invest adequately and objectively into creating memory initiatives for ethnic integration within the polarised Nigerian geo-polity. This has become pertinent in the face of discontent which is still

³⁸ The greatest opportunity in this regard was the initiation of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission which was a failed experiment because of the ill-conceived idea of using it as a tool for settling scores with past enemies rather than objectively focusing on the institutionalisation of such a noble initiative using a formidable constitutional instrument.

³⁹ See: The Dawn of National Reconciliation. Gowon’s Civil War Victory Broadcast Message to the Nation on 15 January, 1970

being expressed by victims due to the trauma of the Nigerian Civil War. The sufferings of these people are still extant through the scars sustained by the memory of the cruel deaths of relatives and friends with the neglect of creating 'institutionalised public memory' initiatives (Bird and Ottanelli, 2011: 20). The grievance of the Igbo subsists till this day as they request for compensation for being punished economically by the Nigerian state.⁴⁰ In the same vein, the Igbo nation still longs for an official apology from the Federal Government, having been left unsatisfied with that of the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, who apologised in September, 1992, (years after leaving his office as Head of State) for the atrocities committed against them by the federal troops during the war (Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, 1999: 16). On the other side of the divide, the Hausa also remain aggrieved for being the major casualties during the first Nigerian Military coup, which had Igbo officers as its key actors. The onus therefore lies on the power at the centre to bring the aggrieved parties together and call for a peaceful settlement of their grievances with recourse to true historical documentation. This efforts should subsequently be aided by joint development of memory initiatives.

The debate on the timing and duration of transitional justice mechanisms (see Kim, 2009: 408) is apt in concluding this paper. The centenary celebration of the country's amalgamation necessitated the call for national introspection in re-evaluating the basis for the unity of the Nigerian state. Adopting the memorialisation policy at the national level would definitely aid the quest to understand the realities and challenges of the present time as consequences of the nation's past. The starting point of this project could be to memorialise the amalgamation event itself by reconstructing the very buildings in which the document was signed and making it a memorial site symbolic of initiation of one Nigeria. In doing this, the Federal Government should endorse inter-agency collaborations among its various organs (such as the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and the National Orientation Agency) and other non state actors. There is need to sensitise the citizenry on the importance of memory initiatives in ensuring sustainable peace within the Nigerian nation. For instance, such sensitisation can emphasize the memorialisation of the Civil War as geared towards the abhorrence of inter- ethnic war as an official state policy, by the future leadership of a nation.

⁴⁰ The most cited example is that of the abandoned property in Port Harcourt, although this must be sieved from the recovery of illegal wealth amassed by the elites in the region.

It is important to reiterate that the erection of monuments does not automate the healing process. Beyond mere creation of symbols and other memory initiatives, there must be a conscious effort to ingrain the correct interpretation of these memorials within the citizenry, especially among the youth population. With the right interpretation, within the contexts of the events which each memorial represents, the avoidance of the mistakes of the past through ‘never again’ can then be achieved. Within the framework of multiple narratives for objectivity, Brigadier General Godwin Alabi-Isama’s account of the Biafran War, titled *The Tragedy of Victory*, is a welcome development as a counter narrative to the popular General Olusegun Obasanjo’s *My Command*, which was a prevalent version from a soldier who fought for the federal troops (Omatseye, Osuji and Macaulay, 2013). For instance, questions as regards the support and participation of the non-Igbo and even the Igbo first republic politicians remain obscure. It was thus interesting to hear from Alabi-Isama’s interview that Isaac Adaka Boro fought on the Federal side, and helped capture vital parts of the oil producing South South. He also made references to the domination of the non-Igbo by the Igbo even within the Biafran military ranks. It was also interesting to learn that there was the Hausa massacre at the Ogbe Hausa in Sabon Gari, Asaba where everyone (children and women included) was killed (Omatseye, Osuji and Macaulay, 2013: 25). This is indeed a part of the narrative that has been given less attention and could contribute to the discourse on genocide during the war period. In the same vein, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* situates the war narrative within a second generational memory trajectory, and her observation of the ‘danger of a single story’ implies that such efforts be guided to avoid a limited, narrow interpretation of persona as well as historical events. It would be quite interesting to read the events as they occurred in Lagos from the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, who was a major actor during the war. The onus lies on the Federal Government to harness these extant narratives into a negotiated official account of this vital part of our history. This will be very symbolic and consequential for future relations among the citizens. History has to be put right to truly heal wounds and chart a way forward for the unity of Nigerians.

The summation of this paper is that the successful initiation and implementation of official memorialisation projects following the principles outlined above have many implications for building unity among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. The appropriate starting point would

be the Biafran War, which, to date, is the most audacious threat to the survival of Nigeria as a nation. The official historicisation of the events of the war, which practically affected every region in the country (be it in terms of the actors or events), would put the unity of Nigeria in perspective and provide a solid foundation for charting a forward course in sustaining it.

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