



# THE ROLE OF OAU IN AFRICAN CONFLICTS: THE CASE OF MOROCCO-ALGERIAN FRONTIER DISPUTE AND NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

Afrika Çatışmalarında Oau'nun Rolü: Fas-Cezayir Sınır Savaşı Ve Nijer İç Savaşı Örneği

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## ABSTRACT

This study is intended to examine the effort and role played by the Organization of African Union (OAU) on African conflicts during the early stages of the formation of the continental club. In the analysis the challenge of maintaining artificial colonial frontiers as a legal frontier among the newly independent African countries are clearly observed. During analysis, the paper explains about the limitations of the OAU in managing the Morocco-Algerian frontier dispute and the Nigerian civil war. Accordingly, the first section of the paper is dedicated to explain the dynamics of the 1963-64 Morocco-Algerian conflict and the role of OAU in culminating the frontier dispute between the two countries. The second section of the paper largely focuses on the ethnic based power rivalries in Nigerian among the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo that later give way for the declaration of the independent republic of Biafra in 1967. Apparently, in the second section, the contribution and limitations of the OAU in approaching the Nigerian civil war is evaluated. In the process of examination news outlets, periodicals, and secondary works of literatures are used.

**Keywords:** Morocco, Algeria, dispute, Nigeria, civil war, OAU

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Afrika Birliği Örgütü'nün (OAU) kıta kulübünün oluşumunun ilk aşamalarında Afrika çatışmalarında oynadığı çabayı ve rolü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Analizde, bağımsızlığını yeni kazanan Afrika ülkeleri arasında yapay sömürge sınırlarını yasal bir sınır olarak sürdürmenin zorluğu açıkça inceleniyor. Analiz sırasında, makale OAU'nun Fas-Cezayir sınır anlaşmazlığını ve Nijerya iç savaşını yönetmedeki sınırlamaları hakkında açıklıyor. Buna göre, makalenin ilk bölümü, 1963-64 Fas-Cezayir çatışmasının dinamiklerini ve OAU'nun iki ülke arasındaki sınır anlaşmazlığının doruğa ulaşmasındaki rolünü açıklamaya adanmıştır. Makalenin ikinci bölümü büyük ölçüde, Nijerya'da Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba ve Ibo arasındaki etnik temelli güç rekabetlerine odaklanıyor ve bunlar daha sonra 1967'de bağımsız Biafra cumhuriyetinin ilanına yol açıyor. Görünüşe göre, ikinci bölümde, OAU'nun Nijerya iç savaşına yaklaşımdaki katkısı ve sınırlılıkları değerlendirilmektedir. İnceleme sürecinde haber kaynakları, süreli yayınlar ve edebiyatın ikincil eserlerinden yararlanılır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Fas, Cezayir, anlaşmazlık, Nijerya, iç savaş, OAU

## 1. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is a wide and general understanding that regional organizations such as, among others, the Organization of African Union (OAU)/ African Union (AU) be required to play figurehead role in addressing regional conflicts. The charter of UN on its Article 52 has also precisely underscore the importance of regional organizations in the process of conflict resolution rather than the intervention of extra-regional and/or international bodies. This is notably true because regional organizations are "well positioned to understand the root causes of many conflicts [...] and to influence their prevention or resolution, owing to their knowledge of the region" (Pinfari, 2013: 83). In the same vein, it is arguably right that regional organizations' conflict resolution and intervention is more cost effective and less time consuming than the engagement of extra-regional and international bodies.

Along the same line, despite the fact that the charter of the UN and international communities hoped a great deal from regional organizations such as the OAU the fact on the ground was not that much satisfactory so far. Thereby, the African continental club, OAU, time and again criticized for its weakness in addressing the regional problems through peaceful and nonviolent manners. Against this background, the OAU's "Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration", formally established in article XIX of the OAU's charter, "was never fully constituted, never met, and never operated" (Pinfari, 2013: 83). As a result, the empirical records of crises management and dispute resolutions of the OAU is understood as one of the worst regional organizations rate in the world. For instance, as Pinfari argued referring a study by Mark Zacher in

1979 from a total of 116 conflicts in the continent of Africa during the period, the OAU addressed only 19 percent of the conflict which is accepted as a very low rate (Pinfari, 2013: 84).

Bearing this in mind, during the post-colonial Africa, there were intra-state and inter-state conflicts which stemmed from the legacy of colonialism. Most of the inter-state conflicts during the post-colonial Africa were border dispute which were resulted from artificial colonial boundaries (Munya, 1999: 554). Here it is vital to note that the root of African colonial boundary delineation traced back to the 1884/85 Berlin conference. At this conference European imperial powers agreed to partition Africa without bloodshed under the principle of “Effective occupation” (Curtin, Felerman and et al, 1995: 410).

As a result of the colonial boundary, a single ethnic group became under different colonial spheres of influence. For instance, the Somalia people were divided among French, Italy and Britain. For that matter, colonizers were agreed to partition Africa not as it suites African but as it suites them. Consequently, the strait line artificial colonial boundaries resulted border conflicts among different African countries. On the other hand, conflicts in Africa are/were aroused from unfair distribution of resources, lack of good governance, unfair distribution of power, a single ethnic and party domination, human rights violation and the like factors (Munya, 1999: 554).

In general, the post-colonial African conflicts can be divided in to the following categories: Inter-state conflicts which were stemmed from the strait line artificial colonial boundaries; conflicts which were aroused from illegitimate racist government; internal conflicts which mainly stemmed from secessionist movements; conflicts sponsored by ethnic and religious fundamentalism; and conflicts emanated from problem of power successions. Against this background, in order to settle the inter-state and intra-state conflicts in Africa the OAU established the commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration as an instrument. However, paradoxically, most member states were not in a position to submit their dispute to the commission. Consequently, the OAU and its member states preferred to establish the ad-hoc committees to address their conflicts. On the other side of the spectrum, what is an irony is that most of the time African conflicts got solution not in a round-table discussion rather by force of arms (Ibid: 548-555). From this we can understand that the role OAU in mediation, conciliation and arbitration of African conflicts was limited.

Keeping constant the existence of the entire above points in mind, in this paper the mediation role of the OAU in the Morocco-Algerian border dispute and the Nigerian civil war is discussed. Accordingly, the paper constitutes two sections. The first section of the paper examines about the artificial colonial boundaries on the Morocco-Algerian frontier disputes and the role played by the OAU in handling the two countries frontier complication. The second section of the paper is largely dedicated to examine the ethnic based power competitions between the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo in the internal politics of Nigeria in the 1960s and early 1970s. This section is also dedicated to explain about the declaration of the independent republic of the Biafra state in Nigeria in 1967 and the response of OAU for the civil war between the federal government of Nigeria and the Biafra.

## 2. THE MOROCCO-ALGERIAN BORDER CONFLICT AND THE MEDIATION ROLE OF OAU

Following its independence in 1956, the first action of Morocco was demanding the so called “lost territory” in the Sahara Desert from Algeria. For that matter, one year after the full independence of Algeria from the French colonial rule, the authority of Morocco invaded the disputed territory in 1963. The October 1963 Morocco-Algerian border conflict was mainly aroused from the legacy of the artificial colonial boundaries (Bourne, 1972: 51; James, 1990: 97). On the subject of the Morocco-Algerian frontier dispute Berko argued that:

*The governments of Algeria and Morocco inherited a difficult boundary problem from the era of French colonial administration. Prior to the French conquest of Algiers in 1830, there were no fixed boundaries in North Africa. While Morocco was a sovereign state at that time, Western concepts regarding boundaries had no meaning in the religiously oriented society of Morocco. The Islamic Arab concept of territory is unrelated to considerations of geography and political organization. In the Islamic view the confines of territory are related to the Dar-al-Islam (House of Islam), an entity which is inhabited by the Community of Believers (Umma). This entity knows no fixed boundaries; as the Community of Believers expands, the Dar-al-Islam grows larger. Moreover, boundaries created by men are provisional since they are temporal, and the Community of Believers cannot recognize boundaries imposed by non-Islamic powers. Considerations of race, language, and culture are added to the religious criterion in determining the extent of Arab, if not purely Islamic, territory. In recent expansionist campaigns, Arab states, including Morocco, have based their territorial claims on these traditional criteria while they have not hesitated to make use of Western arguments as well (Berko, 1966: 19).*

Thereby, when Morocco got its independence from France in 1956 its boundary with Algerian was not well defined. The lack of defined boundary between Morocco and Algeria together with the discovery of oil and mineral triggered frontier disputes amid the two North African Arab nations. In light of this, the conflict between Morocco and Algeria was the first test case to evaluate the capacity of the infant OAU in solving the internal problems of the continent. Particularly the reluctant position of Morocco to use the OAU as a tool to solve the boundary complication between the two countries was a great challenge for the new African based organization. The unwillingness of Morocco to use the OAU platform to solve its boundary problem with Algeria was stemmed from the dominant position of the latter on African politics. Concomitantly, the capacity of the new African based organization was not well developed to put pressure on Morocco to accept the OAU platform to solve the two nation's boundary complication (Berko, 1966:18).

The October 1963 border conflict between Morocco and Algeria was largely known by the international community as "war of the sands" or "the sand war". As mentioned before, the cause of the conflict was the absence of clear delineation of border between Morocco and Algeria; the discovery of important mineral resources (oil, iron and manganese) on the conflicting area; and the Moroccan interest to establish greater Morocco by bringing all of Mauritania and Spanish Sahara, as well as large parts of western Algeria and northern Mali under one administration (Mundy, 2010: 7; Heggoy, 1970: 20).

Prior to 1962, the border between Morocco and Algeria was not defined and delineated clearly in a way that convinces both counties. Later, when Morocco became independent from French rule in 1956, it began claiming western part of Algeria as part of Morocco. Here it is vital to note that during the colonial period, for its own benefit France avoids demarcating the boundary between Morocco and Algeria. In the same vain, French signed several treaties with Morocco without delineating the boundary of the two states in which later complicated the relations of the two countries during the postcolonial era (Munya, 1999: 556). In this connection, the war between Morocco and Algeria was erupted in October 1963 when Morocco deployed its troops in Western Algeria. In the war the two countries built fortified sand wall's to secure their territory (Ruedy, 2005: 202).

After Morocco's invasion of Algeria the conflicting parties needed different mediators. Accordingly, Morocco applied the border conflict to the United Nation Security Council. This was probably because of Morocco's understanding that the OAU's committeemen to preserve the statuesque of colonial boundary. On the other side, Algeria presented the frontier dispute to the OAU looking solution for the frontier problem from the continental club. However, the disparity of interest from the two conflicting parties was a problem for the OAU mediation efforts. But later Morocco was returned to the OAU Mediation. This was true because extra-African powers advised Morocco to seek an African solution first (Farsoun and Paul, 1976: 13; Bourne, 1972: 51).

Following two weeks of combat and military confrontation Modibo Keita of Mali and Emperor Haileselesie I of Ethiopia initiated the OAU Mediation in Bamako to negotiate a cease-fire between the two countries. The mediation effort of OAU under the leadership of Hailesilase I and Keita was started in October 1963 (Diouf, 1998: 26). The Bamako communiqué was produced with the following five goals': (1) The immediate end of hostilities between the two countries; (2) the creation of a committee composed of Algeria, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Mali Military officers which would define a demilitarized zone; (3) the supervision of demilitarized zone by the Ethiopian and Malian observers; (4) the request for an extra ordinary meeting of the OAU council of ministers to give a definitive solution to the Morocco-Algerian Dispute; and, (5) an ending of hostile propaganda attacks between the two states (Munya, 1999: 557).

The extra ordinary meeting was conducted at Addis Ababa in November 1963 mainly to discuss the Morocco-Algerian border conflict (Adeniran, 1981:10-11). In the meeting, the Moroccan representative argued that Morocco had a historical ownership of the conflicting area; and the French colonizer signed different agreement in fever of Morocco. Additionally, the representative of Morocco claimed that in 1961 the provisional Algerian government signed agreement with Morocco supporting Morocco's position on the conflicting area. Furthermore, in its assertion Morocco demanded that since the French left the conflicting frontier area between Morocco and Algeria without any statement the 1961 agreement should be respected. On the other hand, the Algerian government argued that the 1961 agreement was signed under forceful measures and Algeria would not respect it. Furthermore, Algeria asserted that the expansionism policy which Morocco using was against the principle of OAU charter and if the Moroccan case was accepted it become bad example for other African countries (Munya, 1999: 557). Here it is vital to note that the "OAU charters-

recognizing frontier integrity of member state and nonintervention on the affairs of a sovereign state” (Yimer and Subasi, 2020 :763).

These strong arguments which were presented by the two parties’ representatives sandwiched the OAU council of ministers. Consequently, the OAU council of ministers systematically rejected issues rose by both parties and in place established an ad-hoc committee that composed of Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and Tanzania to deal with the Morocco-Algerian border conflict. The ad-hoc committee conducted repeated meeting at different time but Algeria and Morocco were not in a position to change the statuesque. The ad-hoc committee established by OAU was not in a position to bring final binding solution for the boundary disagreement between Algeria and Morocco and it would be mistaken to credit the end of the border conflict between these two countries solely to OAU’s effort. But there is no hesitation that the ad-hoc committee that was established by OAU meeting at the Addis Ababa summit facilitated negotiations that paves the way for the final settlement of the Morocco-Algerian frontier conflict (Munya, 1999: 558).

Finally, the border dispute between Morocco and Algeria came to an end in February 20, 1964 when the two states signed an agreement and established diplomatic ties. Meaning, in February 1964 cease-fire was signed between Morocco and Algeria. The February 20, 1964 cease-fire accord was signed between President Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria and King Hassan II of Morocco with the presence of the cease-fire commissions that includes officials from Ethiopia, Mali, Algeria, and Morocco. After the cease-fire accord, the foreign minister of Morocco, Ahmed Reda Guedira, argued that “the accord would make it possible to “tackle the basic frontier problem itself,” referring to Moroccan claims to parts of the Sahara controlled by Algeria” (The New York Times, February 21, 1964). Additionally, Foreign Minister Guedira stated that in a possible near future he and the foreign minister of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, would met and “apply solutions to secondary problems that became grafted onto this basic problem” (Ibid). President Ben Bella on his part stated that the agreement was promising for the further normalization and rapprochement of the two countries notably to resume the exchange of ambassadors, which was interrupted during the war time. Furthermore, Ben Bella hopped that the Morocco-Algerian frontier accord would serve as a role model for Ethiopia and Somalia to solve their frontier dispute peacefully. In the cease-fire accord a nine mile demilitarized zone was declared (Ibid).

However, the demilitarization scheme was not yield fruit because Morocco refused to leave the territory she had forcefully occupied. Afterwards, in 1965 another mediation efforts was conducted by the OAU to normalize the frontier dispute between the two countries. But, the 1965 efforts by OAU were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the trajectory of the mediation efforts of OAU to solve the Morocco-Algerian frontier dispute showed no headway. Eventually, the October 1963 Morocco-Algerian border conflict that challenges the infant OAU had successfully resolved in 1972 when the actors in the conflict normalized their interaction. In the process of normalization and rapprochement between Morocco and Algeria, in 1970 the two nations agreed to form a boundary commission that would study and demarcate the boundary between the two countries based on the colonial era frontier line arrangement. Eventually, in 1972 an agreement was signed between Morocco and Algeria that leave the conflicting area to Algeria (James, 1990:97; Munya, 1999: 558). On the treaty, President Houari Boumediene of Algeria and King Hassan II of Morocco agreed to follow the principles of a joint exploration of the iron deposit on the disputed territory of Tindouf area, where the two countries fought the 1963-64 war. Apparently, on the joint a communiqué the two North African countries agreed to establish “a border-marking committee, which will use maps made by French colonizers as their basic guide. These maps left the southern border of Morocco, in the Tindouf area, vaguely defined, but most maps show the Gara Djebilet iron deposits, south of Tindouf, to be in Algeria” (The New York Times, May 31, 1970). Additionally, in the joint communiqué the two countries agreed that a joint company would establish to extract the iron deposit from the disputed area, Tindouf. According to the joint communiqué, the two countries also agreed on “the coordination” of actions “to liberate and assure the decolonization of the territories occupied by Spain” (Ibid).

### 3. THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND THE MEDIATION ROLE OF OAU

The Nigerian civil war was one of those highly devastating civil wars in the modern history of Africa that can be comparable in size with the American civil war and the Spanish civil war. The Nigerian civil war was lasted for about two and half years from July 1967 to January 1970. In the civil war from half a million to one million people were died. Additionally, the material devastation of the civil war was estimated approximately \$1.4 billion (The New York Times, Jan. 7, 1973). Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in Africa. It is also a country with diversified ethnic and religious groups (Keller, 2007: 16). In



Nigeria ethnic groups like Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo are dominant both numerically and politically. So, in the dynamics of the early post-independent politics of Nigeria four major groups had noticeable position: the Ibo lead political group was active in the eastern part of Nigeria; the progressive Yoruba was dominant on the western part of Nigeria, the Muslim Hausa had a big political capital in the northern Nigeria; and, there were also a sizable number of minority political groups in the northern and eastern parts of Nigeria (The New York Times, Jan. 7, 1973).

Nigeria was also one of British colony in western part of Africa, until its independence in 1960. When Nigeria got its independence in 1960, it brought together the loosely united three regions named- Northern, Southwestern and Southeastern, which were administered by the British colonizers as “relatively separate states”. These three regions are under the dominancy of one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. For instance, the Hausa-Fulani are dominant in the Northern region; the Yoruba are dominant in the Southwest region; and the Ibo are dominant in the Southeastern region of Nigeria. As a result, during independent the type of government which was chosen for the Nigerian was Federal structure of government. But within short time the federal government which was established by uniting the “relatively separate” three regions (i.e. Northern, Southwestern and Southeastern) faced challenges of coup d'état and civil war (Keller, 2007:16).

In Nigeria, following the establishment of federal structure of government there were ethnic based rebellions protesting the unfair division of power among different ethnic groups. While sharing power, there were grumble that the government of Nigeria favored the northern Hausa and the Southwestern Yoruba peoples. On the other hand, comparatively the well-educated and Christian Ibo, who were dominant in southeastern Nigeria, were marginalized (Yihun, 2012: 426).

This unfair distribution of power stage for ethnic tension within the country, and finally this tension gave way to the January 1966 coup d'état. As a result of the coup, Abubaker Tafawa Balewa was assassinated and replaced by the coup leader Ironsi, who is an Ibo (Ibid: 426). Moreover, most of the coup makers were Ibo officials who were relatively within the same age and educational background that trusted each other. Initially the coup was accepted warmly by many Nigerian but later when most people understood that the coup was an ethnic based coup they began to fear. The fright of the Nigerian reached its freezing point when Ironsi assassinate non-Ibo military officials, prominent political figures and issued a decree to abolish federal structure and transform the country to unitary state. Three days after the decree of Ironsi, on 27 may 1966 ethnic riots targeting the Ibo's living in northern Nigeria breakout (Keller, 2007: 18).

In the unrest around two thousand Ibo people working in Kano (Hawsa) was killed and out of fear and insecurity around one and half million Ibo began to flee from northern Nigeria and from all parts of the federation to their homeland (i.e. South eastern Nigeria or to Ibo land). The unrest and political complication led to the counter-coup by the Hausa in July 1966. During the Hausa led counter-coup, the political and material damage as well as humanitarian crisis was very high from July 29 to August 1. During these three consecutive days until the Lieut. Col. Yabuku Gowon officially declared leader, the Hausa factions were singing the song of secession loudly and there was no recognized government in Nigeria at all (The New York Times, Jan. 7, 1973; Yihun, 2012: 428).

Therefore, the second Nigerian coup d'état after colonial independence which was staged on 29 July 1966 predominantly by the northern Nigerian officials resulted the removal of the eastern Ibo faction from power. In the coup they killed the Ibo leader Ironsi and his closest supporters. Afterwards, the coup maker brought the 31 years old Lieut. Col. Yakubu Gowan, a northern Christian from a minority group, to power as the military leader of Nigeria (The New York Times, Jan. 15, 2020; Keller, 2007: 19).

Following the coup the Ibo military leaders and people strongly opposed the force full abdication of Ironsi from power and finally on 30 may 1967 the eastern military commander Lt. Colonel Odemegwu Ojukwu announced that eastern region of Nigeria was an independent republic of Biafra (Yihun, 2012: 427). Ojukwu also stated that “...the territory and region known as and called eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf and territorial water shall hence forward be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of ‘the Republic of Biafra’...” (Keller, 2007: 19).

The declaration of an independent state of Biafra was a bad news for the Nigerian government. As a result, the transitional government of Yakubu pas economic embargo; closed all sea and land routes to eastern Nigeria (i.e. Biafra land); restricted foreign ships from accessing eastern parts of the country; and finally declared war against the secessionist Biafra state on July 6 1967. The blockage was employed to weaken the

Biafra secessionist movement and to get the easy submission of the Biafra. When the war started in July 6, many spectators speculated easy victory by the federal government. However, contrary to what was speculated by onlookers the Ibo were not easy on the diplomatic and real battlefields for the federal government. As a result, the mediation efforts of the OAU and other continental and extra-continental organizations and powers were not as such fruitful because of the headstrong political approach by the secessionist Biafra and the federal government (The New York Times, Jan. 7, 1973; Yihun, 2012: 428).

Apparently, during the declaration of the secession of the Biafra state, the Mid-west region was declared their neutrality mainly hoping that both the federal government of Nigeria and the Biafra would leave them out of the fight (Keller, 2007: 17). Nonetheless, their calculation was not correct because Ojukwu invaded the Mid-west region for a month mainly refusing the security meeting which the federal government of Nigeria tries to conduct at the seat of Mid-west region called Benin (Yihun, 2012: 427). But, eventually, the federal army cleared the forces of Ojukwu out of the territory of Mid-west region. The war between the federal government which was fighting for territorial integrity of Nigeria, and the secessionist Biafra came to an end on January 6, 1970 when Ojukwu (the leader of the secessionist Biafra state) fled to Ivory Coast and the unity of Nigeria was preserved by force of arms (Keller, 2007: 20).

Apart from the secessionist movement of the Biafra state, the involvement of OAU and other African countries to solve the problem between the federal government and the secessionist Biafra was limited (Adeniran, 1981: 13).

During the Nigerian civil war most African countries were in fever of the federal government. This was mainly to show their harmony, unity and shared aim on the one hand and to give a binding solution for the secessionist problem of Nigeria to protect the reappearance of the same case in other African countries. To this effect there were peace initiatives to solve the Nigerian civil war at different parts of Africa. For instance, the leaders of Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya met at Nairobi to resolve the Nigerian problem on July 1967. This group passes a resolution of peace settlement between the federal government and Biafra state supporting the territorial integrity of Nigeria (Yihun 2012: 428-429).

OAU's capacity in resolving the Nigerian civil war was affected by the OAU principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states which hindered the OAU from involving fully in resolving the Nigerian crises. As a result, OAU did not take any action which sounds in resolving the conflict. Consequently, the devastating civil war claimed the lives of nearly one million Nigerian. To solve the crisis in Nigeria, in September 1967 African heads of states and government met in Kinshasa, Zaire. After the summit they pass a resolution recognizing that the conflict between the secessionist Biafra and the federal government was Nigeria's internal affair (Munya, 1999: 573).

But, after the summit of Zaire, OAU send a consultative mission made up of heads of states of Cameroon, Congo Democratic Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya and Niger to the Nigerian federal government to "assure the Assembly's desire for the territorial integrity, unity and peace of Nigeria" (Adeniran, 1981: 13). At this point, even if the OAU was abstained from interfering as active mediator in the Nigerian conflict because of the non-interference principle of the continental club, unluckily, the OAU interfered on the affair of Nigeria as a supporter of the federal government (Munya, 1999: 574).

The irregular involvement of OAU in the Nigerian crises was mainly to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Nigerian federal government (Adeniran, 1981: 13). As a result, even if the Biafra state declared its secession in 1967 they were not in a position to get significant support and recognition from OAU and African countries. Rather, most African leaders considered the action of the Biafra as illegal (Keller, 2007: 20). However, there were states like Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast which recognized Biafra's right to secession. On the other hand, the federal government's consideration of any peace discussion as direct interference in the internal affair of Nigeria and as a primary step in giving recognition to the secessionist Biafra further complicated the mediation efforts of African countries and the OAU. During the civil war in order to mediate the conflict the first thing which was expected from a mediator was giving recognition to the territorial integrity of Nigeria. Eventually, the internal crisis of Nigeria got solution by force of arms and unity was preserved by reuniting the seceded Biafra state with the federal government of Nigeria in 1970 (Yihun, 2012: 431 & 429).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Africa is a huge continent consisting of more than fifty countries, most of which are multi-ethnic state. These multi-ethnic African states were affected by the legacy of artificial colonial boundaries and internal divisions, which later become a means of inter-state and intra-state conflicts in the continent.

This paper has tried to explore the mediation role of OAU in the intra-state and inter-state African conflicts. Particularly, the role and the limitations of the continental organization, OAU, in approaching the disputes of the continent such as the Morocco-Algerian boundary dispute and the Nigerian civil war are focused. Accordingly, the mediation role of the OAU in the Morocco-Algerian boundary dispute was somehow better than its role in the Nigerian civil war. In the Morocco-Algerian border dispute even if the OAU was not in a position to succeed for the final peace settlement between the two countries it played pivotal role for the final peace agreement between the states. In the case of the Nigerian civil war, the secessionists were not in a position to secure international support. As well, the role of the OAU in resolving the Nigerian civil war was very limited. This was partly because of the principle of the OAU charter, which considers the internal conflicts of a country beyond the purview of the OAU. On the other hand, the secessionist military power did not match with the federal army of Nigeria and finally the leader of Ibo Ojukwu flee to Ivory Coast which later led to the total defeat of the secessionist and the preservation of the Nigerian unity.

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