

From ‘Jaw-Jaw’ to ‘War-War’: Aburi Accord and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967 - 1970

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Abstract

The Nigerian Civil War has been examined from multi-causal perspectives with scholars using history framework of accumulated post-colonial crises variables as a set of uncontrollable events that brought Nigeria to the brink of disintegration. However, the movement of the Aburi agreement from a significant peace instrument to war process appears not to have attracted widespread academic attention. The paper, therefore, argues that Aburi Peace Process was which a significant political development in relation to Nigeria’s post-colonial narratives could be more appreciated when understood as an episode that had the potential of both quickening and cushioning the outbreak of the civil war as gleaned from the agreement reached by the dyads on the one hand and on the other hand, by the escalating tensions it generated in Nigeria’s political, economic and diplomatic interfaces following the partial implementation of the agreement. Using narrative and analytical approaches, the paper sets out to examine the justification of the Aburi Accord as instrument of peace and war in connection to Nigerian civil war.

Introduction

Early post-colonial Nigerian state, like other post-colonial African states, was a theatre of internally and externally motivated conflicts.¹ In the case of Nigeria, the events that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War (one of the major crises of post-colonial African states), as argued in this paper were prompted most significantly by the Aburi peace process of 1967. The Aburi Accord played a crucial and peculiar role in the build up to that war and its impact could be explained from two perspectives: as a prospective instrument of peace and as a catalyst of the Nigerian Civil War.

As a peace instrument, it was expected to serve as one last attempt at redeeming Nigeria from the brink of disaster orchestrated by unresolved and accumulated political

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discrepancies since the colonial and early independence era. As a catalyst, it was a prospective instrument of peace that turned out the sword of Damocles that hung over the head of its negotiators such that once peace became a nearly impossible feat; the generals took to arms to settle their differences. The hypocritical nature assumed by the Aburi peace process therefore triggers this all important question if indeed it was a way out to lingering crisis of the Nigerian state or roadmap to the Nigerian Civil War? Against this background, the purpose of this article to explore the historio-political gestation of the Nigerian state that finally birthed the Aburi Accord incident; discuss the preventive negotiation in Aburi, Ghana and the quickening implication of non-implementation of the Aburi agreement on the civil war process

Build Up to the Aburi Accord

According to Mans² it is only after a conflict has taken its course, does it become possible to point out political and diplomatic shortfalls retrospectively. This claim totally agrees with the patterns of history which concerns itself solely with the events of the past and the burden of unearthing, chronicling and interpreting the causes behind the past. Thus, the Aburi Agreement in Ghana and the civil war in Nigeria had their origins in the British masterminded merger of the variegating ethnic nation-states to create a political structure suitable for its economic benefits against the backdrop of internal power struggles and a desire to control the country's wealth of natural resources. The violent/armed conflicts that took place in the post-colonial Nigerian state were only a continuation of colonial political struggles but in the garb of an all-African affair in a sovereign entity. Some of the events preceding the Aburi Accord are briefly examined below.

Politico-Economic Conditions

The geographic area amalgamated in 1914 and called Nigeria was a multiplicity of nationalities. Each of them was independent although they had interacted at the commercial level. Even the Northern and Southern protectorates were distinct; independent and only responsible to colonial office.² The North was administered differently from the Southern Nigeria. In fact a great rivalry developed between the Northern and Southern administrators. This rivalry notwithstanding, the north needed the south in order to subsist. Whereas

southern trade was booming and bringing enormous profits, the northern administrators relied on southern subsidy for the development of the North. This state of affair led the imperial government to consider the option of amalgamating these two separately administered territories contiguous to each other and owned by the same Lord of manor. The amalgamation had economic underpinnings rather than sociological considerations of the Northern and the Southern protectorate. No deep thought was given to the sociological issues involved and no vision as to the future objective. Consequently, the Nigeria's political trajectory was put in jeopardy with the groups continuously agitating for their separate independence and states.

Social History

Extreme allegiance to ethnic group has been the norm in Nigeria's sociological tapestry even before independence and as such there was much of tribalism in Nigeria. People from a particular tribe favoured their relations with the hope of advancing in politics, education and the Federal civil service. They thus prospered at the expense of the smaller groupings. There was no respect for the Federal character of the country. Even in politics, the parties were formed on the tribal basis: Northern People's Congress (NPC) was a Northern Hausa-Fulani party, NCNC was mainly an Eastern Igbo party, and Action Group (AG) was a Western Yoruba party. The alliances were often shaky. Even the killings in the army during the first coup of 1966 was said to be tribalized. These ugly embers of tribalism and sectionalism led to the meeting at Aburi.

Tribalism has become a terminal social disease afflicting the Nigerian polity. It can be discerned as the bane of national integration, development and stability. Being diametrically opposed to nationalism, tribalism is gradually driving Nigeria to another precipice and eventual disintegration. As Iwe³ posits:

In some of our institutions, fellow Nigerians suffer various forms of discrimination in violation of their civic and constitutional rights. Nigerians in some parts of Nigeria or away from their own state are practically treated as foreigners in their own land. Under such devices as "state of origin", "other states", "indigenes of the state", "sons of the soil", "Daughters of the soil", hideous form of tribal discrimination and prejudice have been practices to the detriment of nation-building and Nigeria unity.

Tribalism has assumed a higher dimension of awfulness with the activities of some tribal chauvinistic politicians and academics who often whip-up sentiments detrimental to our collective interests.

Military Intervention

Following all the confusions that besieged the country, the civilians decided to hand power to the Military early in 1966. Prior to the handover, a group of soldiers who were self-styled revolutionaries with the aim of cleansing the Augean stable of the nation's corrupt and inept political class, attempted to take the rein of power in a bloody coup of January 15, 1966. Rather than sanitize the system as was the claims of the coup plotters, the move became one the greatest drawbacks and the most significant reasons for deepening tensions and crises that led to the Aburi diplomacy. Nzeogwu's justifications for the coup were highlighted in the broadcast that followed the success of the coup in Kaduna:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten per cent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circle, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.⁴

Aside truncating the five year old civilian government, the group acted a script in a manner of their killings which had more of Northern and Western political elements such: Sir Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Okotie Eboh, Chief S.L Akintola, etc. as their targets. People felt that the killings were sectional; more so since majority of the key actors in the coup were from the eastern axis of the country. The North did not take the events of coup lying low. It was the belief of the revisionists- (the Northern group of the Nigerian army that led the counter-coup), just like the general opinion of many, that the Nzeogwu led military coup of January 15 was purely an Igbo coup. Such interpretation only started and laid the foundation for the staging of the second coup in July 29, 1966 when top Northern Military officers staged a counter-coup and installed a northern brother as the head of the new military regime. As one observer puts it:

The coup was essentially a Northern revenge of what was considered to be an Igbo coup in January 1966. Several Igbo officers and those of other ranks were virtually killed by Northern soldiers while Igbos in the North were objects of attack by Northerners. There was no pretending about the character of the coup. It was a Northern coup aimed at only recapturing political power but also dealing a severe reprisal coup, as many as two hundred and fourteen Igbo officers and soldiers were killed in this second July coup⁵

The July 29 coup brought Nigeria into a state of disunity in a very significant sense. It produced the civilian Igbo massacres which did more than anything else to push the Igbo East into a secessionist stance. It is the contention of this work that the July 29 coup and the months of May and September massacres in the North that hastened the march to Aburi and subsequently the civil war. Since the July reprisal did not extend to the East, Ojukwu capitalized on its ineffectiveness and also as a platform to mount incessant pressure on the Federal government to review its leadership structure that saw a rather junior officer in the person of Yakubu Gowon emerging as the Head of State.

Aburi Accord as a Peace Process

After Nigeria was dragged to the brink of abyss by two military coups in 1966 and the May Massacre of 1966 in the North, it was instructive of Gowon, the new Head of state announced an Ad-hoc Constitutional Conference to oversee the restoration of peace and progress in the polity and to discuss the way forward. When the Conference first sat in Lagos from August 12, 1966, the overriding objective of the delegates to the conference, including the Northern delegates, was to settle for a loose association- a confederation. According to Efiog:

The Northern delegation proposed what amounted to a Confederation of the four regions of North, West, Mid-West and the East with a common service organization similar to the now defunct East African Federation. Under this arrangement, each would have its Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force), Police, the Judiciary and Civil Service. It also included a provision of a right of any of the components of the Confederation to secede from the Union.⁶

However, in a dramatic turn of events in the next conference held in September 20, the North, which had on

previous occasions called for 'Operation Araba' and proposed a Confederation of the four regions, made a bolt face and began to advocate for a strong central government and the creation of states. The Conference also witnessed the proposal by the Western delegates asking for the withdrawal of Northern troops from the West. However, while the Ad-hoc Conference was on going, news filtered around that the North had resumed or continued, in a more amplified orgy, the killing of the Easterners. The latest round of killing, according to Ekong, was sparked by a speculative report in Radio Cotonou and Radio Kaduna that northerners living in the East were attacked and killed.⁷ In the midst of the renewed and escalating violence, the conference was adjourned to meet again on October 23, 1966 but the delegates from East did not attend citing security concerns. However, Gowon suspended indefinitely, the Ad hoc Committee after the Eastern delegates failed to show up for the conference.

In the wake of the resumed brutality of the Easterners in the North, Ojukwu's resolved to pursue secession as the only means of safety for Easterners and their property. Two important incidences took place to forestall Ojukwu's determined move towards secession. First, a delegation of Western traditional chiefs visited Ojukwu to pacify him and to change his mind towards a possible secession. Second, the face-off between Ojukwu and Gowon elicited international concerns which played out concerted diplomatic moves and intervention on behalf of the Nigerian factions. For example, the American Ambassador to Nigeria and his British counterpart paid Ojukwu a visit in Enugu all in an attempt to make him reverse his stance towards secession. Similar diplomatic moves transpired in the Federal capital, Lagos when Malcolm Macdonald, a British diplomat, paid Gowon a visit.⁸ It was this visit that suggested that the meeting of the Supreme Military Council which had not witnessed the presence of Ojukwu since its inception be moved to a neutral ground outside the shores of the country.

Although Ojukwu had turned down offers to attend an SMC meeting on board a British (whom Ojukwu, and Igbos in general did not entirely trust) naval ship, and at Benin, he was finally convinced to attend in the neutral territory of Aburi in Ghana. It was General Joseph Ankrah of Ghana who volunteered, in the spirit of African Brotherhood to host the warring parties in the famous Aburi in Ghana between 4-5 of January, 1967.

Major Highlights of the Aburi Agreement

Between January 4th and 5th 1967, the members of Nigeria's then ruling military government, the Supreme Military Council (SMC), met for the first time at Aburi in Ghana under the auspices of the Ghanaian Head of State: Lt-General Joe Ankrah. Following a second bloody army coup in July 1966, the Military Governor of the eastern region of Nigeria Lt-Colonel 'Emeka' Ojukwu had refused to attend any SMC meeting outside the eastern region of Nigeria due citing security concerns.

The Political Reunion

The Ghanaian host Lt-General Ankrah made a few introductory remarks and reminded his guests that: the whole world is looking up to you as military men and of there is any failure to reunify or even bring perfect understanding to Nigeria as a whole, you will find that the blame will rest with us through the centuries.⁹

Ankrah added that although he understood that the eastern region/rest of Nigeria stand-off was an internal matter for Nigerians, they should not hesitate to ask him for any help should they feel the need. After the hostility and bitterness that preceded the Aburi meeting, the soldiers began the meeting on a rather friendly note by addressing each other by their first names as if addressing each other in at a social gathering. According to Siollun as quoted by one of the participants of the conference:

the meeting went on in a most friendly and cordial atmosphere which made us, the non-military advisers, develop a genuine respect and admiration for the military men and their sense of comradeship. The meeting continued so smoothly and ended so successfully.....that I for one, was convinced that among themselves, the military had their own methods.¹⁰

The Position of Aguiyi-Ironsi

Commodore Wey acknowledged that all the debaters already knew what happened to Ironsi: that Ironsi was dead. The soldiers agreed to make a public statement formally announcing Ironsi's death shortly after they returned to Nigeria.

The Position of the Coup Plotters

Members expressed views about the future of those who have been detained in connection with all the

disturbances since January 15, 1966, and agreed that the fate of soldiers in detention should be determined not later than end of January 1967.

The Debate on Confederation

Agreement was reached to “repeal [of] those Decrees that were passed after 15th January, 1966 and to revert to what the country was as at 14th January, 1966, that is regional autonomy.¹¹

Reorganization of the Army

The agreement further reached in meeting on the control and administration of the army was as follows:

- i. The Title "Commander-in-Chief" should be used to address the Head of State as opposed to "Supreme Commander
- ii. There was to be military headquarters on which the regions would be equally represented and which was to be headed by a chief of staff.
 - i. In each region there was to be an area command under an area commander corresponding with the then existing regions
 - ii. All matter of policy, including appointments and promotions of persons in executive post in the Armed Forces should be dealt with the Supreme Military Council
 - iii. Military Governors were to have control over their area commands in matters of internal security during the period of military incumbency in government
 - iv. Certain senior appointments with the Foreign Office, the Armed Forces, the Police, the Civil Service and federal corporations were to be made only on approval by the Supreme Military Council
 - v. Finally, decisions affecting the whole country were to be determined by the Supreme Military Council. Where a meeting was not possible, such matter would be referred to the military governors for comment and concurrence.

Rehabilitation of Dislocated Persons

On the rehabilitation of dislocated persons, the Council agreed that Finance Permanent Secretaries of the regions and their federal counterparts should resume their meeting and submit recommendations.

In summary, the signing of the above agreements as binding to the parties and followed by post-negotiation formalities such as the warm embrace initiated by Gowon and

exchanged between him and Ojukwu and a further claim that the parties toasted their reconciliation and agreement with a champagne were clear indications that the negotiators were ready to implement all that was agreed in the meeting.¹² It could therefore be safe to conclude at this point that the Aburi Accord had met its objective in the hands of the negotiators as a potential instrument of peace of the crises-ridden state.

Aburi Accord as a War Process

The above highlighted agreement practically reflected a huge concession on the part of the Gowon-led Federal Military Government during the conference at Aburi, so much that the Federal government was not willing to implement all that had been agreed but came up with a partial implementation programme through the promulgation of Decree No. 8 of March 17, 1967 which emphasized a major decentralization of the country's administration as recommended in the Accord. By this decree, the regions were returned to their pre-January 15, 1966 status but in a clear contrast to Aburi provisions, with a clause on the 'emergency powers' of the Head of the Federal Military Government. In line with the "concessions" embodied in Decree No.8, the Federal Military Government paid the Sum of £500,000 to the government of the Eastern Region as first instalment for the rehabilitation of its dislocated persons. The Federal side also publicly acknowledged the deaths of Ironsi and Fajuyi and the remains of both given a State burial.

Despite the above concessions, the Governor of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu totally rejected the federal government promulgation on the Aburi agreement citing its 'inclusion of the emergency powers' of the Head of State which was not part and parcel of the initial agreement. He knew that any emergency powers arrogated to the Head of State was a concentration of powers in the hands of the Head of State which was not what he (Ojukwu) bargained for at Aburi. Contrary to Ojukwu's claims, his secretary, N.U. Akpan writing one year after the demise of the Biafra, noted that Decree No. 8 had "faithfully implemented the Aburi decisions"¹³ thus rendering Ojukwu's call for total implementation unjustifiable. It could be argued that Ojukwu, using the Aburi partial implementation as a smoke-screen, had other plans which could only thrive in the event of outright implementation. The disagreement that trailed the post-Aburi meeting was a turning point in the role of Aburi Accord to serve as a peace instrument.

Implications of the Collapse of Aburi Agreement on the Nigerian Civil War

***Diplomatic Tension**

Events preceding the Aburi and their continuation in the post-conference era were severe enough to draw the attention of the international community. The enormity of investments in the naturally endowed former colony of the British, were enough to spark diplomatic row between the British government and the key actors in the Nigerian crises. In order to protect their commercial interests, Britain and other nations became involved in the Nigerian crises. The intensity of involvement was heightened in the events of the Aburi fall out. British involvement and support for the Federal Military Government after the Aburi volte-face was so unequivocal and total that one writer described the Nigerian civil war that followed as Britain's war by proxy¹⁴

Britain helped the Federal Military Government to politically advance its position in the International arena after the failure of Aburi. In fact, political advice to the federal side by British officials obviously began with their role in convening the conference at Aburi¹⁵ and continued thereafter into the mainstream of the civil war. Waugh and Cronje¹⁶, for example, argued that evidence exist to support the claim that in 1966, the British High Commission in Lagos, Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce dissuaded Yakubu Gowon from announcing the break-up of the federation in his broadcast of 1st August. They also claimed that it was arguably:

British influence which prevented Gowon, the Nigerian Military leader from honouring the agreement reached at Aburi, Ghana in January 1967 whereby the regions agreed to remain within a looser federation, and Gowon agreed to help the two million refugees who had poured into the former Eastern region(Biafra) after the massacre of 1966¹⁷

Ralph Uwechue¹⁸ also argued that it was simply in the economic interest of the British government to strengthen her hold on the bigger of the two warring factions with the hope of reigning in the smaller side later on. In the events preceding the war, the government of Britain, in London became pseudo-

Ambassadors for the Federal side to the rest of the World during this period and throughout the duration of the war. In other words, the official of Britain pushed the federal side to take several severe decisions at the detriment of the survival of the Eastern region. London worked hand in hand with the Americans behind the scenes for General Ankrah's and other peace initiatives by African leaders. The US Ambassador to Nigeria, Elbert Matthews informed Gowon after the conference that the Accord amounted to a loose confederation and offered the support of American government if he chose to renege on its implementation.¹⁹ During the troubled days of economic sanctions on the East, it is on record that the US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Joseph Palmer visited Cameroun and successfully convinced President Ahmadu Ahidjo to close Cameroon borders with Nigeria in order to block arms traffic and relief materials to Biafra.²⁰ Foreign support for the federal side was further solidified when, in the events of intense political pressure between the Eastern and Federal Government advised:

- a. their companies operating in Eastern Nigeria not to pay Federal revenues to the Eastern government,
- b. Their companies should comply with Federal decrees closing seaports and airports from carrying out further with the East.²¹

The one disturbing fact in view of the diplomatic gerrymandering is that the same international community was aware of the grievances that relentlessly piled up on both sides prior to the outbreak of the war especially regarding the northern onslaught against the Easterners and the refugees question but none of them intervened to ameliorate the turmoil. It could be argued, therefore, that it was their role in assisting the Federal government to the detriment of the East in the heat of the post-Aburi conference that contributed to the secession and the subsequent war.

Economic Tensions

Economic potentials and advantages of the Eastern region and the struggle for resource control are one of the many underlying reasons for the conference at Aburi. Though resource dilemma was not brought to the fore during the conference but the centrality of oil as one of the implications and immediate causes of the Civil war cannot be denied despite its seeming negligence by the negotiators or scholars who have written on the course and causes of the war. According to Kirk-Greene²² oil was the ultimate *casus belli* of

the war meaning that the trajectory of political events in 1967 before the war of guns started had oil as a central issue. More recently, arguments have continued alluding to the “oil factor” to one of the major reasons the civil war was fought.²³

The petroleum industry in Nigeria was a relatively young one as at the time of the war. It had with it mouth-watering prospects in terms of the country’s future economic development. Also, the Federal Government was already benefiting from the largesse of oil companies’ revenue and would rather not sacrifice this money spinner on account of any rebellious act.

The dyads had envisaged that controlling the oil producing areas would serve as a source to generate foreign exchange to service their respective governments. On the other hand, the possibility of attracting international attention and recognition as the as an oil producing nation may have engendered Ojukwu’s political boldness at confronting the Nigerian situation and Gowon’s determination to resist Ojukwu.²⁴ Under this circumstances, the Military Governor and champion of the Ndigbo course, Lt.col Odumegwu Ojukwu declared at 5.00 am on 30 May, 1967 that “the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria, together with her continental shores and territorial waters, shall henceforth be an independent and sovereign state of the name and title “the Republic of Biafra”.²⁵ At this point, it was clear that the viability of Biafra would largely depend on the prospect of oil wealth but the Federal troops in 1968 captured the oil producing areas thereby rendering Biafran economic ambitions baseless. They could not generate foreign exchange to prosecute the war. The deprivation of the oil revenue, according to Pius Okigbo meant that Biafra became dependent on ad hoc, plus charity sources of gifts to sustain the war²⁶

Aside the oil prospects, Ojukwu’s economic actions were those in line with the agreement at Aburi to look into the plight of the dislocated persons of which the Federal Government did virtually nothing to address. On March 31, Ojukwu issued the Survival Edicts that gave financial autonomy to the government of Eastern Region and also saw to the establishment of economic institutions and industries to solve the socio-economic needs of the Easterners. The Survival Edicts meant the forfeiture of federal revenues derivable from the East. This single act by Ojukwu was enough to forced Gowon from his wait-and-see approach to Ojukwu session threat take punitive and pro-active measures against the East.

In response to the Ojukwu's Survival Edicts, the Federal Military Government wielded a big stick against the Eastern Region government by imposing economic sanctions that stifled the movement of goods and service in and out of the East. This sanction automatically deprived the access to shipping and air haulages to the East as well the suspension of postal, railway, and diplomatic/economic transactions between the East and Multinationals. According to Stremlau,

The international business community respected the federal blockade as "major foreign shipping lines agreed not to enter the prohibited area while several ships bound for Eastern Nigeria were re-routed to federal controlled ports."²⁶

Increased Political Tensions

Another implication of the Aburi discord was the creation of states by the Federal Military Government. The economic sanctions discussed above did not appear to have had the much desired effect in causing Ojukwu to prevaricate. Economic sanctions appeared to have hardened his hearts towards any reconciliatory moves. After many political attempts to placate the leader of the renegade East through the National Conciliation Committee and other personal efforts of well-meaning individuals in Nigeria and abroad, it would appear Ojukwu, at this point, was already revelling in self-delusion that he would rather fight for his 'empire' at any cost than capitulate to Gowon. With Ojukwu famous declarations of "on Aburi we stand", the Survival Edicts, and other open and secret rebuff to Gowon 'appeasement policies', convinced the Federal Military Government of Ojukwu's intention to secede. To conduct a requiem for Ojukwu's secession ambition, it was realized that more stringent action had to be taken to weaken support for Ojukwu especially in the area under his control. Short of military action at that time, creation of states by Decree was the only weapon ready to hand.

In Nigeria, outside the purview of the exigencies of the civil war, state creation, arguably, was not a spontaneous development. It has been a constant demand especially on the part of the minority groups who want to avoid ethnic subjugation. But the Aburi aftermath, more than any other factor in the past, hastened and ensured the creation of states. State creation, before the stray to the path to war, constituted a hotly debated national question. It was the complexities of origin and the different ethnic backgrounds of

the Nigerian polity before and after the birth of Nigeria in 1914 that informed C.L. Temple quoted in Kirk-Greene²⁷ to suggest the present area of Nigeria to be divided into units of areas and population sizes which can be effectively administered by one officer. Although Temple's submissions were not a direct call for state creation, his intentions were obviously geared towards a rather not too difficult mode of governance for the colonial government.

However, the proposal for state creation was formerly launched by E.D. Morel following the merger of the Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914. Morel, cited in Kirk-Greene, noted that the division of the country into various units would probably ensure a sense of unity among the various groups.²⁸ Unfortunately, Frederick Lugard, Nigeria's first Governor General discarded the idea and favoured a two-fold division- North and South. If Lugard had consented to these earlier suggestions by dividing the country into more units, it would have gone a long way in reducing the agitation for state creation in subsequent colonial and post-colonial government. Secondly, the idea of Ojukwu's extension of hegemony over the Eastern minority groups would not have arisen so as to necessitate the extension of war theatres to these minorities.

Eventually, twelve states were created throughout the country on 27 May, 1967. The Eastern region was divided into three states. The state creation automatically swerved the loyalty of Eastern minorities back to the Federal Government. They remained part of the Nigerian Federation thereby disavowing Biafra.²⁹ The reaction from Enugu was sharp and quick. On 30th of May, Ojukwu announced the secession of Eastern Nigeria when he proclaimed the region Sovereign and independent state of Biafra. And with these massive political actions - the state creation and formal declaration of the state of Biafra, the steps towards the war path became irretraceable.

Conclusion

While studies on post-colonial crises in Nigeria have settled on its causes and course, it has rather paid scant attention to the Aburi Accord as a significant instrument for achieving peace in the crises ridden post-colonial Nigerian state or as the main catalyst of the Nigerian Civil War. The present study identified this relative neglect as a gap in the historiography of post-colonial pre-civil war Nigerian history. The study identified Aburi Accord not only as an important

historical event in explaining post-colonial crises in Nigeria but also attempted an analysis of Aburi Accord as a cushioning and quickening factor to the Nigeria Civil War. Nigeria's early post-colonial experience was marked by a cataclysm of challenges leading to serious political debacles between the North and the East. The journey to Aburi on the wake of political tensions between the Federal Military Government led by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon and the Eastern Regional Military Government led by Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu was expected to represent a milestone in Nigeria's conflict resolution attempts. Peace was restored between the negotiators as they marked their "final solution" with refreshments and pleasantries. Back home in Nigeria both parties gave different interpretations to the Aburi Agreements. Endless haggling over the Aburi Accord led to renewed tensions in the political, economic, diplomatic circles which resulted in the secession of the Eastern Region to form the Independent Republic of Biafra with Odumegwu Ojukwu as Head of State. The Federal Military Government's refusal to recognize the Eastern Region secession eventually led to the declaration of war that started in July, 1967.

Endnotes

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¹⁴J. J. Stremmler, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War 1967 – 1970*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 44.

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¹⁶Auberon Waugh and Suzanne Cronje, *Biafra: Britain's Shame*, London: Michael Joseph, 1969, pp. 19-20

¹⁷*ibid*.

¹⁸Ralph Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War: A Call to Realism*, London: O.I.T.H International Publishers, p.91.

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