Chapter I

Introduction

Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial studies is a vast field of literary, cultural, political and historical inquiry that developed after the late 1970s as a field of academic specialization. Today, postcolonial studies occupies a position of legitimacy and even relative prestige not only within Euro-American academy but also in so many academic institutions of formerly colonized world. There are several academic journals and especial issues to ‘postcolonial literature’ and ‘postcolonial theory.’ In addition, the scholarly works of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Benedict Anderson, V. Y. Mudimbe, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chatterjee and others have enhanced the postcolonial studies.

Hans Bertens in his *Literary Theory: The Basics* writes that, “postcolonial theory and criticism emphasizes the tension between the metropolis and the (former) colonies, between what within the colonial framework were the metropolitan imperial centre and its satellites” (200). It also focuses on the cultural displacements--and its consequences for personal and communal identities--that inevitably followed colonial conquest and rule and it does so from non-Eurocentric perspective. Postcolonial theory and criticism radically questions the aggressively expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world.

It studies the process and effects of cultural displacement and the ways in which the displaced have culturally defended themselves. Postcolonial study, in particular, sees such displacement, and the ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead, as vantage points that allow us to expose the internal doubts and the instances of resistance that the West has suppressed in its steamrolling globalizing course. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha has put it in this way:

> Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of the third world countries and the discourses of minorities within the geopolitical division of East and West, North and South. . . . They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity. (171)

Thus, for Bhabha, postcolonial perspective has disruptive potential to unveil the Eurocentric rationalization of modernity.

Similarly, Padmini Mongia writes that, "Postcolonial theory is an umbrella term that covers different critical approaches which deconstruct European thought in areas as wide-ranging as philosophy, history, literary studies, anthropology, sociology and political science" (2). Therefore, postcolonial study is not simply associated with periodizaiton, but rather to a methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale critique of structures of knowledge and power, particularly those of post-Enlightenment period.

What all the postcolonial theorists and critics would agree on is that they are all engaged in a reassessment of the traditional relationship between the metropolis and its colonial subjects and in the radical deconstruction--either along poststructuralist or along more traditional lines--of the imperialist perspective. As Hans Bertens writes, they agree in their focus "on colonial (neo-colonial) oppression, on resistance to colonization, on the respective identities of colonizer and colonized, on patterns of interacting between those identities, on postcolonial migration, on the ensuing hybridity of both cultures, and so on and so forth" (200).

Central to these interests are issues of race and ethnicity, language, nation, coloniality, gender, identity, class, and above all power. Postcolonial theorists and critics also agree on the relevance of their enterprise for the world of late 20th century (and later) from which colonies might have largely disappeared, but in which neo-colonial relations abound--not only between Western nations and their former colonies but also between the majorities within those nations and ethnic minorities.

Postcolonial perspective is nowadays used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, various institutions of colonialisms, the discursive operation of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and resistance of such subjects, and contemporary colonial legacy in both pre and post-independence nations and communities. So Ashcroft et al write,

> while its use has tended to focus on the cultural production of such communities, it is becoming widely used in historical political, sociological and economic analysis, as these disciplines continue to engage with the impact of European imperialism upon world societies. (187)

Such above mentioned aspects are taken into account while reading literary text through this perspective.

Thus, postcolonial studies is such an umbrella domain under which comes the issues like coloniality, postcoloniality, nation, nationalism, empire, ethnicity, race, neo-coloniality, gender spaces, etc. Buchi Emecheta's novel *Destination Biafra* (1982) is significant for postcolonial study because it also raises some of the postcolonial issues--nation formation, ethnicity, neo-colonialism, and gender spaces--associating them with violence, especially in the context of Nigeria in the decade just following the achievement of independence in 1960.

Violence

The unlawful exercise of physical force is violence. It results from a number of reasons: social, economic, religious, ethnic, etc. Often politics is interwoven with these causes. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of English Language* defines the term violence as "an exertion of any physical force so as to injure or abuse." Similarly, *Encarta Reference 2000* defines violence as "physical attack" especially from other persons which involves violent or physical assault. Likewise, E. K. Mayer, in *Violence and Aggression*, says "violence is a form of human aggression that involves inflicting physical damage on person or property" (19). Thus, violence is such a damaging physical attack on person or property and this mainly emanates from human aggression.

In somehow broader sense, Hussein Abdilahi Bulham defines violence as "any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or group violates the physical, social and/or psychological integrity of other person, group" (135). But some are also of the opinion that political violence is essential to historical progress. Mahmood Mamdani writes that, "The modern political sensibility sees political violence as necessary to historical progress. Ever since the French Revolution, moderns have come to see violence as the midwife of history" (1). Modern political sensibility is not horrified by all violence. Mamdani adds, "What horrifies modern political sensibility is not violence per se, but violence that does not make any sense" (2).

Violence nature is so ubiquitous that it is also found in the animal kingdom. But it is more frequent, intense and reactive in humans because of their rational power. The most widespread type of aggressiveness is reactive or defensive aggressiveness. Every animal exhibits this sort of aggressiveness when its vital interests such as life, territory, food and young are threatened. Human beings become more violent as they are more aware regarding such interests. So, James Calleja writes that, "Violence is as old as humanity. The human being (like other animal) is inclined to possess, secure and defend given territorial boundaries whether physical, psychological or emotional" (2). That is why, drawing Hegelian thought of man as different from animals, in that he is willing to die for the cause higher than life, Mamdani writes, "Man is also willing to kill for the cause higher than life" (1).

Human beings are more concerned while choosing certain values, images, persons and institutions. They do not want to give up such values and also do not bear an attack on such values and systems. Such values and systems are basis of cultural identity and any threat to it becomes cause of violence. It does not matter whether the values they defend make sense, but what matters here is the question of their cultural identity. When violence is an outcome of cultural difference, on a world scale, it is called clash of civilizations. Locally, it is called communal conflict as in South Asia or ethnic conflict as in Africa.

Man's involvement in violence is not always because of consciousness only. Sometimes, he is brainwashed and motivated by someone. Therefore, they indulge in war and violence. If his leaders try to make him believe and he lacks critical judgment, he becomes reactionary. It does not matter whether he is really threatened or not. The degree of violence and conflict depends on group leader, his persuasion and rebel's lack of critical judgment.

Further, violence can be both manifest and structural. Manifest violence is a consequence of direct and physical violence inflicted by other individuals. But structural violence is more indirect and it is caused through social system. Jennifer Turpin writes that structural violence is "the violence experienced by people . . . because of inequality or structural conditions imbedded in the society" (801). Such violence may be the consequence of government policies and cultural values like patriarchy.

Literature is also not detached from violence. Literary writers represent violence in different ways. Buchi Emecheta's novel *Destination Biafra* also depicts the violence in post-independence Nigeria which started with political competition and in the long run took the form of violent civil war.

Emecheta's attitude of post-independent violence is heavily critical and she largely blames the elites--both foreign and internal--for the outbreak of violence. Her *Destination Biafra* is a postcolonial critique of violence in newly independent Nigeria. Though there is post-independence optimism initiated by the elites/leaders with the homogenizing spirit of nationalism, they also become catalyst for the outbreak of ethnic or tribal conflict on the background of prolonging imperialism and ubiquitous gender spaces.

Emecheta, in her novel *Destination Biafra*, particularly talks about the violence of civil war in order to expose the paradox of forging postcolonial nation. The civil war of post-independence Nigeria becomes a tool for unraveling the war as an institutional question and war as politics--engineered and fueled by imperialist interests and internal ethnic allegiance. The novel also shows the sexual violence in a woman's attempt to hold national unity threatened by the civil war.

The post-independent optimism of nationalism is postponed from the beginning as the Nigerian politics develops as tribal-regional affair. For instance, "though NCNC party had started as a national party to combat the tentacles of colonialism, in this election it had been pushed into an all-Igbo party" (21). Even the leaders of same Yoruba party AG clash for their own failure to be in government. The military coup with the motto of purging the nation from corrupt leaders and forming truly independent nation also seems to be an Igbo success as majority of ringleaders were Igbo officers and killed politicians were non-Igbo. Though General Onyemer, new state head after coup, "thought that by praising spirit of nationalism, he would abolish tribalism . . . and start afresh" (69), this homogenizing spirit of nationalism comes to a halt due to counter coup which takes life of Onyemer. Then, divisiveness of military leaders, like Saka Momoh and Chijioke Abosi, leads to civil war. Through this Emecheta highlights the paradox of forging postcolonial nation.

Britain as a colonial power is a major "bad guy" in the novel. Neo-colonialism is personified in the portrait of Alan Grey, the son of retired Governor-general and also the advisor of Nigerian Army. Thus, neocolonialism is organic continuation of colonialism. Gray's plundering of cultural artifacts and attempt of ensuring British control over Nigerian oil are the hallmarks of economic imperialism. In the opening part, when Alan Gray says, "Well, why don't we drink to the past empire and the beginning of workable Commonwealth?" (6), we get the hint that Nigeria is not going to be free from colonial claptrap. Not only this, Grey also plays role to ignite civil war. Once he says to Momoh "If you have more arms and ammunition than Abosi, then use them. . . . The whole Mid-west is rich in oil; the part of the breakaway state is very oily; I'd sign percentages of the oil revenue over to people who would help you to win the war" (146).   Further, Britain plays dual role of sending ammunition and mercenaries to federal state and food with Red Cross help to Biafrans during the war. So, with a very strong anti-colonial stand, Emecheta depicts that one of the key causes of violence in post-independence Nigeria is Britain's economic imperialism.

Traditional notion of war as male domain is denied in *Destination Biafra*. Debbie Ogedemgbe, idealistic Oxford-educated daughter of a venal politician, joins the army in her desire to contribute to the reconstruction of Nigeria into an independent nation. But she is victimized by the pervasive trajectories of rape and sexual assault in the war fronts. When Debbie goes with her "delicate mission" to meet Chijioke Abosi, she is violently raped by Nigerian soldiers despite the fact that she herself is in the same profession. When her mother later complains about it, the officer replies "so what? It's war. She is lucky to have been alive. She will be alright" (129). Thus, Emecheta shows how rape is used as the instrument of war. On the way to meet Abosi for peace, Chief Odumosu says to Debbie, “[D]on’t meddle in things bigger than you and don’t forget, my dear, that you are only a woman. That is why we are giving you this delicate mission” (123). In this way, Emecheta exposes the sexual violence in a woman’s attempts to hold a national unity threatened by civil war caused due to arrogant male leaders.

The Nigerian-born Buchi Emecheta, resident mainly in London, is a cross-cultural figure. She writes in African tradition, drawing on African materials and experience. Her novels draw heavily upon Nigerian beliefs and postcolonial culture and often portray the problems that occur when the Western world encroaches upon African social system. Many of her works are autobiographical in nature, feminist in spirit, and portray a place in which cruelties of European colonization endure for generations. Her best known novels include *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Titch the Cat* (1979), *Nowhere to Play* (1980), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Double Yoke* (1982), etc.

Destination Biafra chronicles the events where decolonization is not only marred from the beginning by the corruption of the political leaders but also by the military coup, as later one is also infected by the lust for power and divisiveness. Thus, lingering economic imperialism, corrupt politics, and military coup jointly ignite the civil war. As a result, attempt of forming detribalized single independent nation gets marred due to tribal conflict which culminates with the holocaust of secessionist or Biafran Igbo.

In *Contemporary Novelists,* Christopher Smith comments on this novel saying, “*Destination Biafra* is a chilling account of a different sort of horror, the disastrous civil war that rent Nigeria apart in difficult times immediately after the withdrawal of the inadequate colonial power” (282). Emecheta’s horror provoking this novel is subtle representation of violence in post-independence scenario. Some critics focus attention on the realistic portrayal of Africa in Destination Biafra. On the same line, Lena Andersson writes:

> Emecheta on the other hand, has a heroine so incredibly perfect that you hardly believe that her picture of Africa will be very realistic. She has on the contrary formed an image of Africa that seems to be totally true. People are people and the forest neither “broods” nor resembles an ancient world; it is simply a damp, rain-forest with trees, mosquitoes and stinking swamps. (29)

Further, in “Fighting on All Fronts . . .” Obioma Nnaemeka talks about the dual gesture of main character Debbie saying “we witness the paradoxical gesture of pacifist Debbie donning full military gear as she embarks on her anti-militarist mission” (236). Thus, Nnaemeka high-lights the new role played by a Nigerian women during the civil war.

This dissertation has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline. A synopsis of the entire work is figured out in this chapter. The second chapter of this study will be devoted on the discussion of theoretical modality that is to be implemented in this research. It explains shortly the postcolonial issues--with especial emphasis on paradox of nationalism and post-colonial nation formation, ethnicity, neo-colonialism, and gender spaces--with regard to violence. The third chapter will be the analysis of text in considerable length in the light of the concepts developed while setting up the theoretical modality. Some extracts from the text will be taken out as evidence to prove hypothesis of the study. The fourth chapter will sum up the research. Based on the textual analysis of the third chapter, it will conclude the explanation and arguments and will show the novel as the postcolonial critique of violence in post-independence Nigeria.

Chapter II

Post-independence State and Violence

The ‘post-independence state’ has often been known as ‘post-colonial state.’ Its formation after independence is the clearest signal of the separation of the colonized from the imperial power. Ashcroft et al write that, “The independence of that newly formed state is the *sine qua non* of the claim to have left the power of the colonizer behind” (193). However, in practice, such ‘independence’ may come to be seen as superficial because of the dominance of the idea of European concept of nation in the minds of those who led the struggles for independence. Such nationalist leaders shaped the nation following the model of former European power.

Moreover, except in situation of partition, the independent nation's boundaries were usually unchanged from the old colonial border. In Africa, for example, “the extent of independent countries such as Nigeria and Ghana broadly reflects the colonial enclaves carved out form the pre-colonial societies of West Africa” (Ashcroft et al 193-94). This brought with them the problem of forcing often differing cultural groupings to live together as one nation. So, Boehmer writes, “as colonial maps were rechristened post-colonial, a rickety and even malfunctioning colonial structure was taken over virtually intact” (Postclonialism 348-49).

So, such states usually faced instability and violence because the derivative secular notion of European nationalism could not bind the ethnic, regional and religious diversity. The growing nationalist assertiveness and attempt of self-determination in the part of minority group has also caused the situation of violence. Even the neo-colonial economic interest has played crucial role to invite such violence in the newly post-independent state. Such post-independent violence has been heavily gendered.

Paradox of Nationalism and Postcolonial Nation Formation and Violence

Simply speaking, nationalism is the desire of a group of people who share same race culture, language etc. to form an independent nation. It also refers to a feeling of love for and pride in own country. Richard Handler writes that, “Nationalism is an ideology about individuated being . . . concerned with boundedness, continuity and homogeneity encompassing diversity” (6). Similarly, Johnston et al write, “Nationalism is a means of imposing cultural homogeneity within the bounds of a given territory; it is thus harnessed by a state undergoing a transition in its tasks” (10).

Likewise, John Breuilly is of the opinion that “the term ‘nationalism’ is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments” (3). Considering nationalism as a form of “opposition politics,” he classifies nationalist movement based on three objectives: *separation*, *reform* and *unification*.

However, postcolonialism draws on, as Elleke Boehmer, “contrasting understanding of nationalism as a means of self-determination” (Postcolonialism 348-49). Postcolonial nationalist thinking highlights the fact that nationalism itself is essentially contradictory political formation. The theorists of nation influential in postcolonial studies like Nairn, Benedict Anderson and Partha Chatterjee point out that nation occupies the dialectic between traditional and modern; between pull to assert claims to ancient cultural tradition and desire for democracy and equality. That is why nation/nationalism is ‘Janus-faced.’

James M. Blaut, while talking about diffusionist theory of nationalism, writes the view of Tom Nairn: “Nationalism is process generated by European idea of freedom, that is, the idea that people should govern themselves in a sovereign state, and it is the diffusion of this idea which then causes the rise of national movements in non-European areas” (31). This shows that nationalism was the product of European ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernization.’ In the same vein, P. Chatterjee--referring to B. Anderson who viewed nation as ‘imagined community'--writes that, "The historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in America and in Russia, had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms which nationalist elite in Asia and Africa has chosen the ones they liked" (*Fragments* 6).

After Second World War and in 1960s, the people of colonized state unified--a sort of homogeneity in diversity--to do away with common enemy, i.e., colonizer. Nationalism became unifying principle. That is why, in 1950s and 1960s, nationalism was regarded as "a feature of the victorious anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa" (*Fragments* 4) as Chatterjee. But the paradox is later contingency of nationalism has produced highly ambivalent legacies in post-colonial world. The problem of early postcolonial nationalism has been its exclusive preoccupation with homogenous or monolithic national identities. This tendency led to the emergence of communalist and ethnic violence on a grand scale. Thus, "utopias" (170), to use Satish Deshpande's formulation, of nationalism rarely bore any relation to the "heterotopias" of diverse cultural and ethnic configuration of the newly formed nation.

The leaders of such states, who led nationalist movements against colonialism, became the leaders of corrupt, fractious and often brutal regimes. Thus, here nationalism, to borrow from Chatterjee, "gave rise to mindless chauvinism and xenophobia and serve[d] as justification for organized violence" (*Nationalist Thought* 2). That is why, Laura Chrisman, with reference to Gtayatri Spivak, writes that, "[N]ationalism was . . . 'a reverse or displaced legitimation of colonialism,' doomed to repeat the 'epistemic violence' of colonialism it had rejected" (183).

The years immediately following independence, whether in Asia, Africa or elsewhere, were full of optimism as the barriers of colonial racism were thrown aside and the possibilities for independent social, economic and political development seemed within reach. But Tamara Sivanandan says, "In most cases, however, this optimism turned out to be ill-founded and as the hoped for social and economic freedom failed to materialize, disillusionment set in" (55). This is somehow paradoxical situation of postcolonial nation formation beyond the expectation of anti-colonial nationalist movement.

The rhetoric of anti-colonial nationalism and dreams of what independence would bring seem misguided in retrospect as many of these societies failed to obtain hoped for social and economic freedom for their people. So Tamara Sivanandan again adds:

> What is to be found rather, is increasing division and oppression on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender; the failure of economy to provide even basic necessities, never mind prosperity for the mass of the people; a lack of democratic participation by the masses in political sphere; and the continued--often increasing--structural dependence, economically, politically, and ideologically, on Western imperial powers. (42)

Similarly, referring to the renowned African historian Basil Davidson, Neil Lazarus in his article "Global dispensation since 1945," writes that, "The era of decolonization was marked by heady expectancy, dynamism, a sense of uplift and vibrant hopefulness" (31). But in the post-colonial era the gap between people and state widened rather than narrowed as might have been anticipated and was certainly hoped for.

In newly independent society, the power of state goes to the hands of indigenous elites. With reference to Ijaj Ahmad, Sivanandan writes that, "For in most cases decolonization gave power 'not to revolutionary vanguards but to the national bourgeoisie poised for reintegration into subordinate positions within the imperialist structure'" (56). But these elites of recently independent nation tried to consolidate their power and wealth--to don in Ariel Dorfman's coinage, the "Empire's Old Clothes"--but failed to take the country out of dependency and to transform social structure in the interest of the mass of people. So, following Samir Amin, Sivanandan writes, "There is no doubt that the great tide of national liberation was marked by real gains for Africa, Asia and Latin America. But . . . [b]y the end of post war cycle, third world states were turned back into a comprador role" (56-57). That is why, much of the analysts and writers of postcolonial societies have placed the onus of responsibility of problems on the shoulders of indigenous elites.

Though the colonial rule came to an end, the 'national conflict,' embodied in rivalries for executive power between contending groups and individuals among the "elites" has taken priority over the 'social conflict' concerned with the interests of most of the inhabitants of these new nation states. On the same track, Neil Lazarus expresses his view:

> For in South, South-east . . . Latin America and the Caribbean, as in Africa, leaders and ruling elites have come to identify their own maintenance in power as being of greater importance than the broader "social" goods of democratization, opportunity, and equality and they have increasingly used the repressive apparatuses and technologies of the state (. . .) to enforce the order and to silence or eliminate opposition. . . . (32)

So, the new sense of uplift and regeneration proved to be of relatively short duration.

In many cases, most of such leaders received an education under colonialism, often its elite institutions, military or academic, like Sandhurst, Oxbridge, the Sorbame, etc., which paradoxically made them conscious of and unhappy with colonial racism that held them down. So, they followed nativity to unite their people in the independence struggle. "Their culture and mentality, however, remained deeply dependent and derivative," Sivanandan writes, "and their rule far from being a search for autonomous development of their societies in effect, continued the domination and exploitation of people begun by imperialism" (57). These rulers weren't necessarily conscious agents of capitalism form the beginning; they constituted rather political elite which used state power in order to acquire vast wealth at the expense of the mass of the population.

Such rules failed, in particular, to establish vital links with the poor dispossessed of their nation or to extend democratic participation to them. Strong rulers were even aided by Western or Eastern bloc powers. As a result, such societies were under some kind of authoritarian regime (often military) or one party system. There was even the elimination of opposition usually being justified on the grounds that national unity was threatened by tribalism or separatism. Sivanandan, drawing from Raymond Betts, points out that "some 75 *coups détat,* mostly military in nature, occurred in the former colonial world in the first decades of independence" (58). The example he cites were Ghana, Nigeria, Indonesia, the Philippines, Algeria, etc, to demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of such a phenomenon full of violence.

In "Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa," Mahmood Mamdani, with reference to postcolonial violence in Rwanda, writes,

> The irony is that instead of transforming the political world created by colonialism, the world of natives and settlers, they [native leaders] confirmed it. Here then the question for postcolonial study of nationalism in Rwanda: Why did nationalism fail to transform the political edifice? (16)

Similarly, Nigeria also went under the political unrest, conflict and violence even after the helm of government went to the hand of native leaders form the British. Gita Subrahmanyam's observation made in her "Ruling Continuities: Colonial Rule, Social Forces and Path Dependence in British India and Africa," is worth mentioning. She writes that, "[T]he divisiveness of regional parties and their need to seize state control meant that Nigeria's post independence history was characterized by military coups, counter-coups, secessionist movements and civil war" (85-86).

Thus, such countries' post-independence trajectories were shaped by the interactions between the structures of government handed down by the colonizer and agency of political elites who variously steered their politics. In such situation, as Anirudha Gupta writes in her *Government and Politics in Africa*, “It is possible . . . where a handful of politicians monopolized power and misused it beyond endurance the army intervened--in last resort in order to effect the change of government” (152).

But whatever may have been the original intentions of such intervention, it appears that once army violates its own norm of keeping aloof form politics, it finds itself more or less permanently enmeshed in non-military/political affairs. That is why, as Anirudha Gupta, “militarization of politics has become principle characteristics of recent African development” (*Government* 157). Such phenomenon has made the post-independence period violence prone.

This is the situation of the paradox of nationalism and the postcolonial nation formation. Buchi Emecheta, in her novel *Destination Biafra*, also talks about such problematic predicament of post-independence Nigeria where the failure of national leaders leads to the series of military coups and civil war.

Ethnicity and Violence

Ethnicity is a term that has been used increasingly to account for human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry. Ethnicity refers to the fusion of so many traits that belong to the nature of many ethnic groups: “A composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes and loyalties” as R. A. Schermerhorn says (Qtd. in *Key Concepts* 80). Stuart Hall writes that, “the term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated and all knowledge is contextual” (226). But Irving Howe is of the opinion that, “No one knows what ethnicity means; that is why it is useful term” (Qtd. in Sollars 20). Howe’s view points at the multiplicity and wide range incorporated in the dynamics of ethnicity.

An ethnic group is a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity. Complete uniformity, of course, not essential, but there does prevail in an ethnic group a high degree of loyalty and adherence to certain basic institutions such as family patterns, religion and language. The ethnic group often possesses distinctive folkways and mores; customs of dress art or ornamentation; moral codes and value systems; patterns of recreation; and also physical ethnic mark. Ethic group is a powerful identifier which unifies the related people with their common culture and distinguishes form the other ethnic group.

There is wide divergence among the scholars regarding the meaning and interpretation of *ethnic group* or *ethnic community*. For some, it refers to small community with archaic characters. For others, the term refers to both small and large communities not only in backward societies but also in advanced industrialized ones. So, Urmila Pahdnis and Rajat Ganguley define ethnic group, referring to Ganguley himself and Raj Taras,

> as either a large or small group of people, in either backward or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (. . .), racial similarity, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group. (19)

Similarly, in his “Ethnic and Minority Studies,” Henry Louis Gates cites Immanuel Wallerstein’s definition of ethnic group “as group that assumes an identity grounded within a system of relationships and which frequently go into and out of existence depending on socially and culturally mediated circumstances” (290). It means, to quote Frank A. Salamone, “ethnic identity is situational . . . in that it varies according to the context” (305).

Further, ethnic groups are political, economic and social actions groups formed for particular purpose; that is in order to obtain something which is more easily attained by belonging to an ethnic group rather than as an individual or as a member of some other group. So, ethnic groups are not necessarily marginalized cultural groups, but that all ethnic groupings and indeed the concept of ethnicity itself have come to exert a powerful political function. We can agree with the idea of Ashcroft et al that, “Regardless of the status quo of the particular group, its ethnicity is a key strategy in the furtherance of group political interests and political advancement” (83). As group power is always favored solution to individual powerlessness, the ethic group is a salient formation in the bid for political power within a society.

Ethnic identity, ethnic nationalism, and ethnic conflict are definitely not new phenomena. Yet, what is new today is not the existence of competition and conflict among ethnic groups, but their global manifestation. The challenge of ethnic nationalism and ethnic political mobilization is being equally felt by developed and developing societies.

Urmila Pahdnis and Rajat Ganguley write that

> The rise of ethnic nationalism and the formation of ethnic political movements in many developing states can in large part be attributed to the legacy of Western colonization and decolonization which created sovereign states incorporating many ethnic groups by ignoring existing ethnic and cultural divisions and popular political aspirations. (16)

Until decolonization was complete, this ethnic plurality was by and large manageable since the nationalist movements and organizations that existed in these states could and did generate a common political agenda of achieving independence from colonial rule. However, such feelings of unity were more a function of colonial exploitation and dominance rather than expressions of a common ‘political will’ of the constituent ethnic groups. With reference to Nigerian context, Salamone writes that, “Although there were ethnic rivalries preceding independence these ended to be smoothed over and generally ended in compromises. The tenuousness of compromises became readily apparent after independence” (321).

Consequently, different ethnic groups found little in common to bind them together once independence was achieved and the common enemy (the colonial power) had departed. In their post-colonial history, many of these states have had to deal with increased nationalistic assertiveness on the part of ethnic or subordinate minorities because such groups felt badly treated and, hence, came to regard the dominant cultural groups as new colonizers. In the same line, Pahdnis and Ganguley add that,

> These states, such as the ones in South Asia [and in Africa], were therefore born with a lack of internal cohesion and faced, in the aftermath of their creation, ethnic polarization between majorities and minorities, social fragmentation, civil discord, institutional decay and regime instability, which made the tasks of political nation building and governing difficult. (17)

As a result, one finds in countries like India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Ghana, etc., a plethora of ethnic and cultural conflicts that put the state and human life in the turmoil of violence. That is why, by the late 1960s and 1970s, “nationalism became a matter of ethnic politics, the reason why people in the Third World killed each other--sometimes in wars between regular armies, sometimes in cruel and often protracted civil wars . . .” (*Fragments* 4).

Thus, in post-independence era, nationalism was given an ethnic color and became a matter of ethnic politicization. “The renegotiation of power status between various ethnic groups” (6), as Ashghar Ali Engineer, and changing “ethnic or communal balance” (10) often exploded into unmanageable tension and assumed violent forms. So, to appropriate AchinVanaik’s phrase--“The spectre of growing communalism haunts India” (29)--the spectre of growing ethnicity haunts post-independence Asia and Africa.

In a multi ethnic society, there is constant competition and conflict among the ethnic groups. Mostly, when such state undergoes some significant change like revolution for freedom, many ethnic issues emerge in the process of solidification of the situation following it. For instance, in Nepal people participated in *Jana-andolan* II (April 2006) against autocracy of monarchy. In its aftermath, when the leaders tried to form interim constitution for constituent assembly poll, multiple voices emerged for ensuring their right in constitution saying ethnic and regional people are not addressed properly. The *Madhesi* movement is the one started with ethnic and regional issue which also took violent communal form in some places.

From this recent Nepalese context, we can get the insight that how in post-independent scenario ethnicity emerged as one of the major question that played crucial role to prove the nation's deteriorated condition even after independence. So, as Pahdnis and Ganguley, "ethnicity and identity have therefore been crucial variables in the formation, re-formation and consolidation of state structure in south Asia" as well as in Africa (17).

It seems reasonable that when the unprivileged ethnic group feels suppressed and neglected, it may be forced to raise arms against the dominant group. Such a group may also seek political autonomy. They even demand for separate 'nation-state' which becomes quite difficult ethnic problem for the state government, leading the country towards civil war. That is why, Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin define ethnic violence as

> violence perpetrated across ethnic lines in which at least one party is not a state (or representative of state), and in which the putative ethnic difference is coded . . . as having been integral rather than incidental to the violence, in which violence is coded as having been meaningfully oriented in some way to the different ethnicity of the target. (428)

Again, following the view of D. Horowitz, they say that "the effects of institutions--notably electoral systems, armed forces, and federalist arrangements--[are crucial] in fostering or preventing violent ethnic conflict" (432) in Asia and Africa.

As a nation is formed of large community of people who share a common history, culture, religion and language, ethnicity is also a group of people who have common characteristics like culture, religion, language and territory. Minority ethnic people want their separate state when the majority group and government do not recognize their legitimacy as well. In this situation, the state suffers from confrontation and conflict. On the one hand, government is formed not to fulfill the demand of separate state, on the other, ethnic group is formed to obtain its demand. Such condition obviously leads to *inter* or *intra-ethnic* violence.

In the case of African states, whether they are under a single party rule or military dictatorship, the internal tribal divisions have become increasingly acute. For example, to quote Ambala Vanar Siva Rajah, “In 1960s ethnic and regional conflict in Nigeria created the separatist struggle for Biafra which, however, could not succeed. There is competition for power and influence between large ethnic communities in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Upper Volta” (12). That is why, as Siva Rajah--citing Anthony Smith’s view--points out, “Very few African states have been spared ethnic conflict or competition; ethnic cleavage has been fundamental to most African and Asian states and ethnic conflict has been endemic” (12).

Behind the politicization of ethnicity, there also lies dynamics of intense elite competition for resources. Such phenomenon is likely to be more pronounced in modern states, particularly those in the middle ranks of economic development. As Pahdnis and Ganguley write, “These states--which can include India, . . . Nigeria, South Africa and Brazil, to name a few--often lack the capability and resources to cope with the pace of social mobilization and to satisfy the increased aspirations which mobilization creates” (48). These states are particularly vulnerable to intense conflict between elites which easily ignites ethnic confrontation. Thus, in the altered condition elites, resource scarcity, centralizing tendencies of states have worked together to generate intense elite competition and ethnic polarization and even violence caused by such situation.

In their quest of more power and greater share of resource allocation, ethnic groups question the status quo of the existing state systems and the objectives of ethnic movements range from demands for greater autonomy to self-determination. Thus, as Pahdnis and Ganguley, if the "system is not accommodative enough, the ethnic movements acquire an anti-systematic character and often resort to violent means which frequently end up as insurrectionary movements" (312). A concomitant of this situation is that such ethnic movements seek external support; both material and moral, for their sustenance and survival. Conversely, the affected state may also seek outside support to quell violence and suppress insurgency. Hence, external involvement occurs in essentially domestic ethnic conflict of a state.

Buchi Emecheta's novel *Destination Biafra* also deals with similar sort of politicization of ethnicity and ethnic polarization which even led to Biafran secessionist movement and civil war in post-independence Nigeria.

Neo-colonialism and Violence

One common argument among the postcolonial intellectuals is that the era of imperialism has come to an end. This occurred when European empires relinquished their colonies during the few decades after the Second World War. Nevertheless, the imperial mentality continues to function, especially in policies of former colonial superpowers, giving rise to what is known as "neo-colonialism." The use of the term neo-colonialism is often used in reaction to any unjust and oppressive expression of Western political power after the end of colonialism. Therefore, in her book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Elleke Boehmer talks about neo-colonialism in this way:

> [P]ostcolonial and *neo-colonial,* both of which refer to the post-independence period. A term from economic theory, neo-colonialism signifies the continuing economic control by the West of the once-colonized world, under the guise of political independence. . . . many theorists broadly agree that the decline of one sort of colonialism in the 1950s led to the rise of another, less overt, some might say more insidious, form--what has also been called a super or new imperialism. (9)

In other words, neo-colonialism means the continuing Western influence located in flexible combination of the economic, the political, and the military and ideological level in terms of technology, business and industrialization. So, neo-colonialism is a tacit understanding that shows colonialism something more than formal occupation and control of territories by a Western metropolis. The formal methods of colonial governance are administrative structures, military forces and incorporation of the natives in the metropolitan government. But neo-colonialism suggests an indirect form of control through economic and cultural dependence. In this case, neo-colonialism signifies the continued control of former colonies through the native elites. The neo-colonial powers are alleged to exploit the colonized and their resources for the benefit of metropolis.

Scholars in postcolonial studies like Robert Young, Gareth Griffith and Hellen Tiffin agree that, in spite of the looseness of the term, ‘neo-colonialism’ was coined by the first president of independent Ghana and leading exponent of Pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah, in his full length study of neo-colonialism, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. This title which developed Lenin’s definition of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, suggested that, although the countries like Ghana and Nigeria achieved technical independence, the ex-colonial powers and the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continued to play a decisive role through international monetary bodies, through fixing prices on world markets, multinational corporations (MNCs) and cartels and a variety of educational and cultural institutions. Describing new-colonialism as the ‘last stage of imperialism,’ Nkrumah wrote:

> Neo-colonialism is more insidious, complex and dangerous than the old colonialism. It not only presents its victims from developing their economic potential for their own use, it controls the political life of the country and supports the indigenous bourgeoisie in perpetrating the oppression and exploitation of the masses. Under neo-colonialism, the economic systems and political policies of independent territories are managed and manipulated from outside, by international monopoly finance capital in league with the indigenous bourgeoisie. (Qtd. in Gupta, *Politics* 39)

Thus, Nkrumah argued that neo-colonialism was more insidious and difficult to detect and resist than the older overt colonialism. Nkrumah even divided the postcolonial states into those which were neo-colonial and which were not. According to his categorization, neo-colonial states “deprive their authority not form the will of the people but from the support they obtain from their neo-colonial masters” (*Neo-colonialism* xv).

Nkrumah became aware that the independence and national sovereignty in African states were partly taken and in no substantial way they altered the relationship between the colonial powers and the colonized states. That is why he adds:

> Neo-colonialism is the worst form of imperialism. For those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it had taken abroad. In the colonial those who served the ruling imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case. (xi)

It means neo-colonialism is worse than direct colonialism because neo-colonizer has no responsibility. It is only after its interests.

The theory of ‘dependency’ stresses on the other hand that neo-colonialism is a continuation of the colonial order, which in the first place has caused the process of under development of the colonial world. Proponents of this school demonstrate that modern capitalism functions on the world scale and perpetuates unequal dependency linkages between the industrially developed West (core) and the primarily agricultural or semi-manufacturing economies of the new states (periphery). In their opinion, therefore, the grant of political independence to the former colonies carries little substance so long as they fail to break dependency linkages and achieve economic independence. This gives rise to what Anirudha Gupta, borrowing from Timothy Saw, calls a “contradiction between formal independence and real dependence between the attributes rather than the substance of independence” (*Politics* 40).

Economically speaking, the poverty and, indeed, ever-deepening immiseration and indebtedness of so many post-colonial nations, especially the Third World, is a structural feature of the terms of their insertion into the global economy, from which it has been simply impossible for them to “de-link” or disconnect themselves. So, Neil Lazarus writes,

> To lay the blame for the destruction of the environment, the impoverishment of communities, and the exploitation of workers in Nigeria, Malaysia, Venezuela, and Trinidad on corrupt and autocratic national rulers, without also taking into account the central roles played by the massive and hugely powerful western-based oil conglomerates, for instance, would clearly be to invert reality. (20)

Therefore, for Lazarus, not only the native elites, but also the neocolonial powers persisting structural control are responsible for the problem of post-independence state. In the same line of thought, Boehmer writes that “post-independence nations have been increasingly plagued by neo-colonial ills: economic disorder and social malaise, government corruption, state repression” (237). Thus, in much of the formerly colonized states, power hierarchies are maintained and the values of former colonizer remained influential. This is just a colonial economic and political rearrangement, rather than liberation.

Though there is a good deal of differences among the scholars Anirudha Gupta, in her *Politics in Africa*, mentions some of the principal features of neo-colonialism: firstly, neo-colonialism represents a global pattern of the dominance of economies of newly independent countries by the industrially developed West; secondly, it underwrites the postwar monopolist control of finance, technology and markets by the trans or multinational corporations (MNCs); and thirdly, since the MNCs originated from an aggregation of capital resources for war purposes to produce more arms, their activities in third world countries sometimes assume military dimensions.

In the African context, foreign interest in local resources accounted for the concentration of imperial power and multinational investments mainly in those countries having rich oil or mineral resources.

Ideally, neo-colonialism aims at institutionalizing the process of economic exploitation of the developing countries without restoring to military or colonial means of coercion. But in practice, this does not always happen. “First, because . . . the MNCs themselves have originated from the merger of transnational capital to expand the arms and manufacturing industry,” as Gupta writes, “and second in the context of East and West tension even the socio-economic matters assume strategic dimension in Western planning” (*Politics* 43). Hence, military competition and involvement between superpowers heavily impinges in the sphere of business and trade between developed and underdeveloped countries. Thus, the structural violence of neo-colonialism also takes the manifest form.

To make the investment safe and the African markets tied to Western needs, a new political strategy was devised, i.e., instead of disrupting the states authority or colluding with divisive forces, foreign finance favored the integration of African state structure. The reason behind it, as Gupta hints, can be that "in most African countries . . . no class had developed to take over the reliable ally of neo-colonialism." That is why, those "having control over the state apparatus as soldiers, politicians or bureaucrats can be depended upon to establish links with external capital and exploit the country's economic resources" (*Politics* 47).

So, instead of encouraging the suppression of tribal warfare, the scheme of neo-colonialism has turned to one of supporting the control authority of African states. Even in the case of internal tribal or ethnic conflict, the neo-colonizers supported the state with ammunition and military power so that conflict comes to an end and their interest protected. Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* also observes the structural involvement of neo-colonizer (Britain) in the post-independence violence in Nigeria.

Gender Space and Violence

Conventional views to the relation between gender and war suggest that men make war; women make peace. Men representing their nations or social groups combat men of another group, while women remain outside the fighting protected by 'their' men. Women do remain invisible in army policy-making, reflecting taken-for-granted international assumptions about the maleness of war. But both feminist scholarship and empirical reality have challenged the prevailing assumptions about war's relationship to men and women. They say that not only on the case of wartime manifest violence, women are also the sufferers of less overt structural violence that thrives on patriarchal ethos and male chauvinism.

Gender heavily works in any sort of violence. One's socially constructed identity as male or female is gender. It may or may not be identical to one's biological sex characteristics. It refers to the values actions and systems formed on the basis of definitions of belief about masculinity and femininity. Referring to Myra Marx Ferree and Elaine J. Hall, Lynne Woehrle defines gender “as a system of stratification approach . . . [which] is constantly produced and reproduced as a means of maintaining a system of inequality” (43). Therefore, socialization becomes a means of maintaining a system for such gender inequality.

Culture operates on gender. Gender seems to play a role of categorization throughout history and across cultures, but the importance of those categories varies with time and place. Overtime, patriarchal societies have been quite common and today we know little else. Those cultures where male dominance is not primary value are marginalized. As Woehrle puts, its one example is that, “Early colonial powers and missionaries expected all cultures they encountered to be patriarchal and dealt in those terms. If patriarchy was not already the ruling system of power, then some semblance of patriarchy was introduced” (44). Thus, colonial project itself was gendered one which favored patriarchy.

Besides, men’s power over the so-called “weaker sex” is justified in biological and historical terms, and the social structures of oppression and exclusion are ignored. Even in sports and military, this gender dichotomy or sexism is very dominantly observed. Woehrle writes, “In both sports and the military boys/men are pushed to try harder by a fear of becoming ‘the other’ and being ridiculed as having female like characteristics” (45). Therefore, some are of the opinion that the military is not good for women or that women should reject military because of its sexism and systematic denigration of all that is “feminine”. Women recruits report being sexually harassed and even raped by their fellow soldiers. But as Turpin, “Some [feminists] argue that women in greater numbers will change the military for the better . . . [and] argue for women’s access to the same military jobs as men claiming that women will also gain greater political power as a consequence” (809).

However, it is significant to notice that there is strong link between patriarchy and militarism. Turpin says that this relationship is very much “dialectical,” i.e., “militarism relies on patriarchal patterns and patriarchy relies on militarization" (815). Militarism relies on male privilege and female subordination in order to function. Therefore, Turpin says, "because women have less political and social and economic power in society, they also have less power to make security decisions and very little power in military institutions" (810). Such situation makes wartime violence very gendered.

Such gendered space generates violence against women. Violence against women includes acts of verbal or physical force, coercion, or omission that cause physical, psychological or other harms to girls and women and that force them to remain in subordinate position. As Mimi Ajzenstadt puts, such "violence against women takes numerous patterns and expressions, but they all share common modes of female victimization" (841). Such violence against women by men is a means of controlling women and maintaining male privilege. Male privilege is the mainstay of a patriarchal system. Thus, to quote Woehrle, "violence against women is linked to all other forms of violence that are perpetrated by the model of dominant and dominated that is basic to Western model of hierarchical rule" (46).

Patriarchal gender relation that guides state is also responsible for the violence of state politics in war time. There are plenty of examples throughout the history where the rape of women is a conscious strategy of warfare and cultural genocide. Woehrle writes, "The use of rape in warfare reminds us that in patriarchal social structure women are viewed as property" (46). It is this objectification of women as property that makes it possible to believe that violence against women is plausible means of giving power over women or other men related to women against whom violence is directed. Women's bodies have been violently abused as a strategy of escalation in conflict.

Beginning in the 1970s, the feminist scholarship analyzing the phenomenon of violence against women shifted the focus of inquiry from biology and psychology to societal reaction to it. Feminists challenged the approaches that saw violence against women as manifestations of sexual desires, uncontrollable biological urges, crimes of frustrated attraction, or as acts of victim provocation. Mimi Ajzenstadt writes that

> For feminist researchers violence against women was conceived as part of socially constructed hierarchy of power in a gendered society. These new approaches focused on subordination of women in the realm of the social sphere where this condition was seen as part of socially produced and reproduced gendered asymmetry. (819)

So, feminists are of the opinion that violence against women is a part of socially constructed power hierarchy in a gendered society.

For early feminist theorists such as Brownmiller, rape was interconnected with the maintenance of power relations between men and women. Such relations were part of a structure to keep men in a position of dominance over women. Rape was seen as process of intimidation that kept all women wary of the power of men over women. Ajzenstadt adds,

> They saw all sexual violence as having a common characteristics since those behaviors involve men using a variety of forms abuse, coercion, and force to control women, and as being part of the particular form of sexual violence--a continuum that links particular forms of sexual violence to more common male behaviour. (819)

Hence, sexual violence against women is regarded as continuum of common male behaviour.

Further, in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies,* Ashcroft et al write that “even the post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from gender bias” (104). Though nationalism promises the freedom and equality, the scholars of postcolonial studies characterize it as a movement that promotes the interests of a particular group of people, especially the elites, while claiming to represent the whole. Similarly, Laura Chrisman writes, “nationalism has been defined as patriarchal project that opposes the need of the women and goals of gender equality" (188). Elleke Boehmer adds that, "The contradictions of postcolonial nationalism are particularly fiercely demonstrated in relation to the position of women in the new nation states" (Postcolonialism 349). In the process of nationalist struggles leaders, usually male, set up women, often invoked as mother figures, as bulwarks of cultural identity of the nation. But after independence, "women are excluded from participating in the benefits of national citizenship on equal footing with men" (Postcolonialism 349).

This gendered notion of nationalism has also entered into the violence of post-independence time. "Like the other forms of war and like the phenomena of ethnicity and nation-hood in general, ethnic and nationalist violence is strongly gendered," as Brubaker and Laitin, "as victims of ethnic violence, women are sometimes deliberately spared, at other times deliberately targeted" (444). They add that the representation of ethnic violence is also strongly gendered. They say, "Recent research on nationalism shows that in many settings, prospective threats to (. . .) 'the nation' [is] construed as a feared or actual violence or rape of an 'innocent female nation' by brutal male aggressor" (444). So, in post-independence era, too, in ethno-national violence, women are victimized by war's gendered notion.

Despite other forms of structural subordination, women suffer from war in many ways, including dying, experiencing sexual abuse and torture; and losing loved ones, homes and communities. Many people assume that women are unlikely to die in wars since so few women serve in armed forces. But women and civilians are more likely to be killed in war than are soldiers. Even the advent of high altitude bombing, more powerful bombs, other technologies and a strategy of "total war" has ended the distinction between combatants and civilians. In her essay "Women and War," Jennifer Turpin writes that,

> Most of the wars since 1960s have taken place in less developed countries, particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Military intervention, on the other hand, is perpetrated primarily by the former colonial powers . . . In

> addition to direct interventions [such colonial powers] have also exported the arms to developing world. (802-3)

As a result, more than developed world, the women of the less developed countries of Asia and Africa were victimized by different forms of violence (ethnic, communal) that have taken place in these territories in post-independence era.

Women are also most likely to be uprooted by war. Larger number of war refugee is women and young girls, who experience additional and often sexualized violence during their flight. Turpin writes that, "By the end of 1992 more than 46 million peoples had lost their homes; about 36 million of these were women and girls. In Africa there were more than 23.6 million external and internal refugees" (803). Such women have extra burden. They often serve as their children's sole caretakers. They must seek food and safety not only for themselves but also for their children who need health care and housing.

In the wartime, women are prone to sexual violence. The link between rape and war has been ignored by many policy makers and scholars, but feminists have identified wartime rape as symptomatic of war's gendered nature. Mentioning the situation of Mozambique, Somalia and Cambodia, Turpin writes that, "Even the United Nation peacekeepers--the multilateral forces sent to protect civilian in war-torn areas--have committed rape and sexual abuse against women and girls" (904). She adds, "This suggests that those trained to fight wars are not best suited to protect the human rights of women and children and sexual violence is endemic to military culture" (804).

Thus, the violence of any form is not away from gender biases. Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* shows the wartime gendered spaces in newly independent Nigeria and the manifestation of gendered violence in ethno-secessionist war, rejecting the conventional notion of war as male domain through the central character like Debbie and other female characters.

Chapter III

A Postcolonial Critique of Post-independence Violence in *Destination Biafra*

To read *Destination Biafra* is to make postcolonial critique of violence in post-independence Nigeria. Here, Emecheta, while chronicling the historic-political development following independence (1960) that led to massive violence of civil war, makes critique of violence associating it with the problems of forging postcolonial independent nation, dynamics of ethnic confrontations, neo-colonial economic interests and gender spaces in such complex situation. The main thrust of her criticism falls upon the elites, both native and foreign, for the outbreak of violence.

The post-independent optimism of nationalism to form a prosperous, sovereign and democratic free nation is deferred from the beginning, in *Destination Biafra*, as Nigerian politics develops as ethno-regional affair. In the beginning, there is preparation for first post-independence general election in Nigeria. But the election is soon colored by ethnicity and each candidate attempts to manipulate ethnic sentiments and feelings. One of the candidates from Action Group (Yoruba party) “told his constituents that if they voted for a person from different tribe, they would be selling their soul” (17). Whereas, the NCNC candidate for one of the Lagos constituencies appealed for national unity saying that “their party would fight for independence of all Nigerians” (17). But, because of other parties’ tribal allegiance, though “the NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon) party had started as a national party to combat the tentacles of colonialism, in this election, it had been pushed into an all Igbo party” (21). In such a situation, NCNC’s unifying principle of nationalism could not bring homogeneity encompassing diversity.

Similarly, the ‘utopias’ of nationalism for forming homogeneous monolithic national identity could not encompass the ‘heterotopias’ of multi-ethnic configuration of Nigeria. The Sandhurst educated military officers--Onyemere, John Nwokolo, Saka Momoh, Chijioke

Abosi and Colonel Oladapo--made coup and Brigadier Onyemere became the head of the state. To avoid tribalism and establish national harmony, Onyemere first visited to North, Hausaland. There also he preached about national unity. He promised that “any Ibos [or other] who behaved badly would be publicly dealt by the army” (71). He added, “What the country needed was national unity” (71). Thus, he went on promising one thing to another like “a seasoned politician” (71). Though Onyemere “thought that by praising the spirit of nationalism, he would abolish tribalism . . . and start afresh” (69), this “one of the early [nationalist] attempts to make friendship cut across tribes . . . ended” (74) with the death of Onyemere due to counter-coup. Hence, Onyemere’s preoccupation with homogenous monolithic national identity could not quell the tribal tension.

The spirit of nationalism becomes an instrument to justify an organized violence. The first coup was carried out, but it seemed to be an Igbo success as majority of ringleaders were Igbos, except Oladapo and Momoh, and killed leaders were non-Igbos. Anyway, the soldiers took over it. Unanimously, Brigadier Onyemere was made head of the state as a temporary agreement. Other officers took charge of different regions: Abosi Eastern region, Nwokolo Mid-West as right hand of Abosi, Oladapo West and Saka Momoh North. Not to let it seem an Igbo affair, Onyemere “made up his mind to try to curb tribalism” (65). He even invoked people to take pride in being Nigerian rather than Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa. He also abolished tribal meetings. He justified this coup and massacre of political leaders in the name of nationalism and its spirit of homogenization.

The same tendency gave rise to mindless chauvinism and xenophobia and served as justification for organized violence. To end civil misunderstanding ensued following the counter-coup, remaining old politicians and conflicting leaders, Abosi and Momoh, held Aburi talks. They agreed to accept Momoh as supreme head of state and grant Abosi and East autonomy. But Momoh cunningly divided “the country into twelve” (115) federal states.

Then Abosi, guided by separatist mode of nationalism, started insurgency and even captured Ore and Benin of Mid-West. Then, Momoh in retaliation, with the help of Britain, started attacking Easterners in the name of holding national unity threatened by East's centrifugality: "To keep the Nigeria one is a task that must be done" (111). Thus, both ambitious leaders took to violence in the name of their own version of nationalism leading country to the carnage of civil war.

After counter-coup, Northerners started to kill the Igbos in the North and people who escaped the atrocities started to have the idea of secession. They even started questioning the idea of "One Nigeria" and became disillusioned with independence. Ralph Ugoji, who escaped the Northern witch hunt and massacre thought, "How can politicians be preaching 'One Nigeria' when one tribe of people is being massacred? . . . When the Europeans ruled us few people died; now we rule ourselves, we butcher each other like meat-sellers slaughtering cows" (83). Therefore, post-independence optimism turned out to be ill-founded and disillusionment set in.

Even the secessionist war, which started with ideal vision of Abosi, turned out to be similar disillusionment. In this war, the sufferers were common people. The sons of rich were not involved in warfront. Biafran enclave was shrinking due to invading federal forces. "The ordinary Igbo family still had to send his son to the front . . . to fight the war of liberation" (217). But Abosi kept reminding them on Radio Biafra, "[W]e will not give in. It is better for us to die standing than to be tortured to death by that bent on genocide" (217). But sons of rich were secretly moving out of Biafra. So, "everyone except the leader of Biafra could see that this was a revolution that turned into sour" (188).

After election, despite dissatisfaction of different groups, government headed by Hausa leader Nguru Kano was formed. There was grand celebration of independency in celebration loving Nigeria. Emecheta writes that,

> Now they are going to celebrate their freedom and celebrate in style, after their long and hard time with the British oppressors, and any political dissatisfaction were pushed aside. Jobless young people were given the work of painting the streets and hanging up flags. For the newly appointed senior servicemen it became a thing to own an independence car . . . originally been ordered from America . . . Many streets that had been named after British missionaries, diplomats, kings and queens were renamed to honour the members of the political parties of the day. (32)

This description of celebration shows that though the British colonizers had gone away, the native elites were put in that place. Such imported cars become the symbol of luxury and privilege that constantly reminds colonial legacy transferred to local elites. Even this rechristening of places (maps) postcolonial still bore a rickety and malfunctioning colonial structure because there was no virtual change, just like colonizers being replaced by local elites. This is the situation not different from the old wine being served in a new bottle.

Similar tendency of renaming was given continuity by the military leaders who decided to make coup to purge nation. They agreed that their new ‘imagined community,’ i.e., Nigeria would be named “Biafra” following the example of Ghana which was named Gold Coast in colonial time. These military leaders, with strong nationalist spirit, came to the conclusion to have military respite in country so that this sham independence could be replaced by the genuine one. That’s why, Abosi, in his finalizing statement, put that,

> I would rather say our destination is “Biafra,” since as far as I am concerned we’re not yet independent. We sent one set of masters, without realizing that they have left stooges behind. Even the matches we use in our kitchen come from abroad. I think this country needs military respite, so to Biafra we will go. Destination Biafra! (57)

They even changed their earlier plan to imprison leaders and decided to kill all these leaders and even divided the job. In this way, when the country was in liquefied state, due to venal and indecisive politicians, these young military leaders, with reformist nationalist urge, decided to make coup.

On the other side, when British Governor in Nigeria, Macdonald, announced Alhaji Nguru Kano, from Hausa party NEPU, as the first prime minister of new republic before the complete election result, NCNC party leader Dr. Ozimba's (freedom fighter) wife told him in distress, "Oh! if only we had insight into the future, I would have advised you to give up the struggle and let the British rule forever" (24). Her expression throws light on the fact that Nigerian politics has gone beyond the aspiration of some group of people. Persons like Chijioke Abosi considered this election as "a time bomb which will explode soon" (25).

When the government of the first republic was formed, the power went to the hands of elites who tried to consolidate power and wealth. A corrupt elite Samuel Ogedemgbe, father of novel's heroine Debbie, became minister of finance. Emecheta writes that, "He was too well known and the few don't knows were bought with money, gifts and promises of better things [a]nd he had got the post he wanted of minister of finance" (27). But the two Yoruba leaders who thought money can do anything, when failed to be in government "quarreled so much that . . . they wouldn't hesitate to kill each other" (28). In addition, Igbos were not satisfied with the way Nguru Kano was elected and nominated to be Prime Minister.

Thus, in Nigeria, the democracy happened to be "like a borrowed robe that one had to learn to wear" and "there was no easy way out" (46). Even with independence, there were rivalries for executive power between contending groups and individuals among the elites and this contention took priority over the interests of the grass-root people of this new nation.

The rift between the two Yoruba leaders, Chief Odumosu and Chief Durosaro, became more intense. Both leaders hired thugs. As a result, "the whole town found itself in a mini civil war. Bullets sang in the streets of Ibadan. The police could do little, faced with groups of armed hooligans" (49). This is why, Colonel Chijioke Abosi had to leave his new bride leaving their wedding cake uncut. When police became unable army was mobilized. The army officers became angry with the politicians due to whom they had to suffer. This hatred is revealed in conversation between Abosi and Oladapo.

> 'To think that last night was to be the beginning of your honeymoon.'
>
> Abosi's eyes registered in pain mingled with righteous anger, but he quickly got over it and replaced in joke: 'Do you know, I had forgotten all about that. This was my wedding suit. Wasn't it?'
>
> 'And this was my guest suit at your wedding. How crumpled they look. How muddy, just because of a . . . a set of greedy politicians.' (51)

Thus, the army officers started to mark that the causes of such mess were greedy politicians. This forecasts the consequent coup.

In such situation, Prime Minister Nguru Kano was busy consulting now redundant Macdonald and his master Sardauna in the North. The indecision of government and burgeoning dissatisfaction in people and riots aggravated the situation. Meanwhile, some of the military officers tried to purge the nation by eliminating the remnant of colonial stooges embodied in the corrupt politicians.

These officers met in Oladapo's house in Ibadan. There Abosi said that, "The politicians can't govern with this chaos, can they? We are kept just to do their dirty works for them, and still no words of thanks. If the army were in control, at least we'd know we had a military government" (57). Saka Momoh said, since politicians "have failed, they will go on failing [, so] the best thing would be to have a complete new set of people" (57). They even made coup and took over it.

Once army violates its own norm of keeping aloof from politics, it finds itself more or less permanently involved in non-military or political affair. Though Nigerian army made coup with the motto of reforming the nation, the situation was deteriorated and the nation plunged into the pool of violence because of the divisiveness of “two warring [military] leaders who seemed blind to it” (150).

Even up to last, Debbie tried her best to reconcile Abosi and Momoh. She requested Abosi to give in. But “he felt he was already winning. If millions of people die that was war. He wanted a separate nation even with his last breath” (242). But at the end, when he saw that he could be killed, he ran away from Biafra in “white Mercedes being hurried into the plane” (243). Later, from Alen Grey, it is known that Abosi was “going outside Nigeria to negotiate for peace” (242). Thus, this ideal politician turns out to be “still colonized” “seasoned politician.”

In this way, in *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta shows that post-independence nationalism and nation formation happened to be paradox in Nigeria due to corrupt leaders and ambitious soldiers from Sandhurst who behaved as seasoned politicians against whom they made coups. This led to the situation of violent civil war.

Haunting Spectre of Ethnicity and Violence

In *Destination Biafra*, Buchi Emecheta provides elaborate discussion of post-independence politics in Nigeria--from the post-independence election to the military coup and counter-coup--as a preamble to the civil war. This discussion provides the historical and political canvas on which is conspicuously brushed the invention of ethnicity or ethnic politics that provoked and fueled the war--Nigerian war of unity and Biafra’s war of self-determination. Emecheta explores the complexity of ethnicity and ethnic politics during the war not only on the inter-ethnic struggles but also on intra-ethnic conflict and situationality of such dynamics.

In note to the reader, Emecheta mentions that the Hausas in the North, the Igbos in the East and the Yorubas in the West were the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among these three major tribes, Hausa was numerically greater and occupied greater territory in Nigeria. Beside these three major tribes, there were other minority tribes like Tivs, Fulani, Efiks, Jiwas, Benis, Itsekeri, and so on. With independence, the ethnic issues became more prominent. Nigeria underwent politicization of ethnicity and regionalism. Even former allied groups began to splinter into separate antagonistic factions each seeking to promote the exclusive success of its members. For example, when the Yoruba party Action Group could not get position in government, as they could not win the election, the two main leaders Durosaro and Odumosu clashed mobilizing their own factions of tribesmen. This made convenient situation for coup. Even the government headed by Hausa leader Nguru Kano became very inactive “towards portentous events that began to happen in Nigeria” (56).

Similarly, “for reasons that were not clear the Igbos living in the North felt a vague belief that the Hausas has tricked out of a say in the country’s affairs” (56). There was even competition for resources. Lack of resource triggered intense competition and ethnic polarization:

> It was also noised about that the Igbo were striking it rich from the oil that was being discovered in the Eastern region, and one of the new legislation was that the nation’s wealth would be shared almost equally between regions with a slightly higher share to go to the areas from where the wealth originated. This the Igbos regarded as unfair. During the cocoa and timber days of the West, they reasoned, all the money went to the Yorubas there; and revenue from groundnuts went to the North. So why should East now be deprived of oil revenue? (56)

Against this, there were demonstrations in the East itself. This competition for resources regarding the ethnic region created the situation for ethnic polarization and antagonism.

Yoruba feuds and riots and Igbo demonstration created the situation of chaos leading to emergency. In such problematic condition, even the coup made by army to purge the nation from corrupt elites happened to be an Igbo success. Many Igbos in the Sabon Garri quarters of the North "regarded the coup as an Ibo success and were arrogant in their joy. The banners, placards and slogans thrust up where Igbos lived in Hausaland and jeered at the death of the Sardauna" (66).

Such actions of the Igbos made the Hausas angry giving them a sense that the coup was an Igbo plan. Leader Alhaji Manliki, Hausa ally of Igbo party, also became unsatisfied with the death of their spiritual leader Sardauna. He said,

> No anointed king's son was ever killed without great bloodshed following. I wish those Southern Kaferi soldiers had consulted me, as their man in the North. I would have advised them to leave the Sardauna out of it. Now to rub salt in the wound they are making fun of us, while we are still shocked at our spiritual leader being murdered like a beggar. And the Igbos are claiming it as their victory. They may think the Hausa are fools, but there is a limitation to human patience. (66-67)

Further, the murder of Sardauna "held a kind of haunting pathos that was not there before and the faces of faithful [Hausa] seemed more serious and unsmiling" (68). This shows growing inter-ethnic tension and unavoidable wrath of Hausa to come over Igbos.

Igbo sarcasm did not stop up to that. They even mocked Hausa faith displaying placard with "provocative graffiti: a drawing of Dr. Ozimba treading on the crumpled head of the late Sardauna" (68). Such actions did nothing more than creating an outlet for dormant Hausa anger.

> A small group of Southern demonstrators were carrying a mocking placard and unfortunately had come to face to face with a group of Hausas returning from their mosque. A knife fight ensued in which many of demonstrators were wounded and about six killed. This incident triggered off a tide of ‘Kill the Kaferies’ in Northern towns . . . But the horrible seeds of violence had been sown. (68)

This is how, the Ethnic hatred took the shape of violent confrontation and the Northern Igbos were massacred by the furious Hausas.

The counter-coup took place when Onyemer was in tour with the message of detribalization and national unity. With his death ethnic tension became more intense. In Ijeke Barracks, a group of Igbo army officers were pushed in small “airless one-room prison” (78) for punishment. But when an Igbo officer asked, “What have we done to deserve this?” the soldier on guard replied,

> You people want to rule the country, don’t you? You rushed into the army, into the government, into all lucrative positions in the country, not satisfied with that you killed all the politicians from other tribes and then your man the Brigadier became self-appointed head of state. (78)

In this way, tribal hatred and jealousy worked to intensify ethnic antagonism. This Northern soldier adds that, “Your leader [Onyemere] thought . . . he was clever going preaching ‘One Nigeria’ after he had made sure all comfortable posts were held by his own people. He is dead now” (78). Thus, Northerners had interpreted the first coup as Igbo plan for unitary state with Igbo predominating in its governance.

In this way, in post-independence Nigeria, there was renegotiation of power status between major ethnic groups and change in ethnic balance. First, election gave power to Hausas and it made Igbos and Yorubas angry. Later with coup and majority of Igbos in the helm of government caused dissatisfaction in Hausas. Following Aburi talks, when Momoh made new federal arrangements dividing country into twelve federal units on ethnic lines and defied East's demand of autonomy, this aroused feeling of self-determination in Easterners. This changing balance of ethnic power status culminated into virtually unstoppable civil war. This is how ethnicity had become a *haunting spectre* that converted post-independence Nigeria into a horrendous battleground.

Furthermore, Emecheta's presentation of complexity of ethnicity raises crucial questions about how symbols (tribal marks, for example) and geography come to define the 'imagined community,' that is, ethnic group. In Lagos and Northern Nigeria, the Igbo country was perceived as a monolith undemarcated by the river Niger. As a result equal punishment fell on Igbos no matter what side of the river Niger they came from. At Ijeke Barrack, Debbie barked: "All Igbo officers stand to this side . . . Western and Eastern Igbos, all Igbos!" (75). Huddled into the same "airless one-room prison" they all suffered the same fate: "The Igbo officers did exactly as they were ordered, but none of them lived to tell the tale" (78).

Beside geography, ethnic symbol loomed alike in ethnic conflict. During the witch hunt and massacre of Igbo community residing in the predominantly Hausa country up North, a mistaken cultural mark transformed Ralph Ugoji (an Igbo man) into a Northerner and saved his life in amazing way.

> At the Barclays Bank, they hacked humans to death and those who tried to escape were clubbed and battered to death. 'Down with all Ibo infidels! Down with the enemy!' they screamed . . . Anybody who did not have a tribal mark on his face was regarded as Igbo. That was what saved Ralph Ugoji; his conservative Western Igbo mother had seen to it that he had little tribal dots on both his checks because she did not like a man having such a moon-like face and these marks were meant to relieve his broadness.

> ‘I am not an Igbo see the marks on my face,’ Ugoji shouted as one man lifted his blood dripping club.
>
> ‘Then move, Tofi,’ he screamed . . .. (82)

Though accidental tribal mark saved his life, “it still pained him to remember that he was only a live because he had denied his tribe” (84). This is how people are deeply attached to their ethnic group and even circumstantial denial of it becomes a matter of psychological pain.

Situational nature of ethnicity is also depicted in *Destination Biafra*. Even the geographical locale creates equally polarized, chauvinist and mutually negative perceptions across the boundaries in the same Igbo tribe. The Igbo of the East of the Niger dismissed their brethren in the West of Niger “as stupid and easy-going,” on the other hand, Western Igbos saw their brothers from the East “as uncultured bush people who loved money, more than their soul” (53).

Changes in Biafra’s fortune induced reconfigurations of ethnic allegiance and alignment. The recapture of Ore and Benin by federal force and the push toward the East with devastating consequences for Western Igbo territory flared the interrogation of ethnic boundaries and loyalties among the Igbo themselves. Suspicion and antagonism swelled on both embankments of river Niger dividing Eastern and Western Igbos. With the Biafran forces pushed into the East of Niger, the Western Igbo, defenseless against the federal forces castigated the Eastern “Igbos people” for dragging them (western Igbo) into their war: “May be the Western Igbos were going to be second class citizens in the new Biafra; may be it would have been better for them to remain Nigerians” (138). Equally suspicious were the eastern Igbos who felt betrayed by the antagonistic “Hausa Igbo” (Western Igbo) in their collusion with the federal forces. So, Biafran leader Abosi raged:

> What beats me are those so called Mid-Westerners. Have they got no loyalty at all? Only a few days ago when we took Benin they were shouting and claiming that we had freed them from the shackles of Momoh's Nigeria. Now with the fall of Ore, they are screaming “Kill Biafra and her Igbo people,” we will show them; we must retake those places. (172)

Thus, notion of ethnicity as monolithic (concerning Igbo community) entity harbored by evading federal forces differed markedly from the fragmented notion of ethnicity nursed by Igbos under fire and threat of annihilation.

In this Nigerian ethnic conflict, foreign involvement was also there. Biafran side stepped ahead from the demand of autonomy to separatism with insurrectionary movements. Here, both separatist (Biafrans) and state (Nigerian federalist) seek outside support. The state got support from Britain to quell and suppress centrifugal force of Biafra that threatened Nigerian unity.

In a nutshell, *Destination Biafra* depicts ethnicity as a haunting spectre in post-independence Nigeria. Elite competition and politicization and polarization of ethnicity caused violent inter-ethnic (and also intra-ethnic) conflict dragging country in civil war.

Neo-colonial Interest

In *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta shows the persisting colonial interests in post-independence Nigeria as a booster of violence in subtle way. Britain as colonial power is a major “bad guy” in the novel. Alen Grey--the son of retired Governor General Sir Fergus Grey and also Debbie’s “male concubine” as she calls him--represents Britain’s postcolonial relation with Africa (Nigeria). Neo-colonialism is personified in the portrait of Alen Grey. Though he is supposed military advisor in post-independence time, his main work is to see British interest in the former colony of Nigeria. Gray’s plundering of cultural artifacts and the attempt of ensuring British control over Nigerian oil are the hallmarks of economic imperialism.

In the opening part of the novel, when Alen Grey says, “Well why don’t we drink to the past empire and the beginning of a workable Commonwealth?” (6), we get a hint that Nigeria is not going to be free form colonial claptrap. He was even against granting independence. For him, “[Nigerians] don’t need independence, they need guidance” (7). The reason he opposed granting independence was that:

> [Eastern region and the reasons around Benin] are full of oil, pure crude oil, which is untouched and still needs through prospecting. Now they are to hand it to these people, who had all these minerals since Adam and not known what to do with them. Now they are beginning to be aware of their monetary value. After independence they may sign it all over Soviet for all we know. (8)

Thus, British economic interest and competition for Nigerian oil is expressed here by Alen Grey.

Beside this economic interest, due to competition between superpowers, Britain’s new form of divide and rule is expressed in Sir Fergus Grey’s statement: “We must show the Hausas that we are their friends and that the country will be divided in such a way that they will be the rulers of Nigeria” (10). It means, by instilling the sense of ethnicity, Britain was going to have desired group in the government so that their interest would be maintained. That is why, after election Mcdonald nominated Hausa man, Alhaji Nguru Kano, of the North as Prime Minister after election.

But after the coup, the helm of government went to mostly Igbo army officers headed by Brigadier Onyemere. Though Alen Grey outwardly congratulated Onyemere he felt that, “with the ambitious Igbos at the helm, trade agreement with Russians might be signed” (69).

Still, “despite his avowed love for Nigeria,” Alen felt that “the country’s wealth should be shared with the powers of the West, preferably Britain” (69).

All through *Destination Biafra*, British presence hangs hauntingly over Biafra/Nigeria intervening all crucial movements to subvert Biafra’s gains (for example, after Aburi talks and after the capture of Ore by Biafran force) and negatively change the course of events for the emerging republic. The role played by the British, especially Alen Grey, demonstrates how ethnicity was invented and evoked to produce the ethnic politics that served British interests. At Aburi, when Nigeria’s “Big men” were busy celebrating the end of civil misunderstanding, Giles joined Alen Grey and both talked like this:

> ‘What do you make of this charade that went on in there Giles?’
> ‘I think that man Momoh is fool and Abosi knew it,’ Giles laughed. ‘It wasn’t really fair Abosi taking advantage of the man’s foolishness. How can he rule as the supreme whatever-he calls it without money? The country is in debt and her only hope is from the oilwells in the East. Yet he is letting Abosi take all that. Well that’s their business so long as they let Britain have the greatest share.’ (95)

Britain’s interest in post-independence Nigeria is not limited to the oil resources. They are also particular about the supply of arms and ammunitions. Giles put that, “Momoh has been ordering all his weapons form us whereas the tricky Igbos have been getting their supplies form China and France” (96). Further, the use of “Russian made armoured cars and British tanks” (208) by Nigerian army shows the competition of superpowers for the trade of war instruments. Such competing arms supply, through trade, in Nigeria from powerful countries had prepared the fertile ground for conflict and violence. Rather than discouraging the conflict, such supply of arms and ammunitions escalated the violence and war.

When Giles questioned Grey whether Momoh was likely to make declaration of Aburi Accord giving autonomy to Eastern region, Grey said, “Of course not, and we are starting on him straight away“ (96). This conspicuously depicts that Momoh was going to be advised not to respect the Aburi Accord on behalf of Igbos represented by Abosi. On his own part, Grey was busy stealing and carting away ancient cultural artifacts form Igboland while shrewdly alerting Saka Momoh about the dangers of honoring Aburi accord particularly the effect of “East’s autonomy” on oil money. Consequently, Saka Momoh, when asked by journalist, equivocated on the implementation of Aburi Accord:

> ‘Your Excellency, how come a quarter of the country will be keeping most of the oil money?’
>
> ‘Oil money, what oil money?’ Momoh asked . . ..
>
> ‘Well since you granted Abosi the East’s autonomy—’
>
> ‘Autonomy! Autonomy!’ Momoh gave quizzical look, no doubt uncertain about what the word actually meant . . ..
>
> Then Alen Grey, the friend of Nigeria, stepped in: ‘His excellency will doubtlessly work out the details later, what we have agreed on today is a framework for peace. The details will be filled in later.’ (96)

But when “the details [were] filled in,” they did not argue for or sustain the implementation of Aburi agreement, but rather encouraged Momoh to divide Nigeria into twelve states, drawn largely along the ethnic lines in a bid to neutralize and disempower Abosi and his ethnic group in such a way that “rich oilwells in the East fall into the hands of the non-Igbo speaking people” (115). Thus, the old fashioned policy--cold blooded divide and rule--was appropriated through Momoh. This externally induced and homegrown tactic of ‘decentralized despotism’ did not escape Abosi who responded by declaring the independent state of Biafra.

When Biafrans overtook the Ore and Benin and even attacked Lagos bombing form planes Momoh became very much bemused. Meantime, Grey came to him from his Mid-West visit. Grey said to Momoh, “if you are not careful, Abosi will take the whole country form you” (145). Momoh became very restless and indecisive and said, “We have more arms and ammunitions than Abosi will ever have but these internal battles and massacres have cost us dearly” (146). Then, igniting the sense of war in Momoh, Grey put,

> Oh, for God’s sake Saka. If you have more arms and ammunition than Abosi use them. As for money and people, Nigeria is great nation. I don’t need to tell you that. The whole Mid-West is rich in oil; part of the breakaway state is very oily; I’d sign percentages of the oil revenue over to people who would help you to win the war. (146)

In this way, war as politics is engineered and fueled by imperialist interests.

Later, in the presence of his supporting colonels, Salihu Lawal and Tunde Oshoko, “Momoh signed away the greater percentage of the oilwells to some Western powers on the condition that they settled the Biafran question quickly” (146). By hook and crook, thus, Western-based oil conglomerates managed to extract the oil of Nigeria. After some time, Alen Grey went to England in his holiday where he met his father Sir Fergus and colleagues at foreign office. There they agreed that

> A quick kill would be the best solution to Biafran crisis; it was worth investing in arms and giving aid to Nigeria in this time of trouble, now it looked as if there was more oil than they had imagined. It was decided that Alen Grey should go to the surplus section of the Ministry of Defense and buy up the old unwanted ammunition . . .. (148)

Hence, “a new trade in ammunition and human blood had begun” (149) for the sake of neo-colonizer’s economic interest.

When Alen watched the news which broadcasted the fleeing of Biafran soldiers form Ore and Benin due to federal armies, he cancelled holiday and decided to return Nigeria not to give any chance to Momoh realize that he could win without Britain's help. Otherwise, the oil could be sold to whichever country who flattered Momoh the most.

Although Alen Grey acted in favor of British interests he seemed to be honest when regarding himself as a true friend of Africa. Throughout the novel, he shows himself up here and there buying wood carvings for his collection, making diplomatic moves on behalf of Britain and selling weapons to federal forces and food to Biafra: "Alen was friend of both leaders. To his way of thinking, he had not betrayed Momoh, neither had he betrayed Abosi" (188), but his dual role is unraveled in Abosi's aggressive statement: "Grey . . . Alen Grey. He is England in this war. He arranges mercenaries and arms to be sent to Momoh, then comes to Red Cross our people. He wants to fatten us up for the slaughter" (217).

In Nigerian civil war, the vested interest is economic and human intervention is externally encouraged and internally implemented. In this novel, foreign interests (sometimes collaborative and sometimes competing) abound. But British economic interests, personified by Alen Grey and Giles, remain an overwhelming presence, and a driving force mapping ethnic boundaries, procuring mercenaries and instigating divisiveness:

> It was agreed that Momoh should pay a large deposit, which he did not posses; that, however did not worry Alen Grey. The oilwells in the Mid-West had been liberated since Nigerian army had sent the Biafran soldiers flying to their homeland, and a British oil company could now go there and pump enough oil to pay for her war. Captain Alen Grey left the next day promising to get mercenaries within a week. (191)

Thus, *Destination Biafra* shows that how the imperial power's economic interest manipulates the transitional period of newly independent Nigeria and plays a key role in the violence of civil war through the character like Alen Grey and Giles.

Gender and Violence

Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* shows gendered spaces in newly independent Nigeria and the manifestation of gendered violence in ethno-secessionist war rejecting the conventional notion of war as male domain through the pivotal character Debbie and other female characters.

The female protagonist of this novel, Debbie Ogedemgbe, is one of the new rising generations of Western educated intelligentsia. Debbie, the idealistic Oxford-educated daughter of venal politician, returned to Nigeria from England to witness and participate in war. She defied her parents by deciding to join the army in her desire to contribute to the reconstruction of Nigeria into a truly independent nation: "She knew that it [(army)] was a masculine preserve and did not underestimate the ridicule her announcement would engender once she dared to make it public" (54). She even went to Colonel Chijioke Abosi, her friend, and he took her idea positively saying "it would certainly add glamour to our regiment" (65).

Later on, after coup, Abosi and other officers talked over this matter. Abosi opined that, "Through her English boyfriend [(Alen Grey)] she could see that we have more than adequate supply" (65) of arms and ammunitions. They agreed as Onyemere said, "Well she can be a useful tool, I don't see why we should not use her and other like her" (67). Though they agreed to have female recruitment, they were not taking it as female empowerment but as "useful tool" for vested motto.

On the other side, there was gendered nature of ethnic violence in which women's bodies were deliberately violently abused for the escalation of violence. When the Northerners started killing Igbos, they killed the 'men' mostly on the spot, but women were violently ravished. The people who escaped the witch hunt came to rail station to go to East. There "nearly all women were without one breast [and] the very old ones had only one eye" (84). One boy of about fifteen was there who saw his parents clubbed to death by the Northerners. He sobbingly said that his "older sister was pregnant," but, "they pounded on her, spread her wide and pushed the sharper edge of their club inside her, pounding her and the baby" (85). Therefore, in the ethnic violence, too, women were more violently killed though men were also victimized likewise.

In this post-independence Nigerian ethnic plus nationalistic violence caused due to Biafra's self-determination and Nigerian attempt to maintain unity, women were very badly uprooted. Large number of women, children and civilians became refugees who were heading towards Biafra for safety. In this war sometimes women were deliberately targeted with sexual violence and sometimes deliberately spared. When Debbie resumed her mission, after some weeks, with Igbo refugees, on the way, Nigerian soldiers stopped their lorry and searched them. Later they killed all the men, but let the women and children escape: "They were still loading the women into the lorry when the shooting started. The air was filled with the crying of men dying" (168). Such escaped women had extra burden. They had to be sole caretaker of children providing them food and safety when their own life was in danger.

Nigerian politics was very much male even after independence. Women were sidelined in every aspect. First, Nigerian women, basically from Hausa (Muslim) tribe, were not allowed to vote. There were no female candidates in other parts too. So government policies were exclusively male. Due to arrogant male leaders civil war took place. Here also women were more to suffer. One refugee woman Uzoma Madako said:

> A few years ago it was "independence freedom for you, freedom for me." We were always in the background. Now that freedom has turned into freedom to kill each other and our men left us to bury them and bring up their children;

> and may be by the time these ones grow up there will be another reason for them to start killing one another. (204)

On the other, though there was female recruitment in the army, they were only given orders and no ideas were asked or heard from them. That is why, when the “much publicized Aburi talk” could not work due to divisive policy of Momoh (and Abosi), Alen Grey--supposed military advisor of Nigerian Army--suggested Debbie to act as peace maker between Momoh and Abosi, Debbie showed her grudge to male behavior saying, “You men make all these mess and then call on us women to clear it up” (110).

Debbie was called by Saka Momoh and she was told to go to Abosi and convince him not to secede dividing the country into two. He gave reason why he was sending her to Abosi instead of talking with him directly: “Your family and his were friends for a long time, and of course, you were both at Oxford, although you’re a woman . . . Not that should be a handicap it might help: you can use your feminine charm to break that icy reserve of his” (118). Hence, Debbie was given this task of reconciling the two warring males using her “feminine charm,” not the authority as an army officer. Anyway, she took responsibility of traveling to Eastern enclave of Biafra to take Biafran leader, Abosi, out of waging war against Nigeria:

> Her mission to Abosi was known only to a few high-ranking officers and one or two of the old politician . . . she was to give Chijioke Abosi an opportunity to back down without losing face . . . So now these men thought she could use here sexuality to make Abosi change his stand. She was to use her body, because Saka Momoh did not want to get into a war with Easterner . . .. (120-21)

In this way, even in diplomatic level women were supposed to be sexual object. This is the mal-thought of patriarchy.

Similarly, on the way to meet Abosi for peace, she met Chief Odumosu. When she asked, “Sir, do you want me to tell Abosi that you’ve changed your mind about declaring a [separate] Yoruba kingdom?” (123) he said in reply “don’t meddle in things bigger than you and don’t forget my dear that you are a woman. That is why we are giving you this delicate mission.” (123). Thus, most of the leaders--both old and young--were the perpetuators of patriarchy/male chauvinism.

Even the colonial project is depicted as the gendered that curtailed the African women’s freedom and equality with men: “In the distant past, in that part of Africa women were treated almost equal as men’s equals, but with the arrival of colonialism, their frail claim to equality had been taken away” (113). But still

> with the coming of independence the situation had not changed. Now, the young girls, like Debbie and Babs, were determined to play their part in the formation of nation. But this in turn was making the army boys more brutal to unlucky women caught in any helpless situation. There were stories of women being beaten and sexually assaulted by soldiers whose commander would only say “It is war, and in a war situation men lose their self control,” as if that were explanation enough. (113)

This is nothing more than the colonially inherited gender biasness which is practiced heavily in every social sphere: In war time manifestly victimizing women through sexual assault and rape and in other time structurally inferiorizing them. Thus, post-independence violence in Nigeria was gendered one.

In warfronts, rape is used as an instrument to torture women. When Debbie, with her mother, was on way to Biafra, she stopped to give lift to escaped Igbo man and his pregnant wife with baby. There arrived two army cars of Nigerian soldiers. They were surrounded by these soldiers. She told them that she was also a Nigerian army. She convinced them that she would give her gun if they let them go. The leader of soldiers agreed saying, “You women rule the world!” But what happened following that was just opposite. In request of Stella Ogdemgbe, Debbie’s mother, to leave her daughter the soldier’s leader said, “It’s war madam, we are not killers of women and children” (127). Though she was not killed she was violently raped by these soldiers:

> She could make out the figure of the leader referred as Bale on top of her, then she knew it was somebody else, then another person . . . she felt herself bleeding, though her head was still clear. Pain shot all over her body like arrows. She felt her legs being pulled this way or that, and at times she could hear her mother’s protesting cries. But eventually, amid all the degradation that inflected upon her Debbie lost her consciousness. (127)

This is how, in war front, army used rape as an instrument to torture women. Debbie was not killed, but humiliated so much that it would be better to have been killed: “Had she been a man they would have killed her outright,” like her driver and Igbo man, “instead they humiliated her and left her die slowly” (128). So Stella said to Debbie, “We are women, daughter, this is our lot they killed Ignatius and the other man. And that poor girl with her baby . . . they just tortured her to death” (128). Thus, in this conflict infused by ambitions male leaders, the structurally dominated women were manifestly victimized. They were given “precious” life, but this was more precarious than death.

The gendered nation of female inferiority and male superiority is deeply rooted in culture and socialization. As a result, such consciousness remains intact in the mind of a person. Its one genuine example is there in *Destination Biafra*. In Ijeke Barracks, when a group of army officers were unarmed and about to be punished under Debbie’s command, these officers were amazed and even tended “to laugh” seeing a women army commanding them. They seemed as if saying, with undisguised amusement, “Whatever you do, however much you are armed and in command now, you are sill a woman" (75). Even in such critical situation, the gendered nation of female inferiority had not gone out of the mind of these officers.

The same tendency was making this post-independence violence heavily gendered. When Debbie's mother complained about the nightmare that fell upon them in the nearest checkpoint at Benin, the concerned officer replied, "Hundreds of women have been raped–so what? It's war. She's lucky to be even alive. She will be alright" (129). One of the soldiers even added, shrugging khakied shoulders, "Please yourself. It's woman's world any way. They get what they want' (129), as if Debbie and her mother had desired that incident. The novel is replete with men's utterance, "It's woman's world," but the case was victimization of women in the "man's world" (152).

After the lapses of some weeks, Debbie got recovered and resumed her mission despite her mother's objection. This time she went with other Igbo refugee. When the lorry in which they were traveling was stopped by army on the way, they were taken out of lorry. All the women were striped naked. Debbie saw that the army leader was Lawal Salihu, an officer who had drove her to Appa barracks for new uniform before starting her mission initially. This man took her to army shelter inside jungle. Though she told him that she was still in her mission, later he was enraged and said, "I am going to show you that you are nothing but a woman, an ordinary woman" (167). Then he fell upon her. Thus, rape was used to maintain power of man over women. In this way, in this post-independence violence/war, Debbie suffers from the ultimate act of aggression when she was raped by the Nigerian soldiers.

A group of about twenty women and children including Debbie, Madako with her three sons and a daughter, Dorothy whose husband was killed on the way and who breastfed her own infant and orphan infant named Biafra, and other small boys moved through the forest full of "snakes and other animals" (197). In the jungle reverberating with the "rat-rat of gunfire” (184) and “explosions” of bombs they moved eating “unfortunate frogs that they had caught” (198) and drinking dirty water. Consequently, some of the children, including infant orphan Biafra, died on the way due to dysentery and gunfire from armies.

To sum up, the atrocities against women, in post-independence Nigerian violence, are slanted in Debbie’s femaleness: the rape of the age as well as young, women, the rape and murder of pregnant women and the slaughter of unborn infants. Women die of child birth on highway and new-born infants perish within days of birth. Therefore, this war becomes a theatre not for male heroics but for female endurance.

Conclusion

Destination Biafra shows that the post-independent Nigeria could not bring the anticipated national harmony based on the spirit of nationalism. The development of Nigerian politics as ethno-regional affair and competition and clash of local elites, like Durosaro and Odumosu, made this post-independence situation just a re-appropriation of colonial order without virtual change. Even the military coup made to purge the nation out of corrupt leaders turns out to be a just another block in building up the mansion of violence initiated by politicians. Because of their divisiveness, these military leaders also turn out to be seasoned politicians against whom they made coup. Further, the Biafran attempt of self-determination and Nigerian attempt of maintaining forced unity bring massive violence. These both sides try to justify their violence in the name of their own versions of nationalism--Abosi's secessionist bid for liberation and Momoh's unification. That is why, Emecheta is critical of such elites who are catalyst for violence and creator of paradox of forging postcolonial independent nation in a true sense.

In this canvas of post-independent Nigerian politics, Emecheta traces the invention of ethnicity and ethnic politics that also provoke and fuel the violence. Here, the complexity of ethnicity not only includes the inter-ethnic conflict, but also the situational intra-ethnic conflict. Lack of resources triggers intense competition and ethnic polarization. Due to the politicization of ethnicity, Hausas come to power in the first election disappointing Igbos and Yorubas. Later, the coup disappoints Hausas as Igobs hold majority position in government. This renegotiation of power status between major ethnic groups and changing ethnic balance culminate into virtually unstoppable civil war. During such conflict ethnic symbols also become a sign to distinguish a friend or enemy. Even the changing power status of ethnic group brings situational difference in intra-ethnic relation of Eastern and Western Igobs. This is how, in *Destination Biafra*, ethnicity has become haunting spectre that converts post-independence Nigeria into a horrendous battle ground.

Besides, Emecheta explores the neo-colonial impingement in this post-independence violence. Britain's neo-colonial relation with Nigeria and its economic interests--from the plunder of cultural artifacts to the control of petroleum--are portrayed in Alen Grey and Gile's character. By instilling the sense of ethnicity, Britain tries to bring desired group in government to safeguard its interests. Their activities fuel the violence in Nigeria. The competition of oil conglomerating powers (especially Soviet and Britain) on the one hand and trade of arms and ammunition on the other escalate the violence. Alen Grey and Giles also play key role to encourage Momoh, a willing tool, to go against Aburi Accord and devise a new federal structure in Nigeria which ensues the violent secessionist move from the Eastern/Biafran side represented by Abosi. Emecheta also exposes Britain's dual role in civil war. In this war, Alen Grey procures food to Biafran side through Red Cross and ammunition plus mercenaries to Momoh. Thus, in *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta, with strong anti-colonial stand, makes critique of neo-colonial power for bolstering up violence in post-independence Nigeria.

Emecheta also makes due observation over the gendered spaces in this homegrown ethno-regional national violence where foreign economic interests also abound. As we have discussed earlier, this novel denies the conventional notion of war as male domain. Her heroine, the die-hard nationalist Debbie, joins Nigerian army and tries to maintain national unity threatened by civil war caused due to arrogant male leaders. But in this process, she is sexually assaulted in war fronts. She represents the predicament of whole Nigerian women who are tormented in wartime. The wartime atrocities on refugee women--like Madako, Dorothy and others--and their attempt of survival make the Nigerian civil war not the theatre of male heroics but of female endurance giving a sense that it is women's war.

To wrap up, *Destination Biafra* is a representation of violence in contemporary post-independence Nigeria. Here Emecheta is heavily critical of native elites (especially male) who politicize ethnicity for holding state power and foreign power intervening in subtle way. These both elite forces lead country toward civil war. For Emecheta this violence becomes a tool to unravel the paradox of postcolonial nation formation, haunting ethnic tussle, neo-colonial economic interest and wartime gendered spaces. Thus, Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* stands conspicuously as a postcolonial critique of violence in post-independence Nigeria.

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