

## **The Effects of Inter-ethnic Conflicts on the Education of the African Girl Child: A Reading of Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War***

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### **Abstract**

*Most countries in Africa are multi-ethnics. As it is in most civilizations in the world, different nationalities come together to form a geographical contiguity owing to such factors like proximity, migration, annexation and colonization among others. While some countries in the world have been able to manage the conflicts arising from their inter-ethnic relationships. The case is not so with African countries where inter-ethnic conflicts have been responsible for underdevelopment of many countries however, there is need to reverse this ugly trend. This study examines the impact of the recurrent inter-ethnic crisis on the education of the African girl-child. The study is based on the fictive world created by Chinua Achebe based on the Nigerian civil war fought between 1967-1971. The study used the fictive character of Gladys to explore the nature and the extent of the damage that inter-ethnic crisis could continue to have on the education of the African female children in particular by using psychoanalytic criticism as theoretical framework, by adopting the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret the text. The paper concludes that although crises generally have negative impacts on the society, the effects of wars and conflicts on the girl child education may be irreversible, therefore, the need to protect girl-child from traumatic experience of war if their education is to be enhanced is the objective of this paper.*

**Key words: Inter-ethnic, Conflict, Education, Girl, Child.**

## **Introduction**

Education is a human right that should be given to all human beings. There are lot of international human right instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right which include the universal declaration of human right (1948), international convention on economic, social and cultural right (1960) etc. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a lay index of development. Research has also shown that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis particularly in recent times for all citizens to have access to basic education. It has however been established by researchers that improving female education is crucial for national development.

Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the universal declaration of human rights. Since then, numerous human rights treaties have reaffirmed these rights and have supported entitlement to free compulsory primary education for all children. In 1990 for example, the education for all (EFA) communication was launched to ensure that by 2015, all children particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. According to UNESCO report, about 90 million children are not in school and majority of them are girls. Most girls do not have access to education despite the fact that it is their rights. The girl-child is often saddled with responsibilities, which may make her not to have access to quality education. The girl-child from birth may be considered a costly guest in her house. Her schooling is a waste of time and money and she is differently trained only for her role as a bearer of many children. A girl born into the family is received with mixed feeling while baby boy is considered a source of joy and pride to such families.

Some parents hold the view that it is better to have more boys than girls. Therefore, it is better for them to spend more time and money on the education of boys than girls, this summarizes the predicament of the girl-child as conceived by some families in some parts of Nigeria. Garba (2000) notes that for girls, their gender alone may keep their home locked in subsistence works or so isolated in the classroom that they become discouraged and drop out.

In Nigeria, fewer girls than boys are withdrawn from school for early marriage and the fact that they often assist in housework more than boys, they may not have time to study when they come

home from school. Free access to quality education is the right of every child without expectation or discrimination on gender basis. This paper however picks the issue of inter-ethnic conflicts as another major factor that is negatively affecting the education of girl child in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular and this may include psychological, emotional or social disconnect from the of idea educational attainment. The paper concludes that there is need for ethnic and national peace to ensure unhindered education for the girl child.

### **Theoretical framework**

Psychoanalytic criticism adopts the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. One may psychoanalyze a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche.

One interesting facet of this approach is that it validates the importance of literature, as it is built on a literary key for the decoding. Freud himself wrote, "The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech".

Like psychoanalysis itself, this critical endeavour seeks evidence of unresolved emotions, psychological conflicts, guilt, ambivalences, and so forth within what may well be a disunified literary work. The author's own childhood traumas, family life, sexual conflicts, fixations, and such will be traceable within the behavior of the characters in the literary work. But psychological material will be expressed indirectly, disguised, or encoded (as in dreams) through principles such as "symbolism" (the repressed object represented in disguise), "condensation" (several thoughts or persons represented in a single image), and "displacement" (anxiety located onto another image by means of association).

Despite the importance of the author here, psychoanalytic criticism is similar to New Criticism in not concerning itself with "what the author intended." But what the author never intended (that is, repressed) is sought. The unconscious material has been distorted by the censoring conscious

mind. Psychoanalytic critics will ask such questions as, "What is Hamlet's problem?" or "Why can't Brontë seem to portray any positive mother figures?" Why Gladys cannot complete her school in Achebe's *girls at war*

**Psychological Criticism:** This approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. Fundamental figures in psychological criticism include Sigmund Freud, whose "psychoanalytic theories changed our notions of human behavior by exploring new or controversial areas like wish-fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression" as well as expanding our understanding of how "language and symbols operate by demonstrating their ability to reflect unconscious fears or desires"; and Carl Jung, whose theories about the unconscious are also a key foundation of Mythological Criticism. Psychological criticism has a number of approaches, but in general, it usually employs one (or more) of three approaches:

An investigation of "the creative process of the artist: what is the nature of literary genius and how does it relate to normal mental functions?"

The psychological study of a particular artist, usually noting how an author's biographical circumstances affect or influence their motivations and/or behavior.

The analysis of fictional characters using the language and methods of psychology.

### **Psychological approach to analyze literature**

The aim of psychological study folds in three natures. Foremost, the objective of understanding behavior, that is by defining factors that combine the development and expression of behavior. Secondly, the psychologist striving to develop procedure for the accurate prediction of behavior. Thirdly, psychology aims at developing techniques that will permit the control of behavior that is, way of "shaping" or course of psychological development through manipulating those basic factors to the growth and the expression of behavior.

The psychological approach leads most directly to a substantial amplification of the meaning of a literary work. When we discuss psychology and its place in a literary work, we are primarily studying the author's imagination. As all literary works are based on some kind of experience, and as all authors are human, we are necessarily caught up in the wide spectrum of emotional problems (caused by experience). Not all recourse of psychology in the analysis of literary work

is undertaken to arrive at the understanding of the literary work, to a certain extent, we must be willing to use psychology to discuss probability.

However, this study will be using Abraham Maslow theory of need to analyze the literary text and his theory states as follow;

The Hierarchy of Needs is a model in which Maslow attempted to capture these different levels of human motivation. It represents the idea that human beings are propelled into action by different motivating factors at different times – biological drives, psychological needs, higher goals which include; Basic/psychological needs, safety needs, love /belonging needs, self - esteem needs, self- actualization needs and self - transcendence needs.

Now the hierarchical arrangement is not meant to imply that those who focus on higher needs are somehow “better” than those who focus on lower needs. It’s not that kind of hierarchy. It’s a hierarchy within you, within your day-to-day experience.

It simply means that higher needs don’t appear unless and until unsatisfied lower needs are satisfied. If you are suffering from cold and hunger, for example, you just don’t have the time or energy to worry about your self-esteem. Your entire being is focused on food and warmth.

For this reason, the different levels also broadly correspond to different stages of life. The basic physical needs at the bottom are predominant in infancy; safety needs come into focus in early childhood; belonging needs predominate in later childhood; esteem needs predominate in early adulthood and self-actualization only really comes into focus with mature adulthood.

At the very top of the pyramid is the desire for self-transcendence — to experience, unite with and serve that which is beyond the individual self: the unity of all being. Therefore, the second basic need is safety or security which its absence may affect the psychological state of any individual especially the girl child education.

## **Methodology**

This study is qualitative research and it adopted a descriptive research design. The reason for this choice of research design is because the study does not assume or envisage any response from a set of audience or population. The study was therefore carried out and evaluated through the use of selected play. The analysis of the play using descriptive research to expose underlying

traumatic experience of the girl child education in Africa against. This study explored and guided the readers and the target audience, through close reading and analysis of this play, to help reduce the problem of out of school children especially for girl child education.

### **The multi- ethnic nature of Nigeria**

The culture of Nigeria is shaped by Nigeria's multiple ethnic groups. The country has 527 languages, seven of them are extinct. Nigeria also has over 1150 dialects and ethnic groups. The four largest ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba predominate in the south west. The Edo people are most frequent in the region between Yoruba land and Igbo land. Many of the Edo tend to be Christian. This group is followed by the Ibibio/Annang/Efik people of the coastal south southern Nigeria and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta. Nigeria's other ethnic group, sometimes called 'minorities', are found throughout the country but especially in the north and the middle belt. The traditionally nomadic Fulani can be found all over West and Central Africa. The Fulani and the Hausa are predominantly Muslim while the Igbo are predominantly Christian and so are the Efik, Ibibio, and Annang people. The Yoruba are equally likely to be either Christian or Muslim. Indigenous religious practices remain important to all of Nigeria's ethnic groups, and frequently these beliefs are blended with Christian beliefs, a practice known as syncretism

### **The Challenges of Ethnicity in Africa**

History has stripped Africa's people of the dignity of building their nations on their own indigenous values, institutions, and heritage. The modern African state is the product of Europe, not Africa. To attempt at this late date to return to ancestral identities and resources as bases for building the modern African nation would risk the collapse of many countries. At the same time, to disregard ethnic realities would be to build on loose sand, also a high-risk exercise. Is it possible to consolidate the framework of the modern African state while giving recognition and maximum utility to the component elements of ethnicities, cultures, and aspirations for self-determination? Ethnicity is more than skin color or physical characteristics, more than language, song, and dance. It is the embodiment of values, institutions, and patterns of behavior, a composite whole representing a people's historical experience, aspirations, and world view. Deprive a people of their ethnicity, their culture, and you deprive them of their sense of direction or purpose.

Traditionally, African societies and even states functioned through an elaborate system based on the family, the lineage, the clan, the tribe, and ultimately a confederation of groups with ethnic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics in common. These were the units of social, economic, and political organizations and inter-communal relations.

In the process of colonial state-formation, groups were divided or brought together with little or no regard to their common characteristics or distinctive attributes. They were placed in new administrative frameworks, governed by new values, new institutions, and new operational principles and techniques. The autonomous local outlook of the old order was replaced by the control mechanisms of the state, in which the ultimate authority was an outsider, a foreigner. This mechanism functioned through the centralization of power, which ultimately rested on police and military force, the tools of authoritarian rule. This crude force was, however, softened by making use of traditional leaders as extended arms of state control over the tribes or the local communities, giving this externally imposed system a semblance of legitimacy for the masses. Adding to this appearance of legitimacy was the introduction of a welfare system by which the state provided meager social services and limited development opportunities to privileged sectors. National resources were otherwise extracted and exported as raw materials to feed the metropolitan industries of the colonial masters.

This new system undermined the people's indigenous system, which provided them with the means for pursuing their modest but sustainable life objectives, and replaced it with centrally controlled resources that were in short supply and subject to severely competitive demands. Development was conceived as a means of receiving basic services from the state, rather than as a process of growth and collective accumulation of wealth that could in turn be invested in further growth. The localized, broad-based, low-risk, self-sustaining subsistence activities gave way to high-risk, stratifying competition for state power and scarce resources, a zero-sum conflict of identities based on tribalism or ethnicity. Independence removed the common enemy, the colonial oppressor, but actually sharpened the conflict over centralized power and control over national resources.

Today, virtually every African conflict has some ethno-regional dimension to it. Even those conflicts that may appear to be free of ethnic concerns involve factions and alliances built around ethnic loyalties. Analysts have tended to have one of two views of the role of ethnicity in these

conflicts. Some see ethnicity as a source of conflict; others see it as a tool used by political entrepreneurs to promote their ambitions. In reality, it is both. Ethnicity, especially when combined with territorial identity, is a reality that exists independently of political maneuvers. To argue that ethnic groups are unwitting tools of political manipulation is to underestimate a fundamental social reality. On the other hand, ethnicity is clearly a resource for political manipulation.

For instance, some of which have hostilities that dated back millennia, live in largely impoverished conditions in a forced co-existence dictated by colonial-era national borders.

### **Ethnic groups in Africa**

One of the clearest examples of ethnic and racial tension in Africa is the conflict between Arabs (and the Tuareg, who are Berbers) and sub-Saharan (black) Africans. For over 1,000 years Arabs enslaved black Africans; estimates of the victims of the Arab slave trade range up to 18 million. Although the Arab slave trade began to rapidly decline in the 1960s Mauritania did not criminalize slavery until 2007 and even today tens of thousands of Africans remain enslaved through bonded labor or other forms of slavery in the region (it is estimated that 8% of Nigeriens and 10-20% of Mauritians are slaves). Beyond this predatory relationship, interaction between Arabs/Tuaregs and black Africans was somewhat limited by the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert which acted as a natural buffer zone.

That began to change in the 1800s during the “Scramble for Africa” when European powers colonized and carved the continent into what became (for the most part) the modern national borders. Arabs, Tuareg and black Africans were lumped together in a band of French and British territory stretching straight across the southern expanse of the Sahara that later became the current states of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan.

In the past decade four of these countries (Mali, Niger, Sudan and Chad) have experienced rebellions or civil wars fought predominantly along ethnic or racial divisions. This is not to suggest that ethnicity and race are necessarily the root cause of these conflicts and that the racial conflict was inevitable, but the role of ethnicity and race cannot be dismissed either. The ethnic and racial animosity that exists is very real and apparent to anyone who has spent time in the region. These wars occurred for a multitude of standard reasons – politics, resources, religion,

history – but it was often quite clear that ethnicity and race were determining factors when the locals chose which side to fight for.

The latest Tuareg rebellion in Mali claimed the desert north of the Niger River as the independent state of Azawad in 2012, separating the Tuaregs from the black Africans in southern Mali. The previous Tuareg rebellion (2007-2009) occurred in both Mali and Niger with the Nigerien Tuaregs demanding decentralization and that the Nigerien military in their territory be dominated by Tuaregs instead of black Africans. Sudan fought two civil wars between the Arab-dominated north and the black African south, the most recent from 1983-2005 which resulted in autonomy and later the independence of South Sudan in 2011. The Sudanese Civil War spilled over into Chad from 2005-2010 as mostly a proxy war between Sudan and South Sudan utilizing the same ethnic militias from the Sudanese Civil War. Mali, Niger, Sudan and Chad should never have existed in their current form and the redrawing of borders in Mali and Sudan is long overdue. There may unfortunately never be any widespread reconciliation between Arabs/Tuaregs and black Africans given the history of slavery, racism, discrimination and competition for resources in combination with literacy rates that are among the lowest in the world (a substantial obstacle to education programs designed to foster racial harmony). Black Africans have been continually victimized by their Arab and Tuareg neighbors in Northern Africa for over a millennium, resulting in a hatred and fear that is deeply engrained. Religious (generally Muslim vs Christian and animist) and cultural differences further exacerbate the situation. Sudan and South Sudan are now on the brink of war after less than a year of separation, feuding over border demarcation and oil revenues. Both sides are using proxy rebel forces and Sudan has conducted air strikes against targets in South Sudan. If history is any indication, the violence will slowly but surely spill over into Chad as rebel groups conduct cross-border raids. It is also likely that Uganda will intervene militarily and fight alongside South Sudan if necessary. This would escalate the conflict into looking very much like a disturbing, regional race war.

In Mali the Tuareg rebellion is far from over. As the Tuareg celebrate their declaration of the newly independent state of Azawad counter-revolutionary forces are assembling into militias of their own and revenge is at the top of their agenda. One of my sources has told me on good authority that at least some of the militias are debating whether killing off the Tuareg fighters will be enough or if they should also execute the Tuareg women and children to prevent yet

another Tuareg rebellion in the future. The rest of the war won't be fought by the Malian army and the Tuaregs, but by disparate militias that will rack up a list of human rights abuses that will dwarf those that occurred during the Libyan civil war.

These ethnic conflicts are not only limited to Africa but Nigeria too has her own shares of these conflicts. Since the return of democracy to Nigeria on May 29, 1999, parts of the Middle Belt region now better known by its new geo-political identity as North-Central Zone, have witnessed a series of communal, religious, inter and intra-ethnic crises resulting into mindless destruction of lives and property. The most affected states in the zone are Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue and Taraba states. Although Kaduna and Bauchi states are not strictly within this zone, the crises in the two states have had some effect on the zone itself.

Generally, these clashes have reduced towns (Kaduna and Jos) and villages to charred evidence of the new spirit of intolerance stalking parts of our dear nation. When the president himself visited Kaduna in the wake of the crisis, he could not find words either to express his revulsion at the degree of destruction or to condemn the perpetrators of the mayhem. For a president who is not known to be short of words, this must have been a great source of grief for him. These crises have turned thousands of people into pitiable refugees in their own homes and communities. Unfortunately, the state governments do not have the financial means to adequately respond to the resettlement and security needs of these helpless victims.

The bloody clashes in Benue and Taraba states were inter-state and inter-ethnic; those in Plateau (Jos), Nasarawa (southern senatorial zone of the state) and Kaduna states were/are intra-state and inter-ethnic. The crisis in Bauchi was both inter-ethnic and inter-state. There is thus a common characteristic of inter-ethnicity in all these clashes. There is a religious coloration to the clashes in Kaduna and Jos. The religious coloration seeks to mask the underlying fundamental cause or causes of these crises. However, its interpretation by interested analysts gives the impression that it can stand on its own. We will so treat it but bear in mind that religion is quite often a ready weapon employed to gain advantage or obtain a victim status in the unending ethnic quest for social, political and economic advantages. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the fact that the religious coloration has become as dangerous and nearly as intractable as the fundamental cause or causes of these inter-ethnic clashes.

In Nigeria, it might look like a horror movie, scene of disembowelled body of a pregnant woman, headless body of a man; dead bodies of children who died of hunger; and so on. This wasn't fiction, it's real. The ancient oil town of Warri had exploded in violence between hitherto co-existing communities. This explosion has left scars, visible and invisible. Some of the visible scars were corpses, burnt out houses that were no more than hollow shells. The streets had a desolate look as business closed down and people fled the town in panic. This was the outcome of clashes between the three ethnic groups that makeup Warri - the Ijaws and Urhobos on one hand and the Itsekiris on the other. The scale and ferocity of the destruction are quite alarming- with hundreds of lives and properties lost. The antagonism among these ethnic groups is not new; it is a festering sore; it is merely increasing in frequency.

In Ondo State, it was a replay of the Warri mayhem as the Ijaws and Ilajes, went for each other's throat with the consequent loss of hundreds of lives and property. In most cases, whole villages were razed. Even in the riverine areas like the farming communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, the story is the same. The conflict, over land, is not new. It happened in 1933, 1964 and 1995. But, this recent one in 1999 assumed dangerous proportions with thousands of lives and properties destroyed, as more sophisticated weapons were used.

All across Nigeria there is an ever-lengthening thread of ethnic violence: Ife/Modakeke, Ogoni and Andonis, Sagamu, Kano, Zango-Kataf, Jukuns/Tivs, etc. These are not isolated events but are interconnected. Powerful social and economic factors gave rise to them.

### **Features of war Literature**

As long as there has been war, there have been writers trying to understand it, turning battlefield horrors into narrative, trying to make something useful out of its debris. From Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, which has remained in print since its first publication in 1895, and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, a book that dramatizes (if not romanticizes) the author's youthful experience during World War I, to Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, the Vietnam War novel that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1990, war has inspired some of the best-known works in the American canon and in Africa as well. A good example is Chinua Achebe's *Girls at war*

Today, our war literature is no less vivid and troubling—even if it is less grand in theme and less demure in detail. The last few years have seen the publication of several notable memoirs, such as *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* (Melville House, 2003), the international best-seller by Bernard-Henri Levy; and *Jarhead* (Scribner, 2003) by Anthony Swofford, an ex-marine who fought in the first Gulf War and later attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop. and *end of war* by Okinba Launko a short poem which also discusses the negative impacts of war. While some consider the memoirs of war as merely a trend in an industry that is informed by popular consensus, Dan Conaway, an executive editor at Putnam and the editor of *My War*, says that publishers are not “collectively banking on war memoirs as a category to be the ‘next big trend’ à la chick lit or *The Da Vinci Code* knockoffs.”

Conaway says that war has always been a “wellspring from which urgent, dramatic storytelling can emerge, and that’s certainly the case today.... But in the end, a great book is a great book, and that—the quality and originality and vitality of the work itself—is going to be what makes a book stand the test of time.”

The features of war include; Intolerance, propaganda, inordinate ambition, selfishness, political nepotism among others have accounted for many of the ethnic conflicts in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular.

Whether or not these books will stand the test of time, writers continue to write about war to find the unarguable point of it. And readers read about war for the same reason. It’s no surprise, of course, that this goal is never reached.

Still, writers struggle to tell the truest tale, to form true opinions, and to make sense of something that is hard to understand.

### **The Nigerian Civil War**

The Nigerian Civil War, better known as the Biafran War, (6 July 1967 – 15 January 1970), was a war fought between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra. Biafra represented nationalist aspirations of the Igbo people, whose leadership felt they could no longer coexist with the Northern-dominated federal government. The conflict resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions which preceded Britain's formal decolonization of Nigeria from 1960 to 1963. Immediate causes of the war in 1966 included a military coup, a

counter-coup, and persecution of Igbo living in Northern Nigeria. Control over oil production in the Niger Delta played a vital strategic role.

Nigerian Civil War Within a year, the Federal Military Government surrounded Biafra, capturing coastal oil facilities and the city of Port Harcourt. The blockade imposed during the ensuing stalemate led to severe famine—accomplished deliberately as a war strategy. Over the two and half years of the war, there were about 100,000 overall military casualties, while between 500,000 and 2 million Biafran civilians died from starvation.

The current social political cum ethnic crises have taken a dangerous dimension in which many ethnic groups are now agitating for secession and notice of quit notice from one ethnic group to another. For instance, the Arewa youth forum an umbrella group of youth in the northern part of Nigeria gave the Igbos in the eastern part of the country three months quit notice effective from October 1st, 2017.

### **A Synopsis of Achebe's *Girls at War***

Chinua Achebe is an African English-language writer. As an author, Achebe uses the power of English words to expose, unite, and reveal various aspects of Nigerian culture. His subjects are both literary and political. In general, Achebe's writings reflect cultural diversity in twentieth century African society. He focuses on the difficulty faced by Africans who were once under the rule of British colonials but later had to struggle with issues of democracy, the evils of military rule, civil war, tribal rivalries, and dictatorship. Achebe seeks to preserve the proverbs and truths of his Ibo tribal heritage by incorporating them into his stories, whether they be in his contemporary novels or his children's tales. His works do more, however, than entertain; they reveal truths about human nature and show the destruction of power corrupted. Achebe's writing does not cast blame but delivers a message to his readers, concerning unity and the necessity for political stability in Nigerian culture and a good example is *Girls at War*:

"*Girls at War*" is a tragic love story during the civil war in Nigeria. The story is centered on the short-lived romance between a militia girl called Gladys and the Minister of Justice, living on the edge during the dangerous times of the civil war.

The story about the war between the seceding state of Biafra and Nigeria, and both the theme and the plot are foreshadowed in the spare sentence introducing the principal characters: "The

first time their paths crossed nothing happened.” The second time they meet, however, is at a checkpoint at Akwa, when the girl, Gladys, stops Reginald Nwankwo’s car to inspect it. He falls back on the dignity of his office and person, but this fails to impress her, which secretly delights and excites him. He sees her as “a beautiful girl in a breasty blue jersey, khaki jeans and canvas shoes with the new-style hair plait which gave a girl a defiant look.” Before, in the earlier stages of the war, he had sneered at the militia girls, particularly after seeing a group recruited from a high school marching under the banner “WE ARE IMPREGNABLE.” Now he begins to respect them because of the mature attitude and bearing of Gladys, who seems both patriotic and savvy, knowing and yet naïve.

The third time they meet, “things had got very bad. Death and starvation had long chased out the headiness of the early days.” Reginald is coming back to Owerri after using his influence as an official to obtain some food, unfortunately under the eyes of a starving crowd who mock and taunt him. He is something of an idealist, and this embarrasses him, but he has decided that in “such a situation one could do nothing at all for crowds; at best one could try to be of some use to one’s immediate neighbors.” Gladys is walking along in a crowd, and he picks her up, but not because he recognizes her. She has changed: She is wearing makeup, a wig, and new clothes and is now a bureaucrat and no doubt corrupt. She reminds him that she was the one who searched for him so long ago; he had admired her then, but now he just wants her, and as soon as they get into town, he takes her into an air-raid bunker after Nigerian planes fly over, strafing.

Later, they go to a party, where in the midst of Biafran starvation there is scotch, Courvoisier, and real bread, but a white Red Cross man who has lost a friend in an air crash tells them all that they stink and that any girl there will roll into bed for a fish or a dollar. He is slapped by an African officer who, all the girls think, is a hero, including Gladys, who begins to appear to the protagonist—and to the reader—as the banal, improvident child she really is. Finally, Gladys goes home and to bed with Reginald, who is shocked by the coarseness of her language. He has his pleasure and writes her off. Then he begins to think she is nothing but a mirror reflecting a “rotten, maggoty society” and that she, like a dirty mirror, needs only some cleaning. He begins to believe she is under some terrible influence. He decides to try to help her; he gives her food and money, and they drive off together to her house. He is determined to see who is there and who her friends are, to get to the bottom of her life of waste and callousness. On the way he picks up a soldier who has lost part of one leg. Before, he would not have picked up a mere

private, not only sweaty but also an inconvenience with his crutches and his talk of war. Then there is another air raid. He pushes past Gladys, who stops to go back to help the crippled soldier, and, terrified, goes into the timberline, where a near-miss knocks him senseless. When he awakes, he finds the driver sobbing and bloody and his car a wreck. "He saw the remains of his car smoking and the entangled remains of the girl and the soldier. And he let out a piercing cry and fell down again

### **The analysis of Girls at war and physiological impacts of war on girl child Education**

The amoral relationship carried out between Biafran officer Reginald Nwankwo of the Ministry of Justice and a vivacious and beautiful girl named Gladys, who works in the Fuel Directorate of the Biafran army, allows readers to gain an insight into the details of life during the war. Both Reginald and Gladys relate their own stories, divulging the degree of discomfort they feel about the social malaise in which they are caught, a decadence that seems to have eroded the very fabric of society. Nwankwo specifically holds women responsible for the decay. The story's title, which is taken from a comment made by Nwankwo about a girlfriend of Gladys's, indicates the ironic distance with which the author views Nwankwo's position. The rumors being peddled by neighbors about the trips Gladys's girlfriend repeatedly makes to spend weekends in Liberiville in the company of her boyfriend provokes Nwankwo's comment that "she [Gladys] will come back on an arms plane loaded with shoes, wigs, pants, bras, cosmetics and what have you, which she will then sell and make thousands of pounds. You girls are really at war, aren't you?". The comment is unfair since Nwankwo himself is equally guilty of profiteering from the war. In any case, Nwankwo's observation regarding the character of Gladys refutes his biased explanation of the situation.

Gladys's beauty is so startling it gives Nwankwo the impression that "she had to be in the keep of some well-placed gentleman, one of those piling up money out of the war". Her behavior is also consistent with his description of her as "a girl, who once had such beautiful faith in the struggle and was betrayed (no doubt about it) by some man ... out for a good time". Nwankwo distinguishes between those who exploit the war situation as a tactic for survival and those who are so perverted and lacking in ethical values that they take delight in making material gains from the death of others.

With Gladys's horrible death, the protagonist understands the potential for nobility within the heart and soul of even the most banal and superficial of human beings. "Girls at War" confirms Achebe's faith in humanity and in Africa. It is pathetic in this short story that underage girls in the secondary schools are recruited to join the militia that fight the ugly civil war in Nigeria this automatically leads to the stoppage of their academic career since the second Maslow's hierarchy of need that is –safety is not available, they have to abandon the secondary need of self-actualization and defend their nation as seen in the statement below;

*Before, in the earlier stages of the war, he had sneered at the militia girls,*

*Particularly after seeing a group recruited from a high school marching under the banner*

*"WE ARE IMPREGNABLE.*

The conversation between an officer in the ministry of Justice Reginald Nwankwo and Gladys shows another negative effect of war on a girl child education;

**Gladys:** *You gave me a lift to Enugu that time I left school to go and join militia.*

**Reginald:** *Ah, yes you were the girl I told you, didn't I? to go back to school because girls were not required in the militia, what happened?*

From the above conversation, it can be seen that society does conform with the girl child or even females generally to join the militia let alone a high school girl to abandon her educational career to become a militia but in a place of inter-ethnic conflict everything goes and this will eventually have a psychological effects on the child and stoppage of her educational pursuit .It must be stressed here that if you educate a girl child, you are educating a nation .

According to a German proverb, war leaves three armies: an army of cripples, an army of mourners, and an army of thieves. The costs of war may seem obvious, yet there has been remarkably little scholarly research into this subject, especially as to its long-term consequences. This paper offers one of the most original examinations of the consequences of violent conflict. Rather than simply focusing on the tragedy of war, she looks at winners and losers. "Warlords," for example, enjoy economic gains from control of resources which are the basis of their patronage networks, and will thus seek to prolong the war. This analysis, also strongly argues that collapsed states are an important component of the global economic system, as warlords,

freed from the constraints of statehood, run their territories like a very bloody business. Influenced by world systems theory, he argues that these collapsed states are in symbiotic relationships with powerful global interests that benefit from uncontrolled and monopolistic access to natural resources such as oil and gems and even educational advancement as the case of Gladys in *Girls at War*.

“The war in Somalia...is a war on the woman. Any woman between the ages of 18 and 40 is not safe from being forcibly removed to the army camps to be raped and violated. If her husband finds out, he kills her for the shame of it all; if they know that he has found out, they kill him too; if he goes into hiding instead and she won't tell where he is, they kill her.” The same harrowing experience is typically fits the experience of Gladys who is not only killed physically, morally, but is also killed educationally.

### **Conclusion**

This harrowing account illuminates all too clearly the trauma of women in conflict. Though many still assume that the primary victims of conflict are combatants, in Africa this is not at all the case. Women and children account for up to 80% of Africa's displaced people and represent the most vulnerable populations in times of crisis. Stresses placed on women are immense and encompass not only war-related physical and sexual violence, but also increasing levels of domestic abuse which result from the breakdown of traditional community and family life and the ensuing erosion of cultural mechanisms that protect and support women. Their weak status also makes them particularly vulnerable to shortages of food and medicine; meanwhile, the burdens on women and educational dislocation, painfully, if you educate a girl child, you educate a nation and vice versa. Therefore, any inter- ethnic conflicts that would affect the girl child education should be avoided by all concerned citizens and then we would have better and peaceful society.

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