

**Causal factors in the Nigerian civil a critical
and comparative analysis of some
Nigerian accounts.**

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Abstract:

The principal objective of this study is to attempt a critical and comparative analysis of the various causal explanations proffered for the Nigerian Civil War in the published accounts of the principal actors participants and, spokesmen on both sides of the war. We discover that these accounts often invoke as "causes" factors such as the heterogeneity of the Nigerian society and politics, the British colonial policy of divide and rule", the 1966 killings in the army along ethnic lines and the massacres of the Igbo in 1966.

We, however, argue in this work that this commitment to ethnic, regional and other superstructural explanation and rationalizations does not fully explain the complex character of the Nigerian Civil War. For instance, it does not satisfactorily explain why the war was not fought entirely along ethnic or regional lines. Thus we adopt an alternative analysis located in the context of overall political economy of Nigeria, and highlighting the following causal relationships:

Firstly, the bitterness and violence which accompanied Nigerian politics was provoked not so much by ethnic differences as by the competition among the various factions of the ruling class for limited opportunities in business and politics. Concretely, each faction (or fraction) of the ruling class wanted to control the centre because it would thereby be able to monopolise the national wealth for the purpose of private accumulation. *In effect*, despite the denial of both parties, the desire to exercise full control over the oil-resources of Eastern Nigeria was crucial in the outbreak of the war.

Secondly, but in a less significant sense the civil war could be said to have arisen as a result of the diplomatic and political blunders and misunderstandings on the part of the leaders on both sides of the war, as demonstrated by the September 1966 Ad-Hoc Constitutional Conference and the Aburi Peace Meeting of 10 January 1967.

On the whole, our analysis reveals that the Nigerian Civil War as the culmination of the *contradictions* within the ruling *class* before and after independence.

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