The incessant conflict and confrontation which have characterised the relationship between three culturally contiguous ethnic groups in the Niger Delta: Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri, and for which inestimable losses in human and material resources have been incurred, is the subject matter of this book — *Conflict and Instability in the Niger Delta:* The *Warri Case.*

The vexed and volatile issues of who owns Warri-land [Settler - Indigene question] and the oil-fields— who gets the royalties; the alleged cultural domination and overlordship of the Itsekiri; the issue of arbitrary / discriminatory local government creations; the jurisdiction of the authority of the Olu of Warri; discrimination in employment even in Federal institutions and oil companies, among others, constitute the kernel of the intractable conflict. Though predating colonial rule, it is a conflict that was actually exacerbated by that administration's policy of "divide and rule" in the Delta province, favouring one party against the others.

The effort of the Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) is a holistic approach which digs deep, involving the three ethnic gladiators in a peace process aimed at unravelling the endemic conflicts, and with far-reaching proposals for peaceful co-existence. To AAPW, if the conflictual communities can swallow their pride and irrendentist tendencies and genuinely agree to live side by side in Warri, there would be peace; bearing in mind that only peace can build, crisis rather destroys

The Authors

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THE WARRI CASE

T.A. Imobighe
Celestine O. Bassey
Judith Burdin Asuni

A Publication of Academic Asssociates PeaceWorks

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The case study, which forms a large part of this book, was conducted under very taxing circumstances from June-August 1999, by three eminent scholars drawn from the three ethnic groups involved in the crisis: Professor V.F.Peretomode (Ijaw), Dr. A.S. Akpotor (Urhobo) and Dr. D.A. Tonwe (Itsekiri). Violence broke out in Warri just as the case study team was heading for the field. The three scholars and Prof. Bassey risked their own safety to conduct the research. The vastly different reports presented in Appendix 1 by Prof. V.F. Peretomode, Appendix 2 by Dr. A.S. Akpotor, and Appendix 3 by Dr. D.A. Tonwe, reflect the views of the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri groups respectively. They do not represent the views of the authors of this book or Academic Associates PeaceWorks. However, the divergent views expressed by the three scholars demonstrate how various parties in a conflict can see things so differently.

A great deal of thanks of course go to the six mediators who have worked earnestly in bringing peace to Warri: Chief Dr. Mrs. P.E.B. Uku and Mr. Eni Umuko (Itsekiri), Chief E.E. Ebimami and Rev. Prof. Dime (Ijaw); Chief W.A. Digbori and Chief Wilson Eboh (Urhobo). As members of the National Corps of Mediators, established by Academic Associates PeaceWorks and President Olusegun Obasanjo's Africa Leadership Forum in 1994, these members of the civil society volunteered their time and energy

in bringing about peace in Nigeria. This was often at their own personal financial expenses and sometimes physical risks. During the analysis of the case study in Warri in October 1999, the mediators spent a great deal of time arguing among themselves. Two years later however, they learned to collaborate, whether that meant coming as a team to the AAPW first book launch or making enlightenment visits by open flying boats to riverine villages. These mediators have indeed become role models of how people from different ethnic background can, not only work together, but enjoy it! Ultimately the peace in Warri belongs to them and other members of their ethnic groups.

We are also grateful for the support and encouragement of the Delta State Government, especially the Governor, Chief James Ibori, who has received us several times and listened thoughtfully to our comments and suggestions. Other state officials, including the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Deputy Governor and Head of Service, have also assisted us in the peace effort, as have the chairmen of the 5 local government councils in the greater Warri area. We hope that the state and local governments will continue to fund peace activities, as peace is a continuous process.

Finally, it is gratifying to state that the peace process in Warri, which though only beginning, has recorded tremendous growth so far. The different ethnic groups are now talking to each other and have learned new ways of dialoguing rather than fighting. Structures have been put in place, but it is now the responsibility of the average persons, men and women in Warri to ensure that the peace continues. These are the real heroes of this book.

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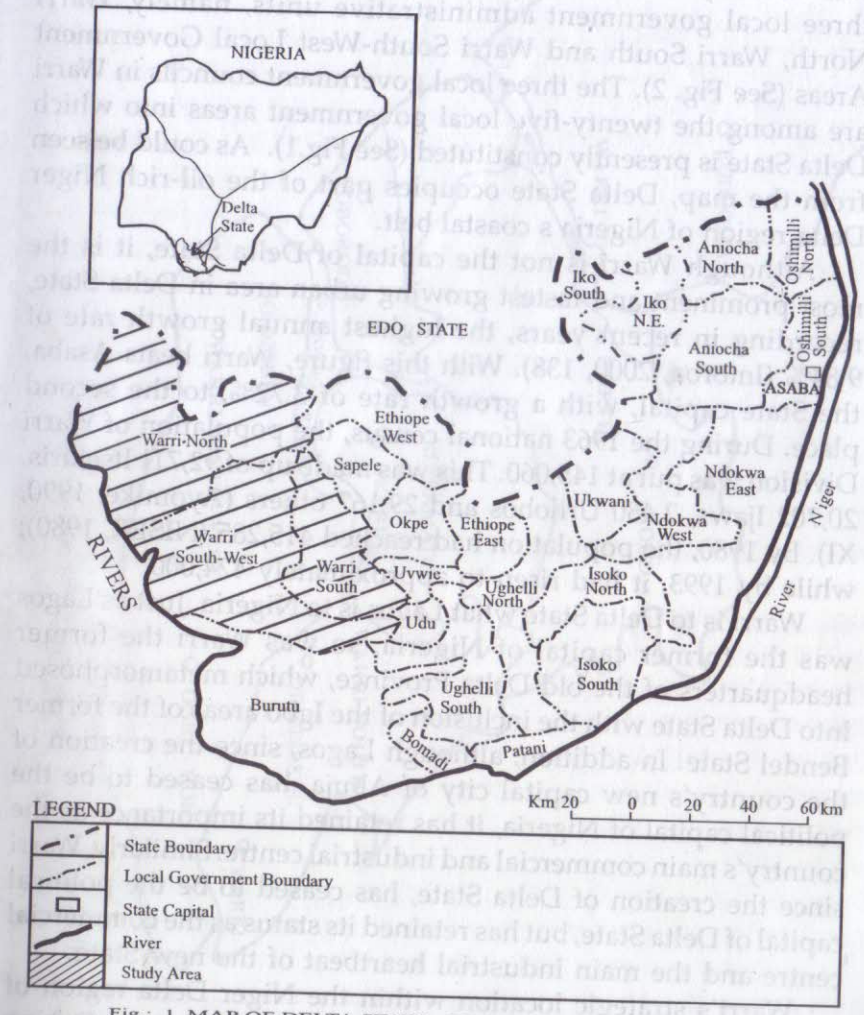

Fig.: 1 MAP OF DELTA STATE: WARRI LOCAL GOVT. AREA.

Introduction

Warri town is located at the northwestern edge of the Niger Delta. It is one of the most prominent towns in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta State. It occupies an area of about 1,520 square miles, which is bounded roughly by latitudes 5°20′ and 6° North and longitudes 5°5′ and 5°40′ East. The territory constitutes what was formally known as Warri Division, which now comprises three local government administrative units, namely, Warri North, Warri South and Warri South-West Local Government Areas (See Fig. 2). The three local government councils in Warri are among the twenty-five local government areas into which Delta State is presently constituted (See Fig.1). As could be seen from the map, Delta State occupies part of the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria's coastal belt.

Although Warri is not the capital of Delta State, it is the most prominent and fastest growing urban area in Delta State, recording in recent years, the highest annual growth rate of 9.84% (Imoroa, 2000, 138). With this figure, Warri beats Asaba, the State capital, with a growth rate of 3.72%, to the second place. During the 1963 national census, the population of Warri Division was put at 145,060. This was made up of 92,711 Itsekiris, 20,702 Ijaws, 2,480 Urhobos and 29,167 others (Ayomike, 1990, XI). By 1980, the population had reached 415,285 (NISER, 1980); while by 1993, it had risen to approximately 474,000.

Warri is to Delta State what Lagos is to Nigeria. Just as Lagos was the former capital of Nigeria, so was Warri the former headquarters of the old Delta Province, which metamorphosed into Delta State with the inclusion of the Igbo areas of the former Bendel State. In addition, although Lagos, since the creation of the country's new capital city of Abuja, has ceased to be the political capital of Nigeria, it has retained its importance as the country's main commercial and industrial centre. Similarly, Warri since the creation of Delta State, has ceased to be the political capital of Delta State, but has retained its status as the commercial centre and the main industrial heartbeat of the new State.

Warri's strategic location within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has particularly served the territory in good stead. During

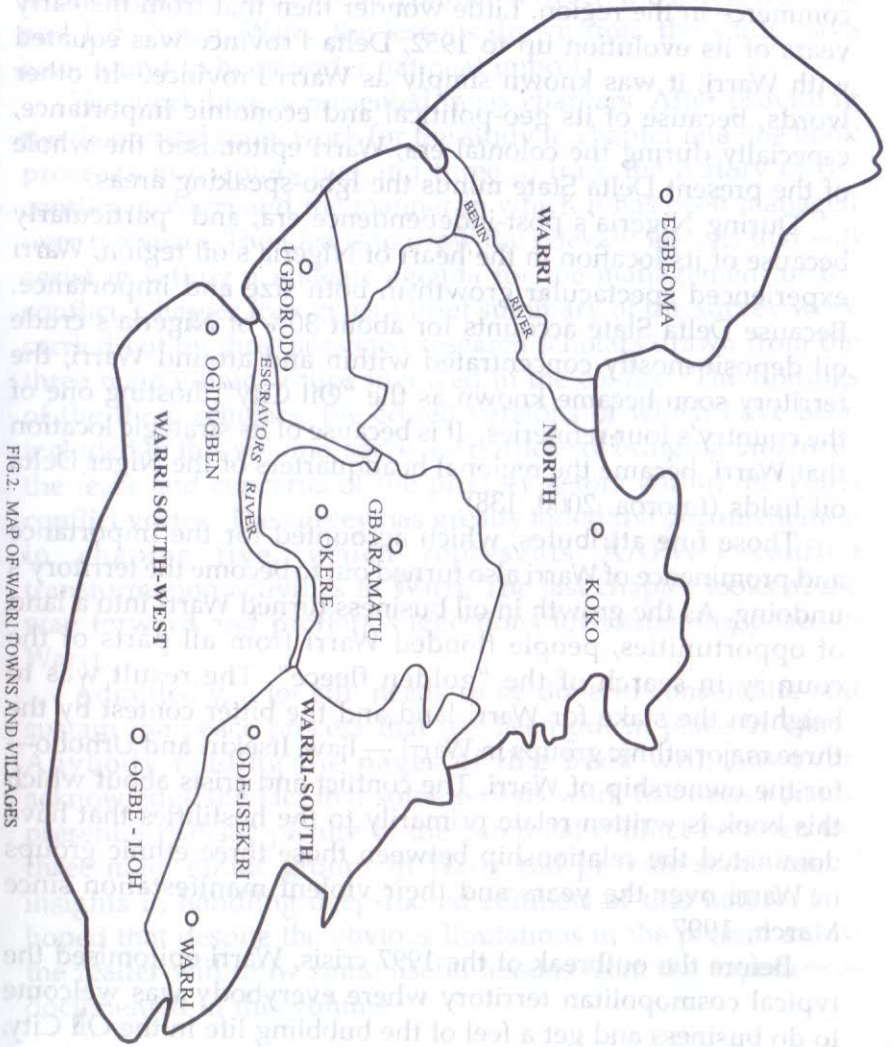

FIG. 2: MAP OF WARRI TOWNS AND VILLAGES

the colonial era, because of its location near the coast, Warri served as the transit route first, for the slave trade and later, for the trade in palm oil and other produce from the hinterland. Consequently, Warri became the main area of focus in terms of physical development. It eventually evolved as the political headquarters of the old Delta Province and the centre of commerce in the region. Little wonder then that from the early years of its evolution up to 1952, Delta Province was equated with Warri; it was known simply as Warri Province. In other words, because of its geo-political and economic importance, especially during the colonial era, Warri epitomised the whole of the present Delta State minus the Igbo-speaking areas.

During Nigeria's post-independence era, and particularly because of its location in the heart of Nigeria's oil region, Warri experienced spectacular growth in both size and importance. Because Delta State accounts for about 30% of Nigeria's crude oil deposit mostly concentrated within and around Warri, the territory soon became known as the "Oil City", hosting one of the country's four refineries. It is because of its strategic location that Warri became the regional headquarters of the Niger Delta oil fields (Imoroa, 2000, 138).

Those fine attributes, which accounted for the importance and prominence of Warri also turned out to become the territory's undoing. As the growth in oil business turned Warri into a land of opportunities, people flooded Warri from all parts of the country in search of the "golden fleece". The result was to heighten the stake for Warri land and the bitter contest by the three major ethnic groups in Warri — Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo— for the ownership of Warri. The conflict and crisis about which this book is written relate primarily to the hostilities that have dominated the relationship between those three ethnic groups in Warri over the years and their violent manifestation since March, 1997.

Before the outbreak of the 1997 crisis, Warri epitomised the typical cosmopolitan territory where everybody was welcome to do business and get a feel of the bubbling life in the Oil City. Apart from the three warring ethnic groups, which are indigenous to Delta State, both foreigners and other ethnic

groups lived harmoniously together in Warri. Among the other ethnic groups with considerable presence in Warri are Edo, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, and Hausa/Fulani. The problem of inter-ethnic hostilities addressed in this study does not affect all these other ethnic groups. It does not also affect the Delta Igbos and Isokos - the other two major ethnic groups that are indigenous to Delta State. However, while the analysis in this study is concentrated on the conflict between the Ijaws, Itsekiris and Urhobos in Warri, the lessons drawn from the study have been found to be of wider national import.

The work here is presented in six chapters. After providing the theoretical framework for the study in chapter one, the book proceeds in chapters two and three to trace the history of the conflict in Warri and the manner in which it has been managed over the years. The idea is to draw the relevant lessons that will assist in setting a realistic agenda for the management of the conflict. Chapter four gives a brief summary of the survey work carried out by three seasoned research scholars drawn from the three main ethnic groups involved in the conflict. The findings of the three scholars, the edited versions of which have been included in this volume, serve the purpose of bringing into focus the fears and concerns of the primary actors within the Warri conflict vortex. The survey has greatly aided the documentation in chapter five, which represents AAPW's conflict transformation activities in Warri. The last chapter looks at the way forward and proffers suggestions for sustaining peace in Warri.

Admittedly, a lot still needs to be done to consolidate and sustain the peace process that has been put in place in Warri. Anybody reading the pages of this book will, however, acknowledge the fact that some serious work has been done to present a realistic picture of the perennial conflict between the three main ethnic groups in Warri and provide some useful insights in handling deep-rooted conflicts of this nature. It is hoped that despite the obvious limitations in the present study, the reader will draw some useful lessons from the experiences documented in this volume.

T.A. Imobighe

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Chapter 1

Celestine O. Bassey

Framework for The Conflict Transformation Project in Warri

Preamble

The pervasiveness of conflict in the Nigerian Society (as elsewhere in Africa) has been attributed to a number of factors — psychological, socio-psychological (group dynamics) and sociological factors. These factors have understandably given rise to a variety of analytical approaches to conflict in the Nigerian social formation. (Otite, 1990; Ihonvbaire and Falola, 1985). These approaches differ in their general assumptions about the causes, nature, and resolution of conflicts.

However, since inter-group conflicts (such as Warri, Ife-Modakeke, Zangon–Kataf etc) have their objective bases in society, it becomes imperative that any intervention project aimed at conflict resolution should first of all seek to determine the nature of the particular conflict system and the requisite condition for peace through the instrumentality of survey research. This assumption underscores the AAPW conflict intervention methodology in relation to the Warri Crisis Project. It proceeds from the operative construct of transformative paradigm as a set of interrelated activities involving, first, understanding the conflict system by analysing its structure and process and, second, creating irreversible dynamics toward conflict settlement through a combination of operational strategies that address the "concern of the parties, social relationships, the changing positions and roles of interveners, and the moderation of planned and unintended consequences". Hence, J. P. Lederach's (1987:88) representation of " constructive transformation of conflict as a:

> Comprehensive set of lenses for describing how conflict emerges from, evolves within, and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions, and for developing creative responses that promote peaceful change within those dimensions through non-violent mechanism.

Thus, both in terms of objective and strategy, conflict transformation (unlike the boarder concept of conflict management) is context-specific, involving, as the AAPW Handbook puts it, a metamorphosis or permutations in three central elements of a conflict system. The first involves transformation of attitudes: "by changing and redirecting negative perceptions, a commitment to see the other with goodwill, to define the conflict in terms of mutual respect, and to maintain attitudes of collaborative and co-perative intent" (AAPW, 2000 : 8).

The second involves transforming behaviour: "by limiting all action to collaborative behaviour, and interrupting negative cycles. This requires a commitment to seek non-coercive process of communication, negotiation, and dispute resolution even when there has been intense provocation. The commitment on both sides to act with restraint and mutual respect changes the dynamics of the negotiation from mistrust to trust (AAPW 2000:9). The third dimension of conflict transformation process involves graduated alteration of the conflict situation by "seeking to discover, define and remove incompatibilities by creative design and thus inventing options for mutual gain."

In destructive conflicts, goal incompatibilities sustain negative attitudes, and "behaviour" becomes divisive and alienating, a product of individuals' socialisation and acculturation that is present in "most person's behavioural repertoire from childhood". The conflict transformation process in this context is geared towards peace building through "a shared vision of new patterns of sustainable relationships which go beyond "resolving" or "ending" particular conflicts "(Otite, 1999:10).

The AAPW conflict transformation project in Warri proceeded within this inclusive framework which combines the tested wisdom of facilitative mediation and appreciative inquiry to engender the binary process of constructive dialogue, negotiation, culture of tolerance and exchange in the express hope of "changing the nature and intensity of conflict". In this regard the Warri conflict, as any other communal conflagration, has its complexity, and any approach towards understanding its transformation requires a multidimensional, non-unilinear

perspective (Otite, 1999, Rupensinghe, (1995). Its terminal resolution is bound to be generational, an outcome of confidence-building measures in which politico-economic and socio-cultural resources are mobilized in an effort to reconvene and continue the process of peace-building (Otite and Albert, 1999; Fisher, 1983).

Statement of Problem

The Warri Crisis project was initiated in response to the current tension and ethnic conflagration involving the Itsekiri, Ijaw, and Urhobo communities in the Warri metropolis and environs. Inter-ethnic clashes in Warri metropolis date back to the colonial era. However, the violent trend, which is a new and recent phenomenon in the history of the Warri Crisis, goes back to the early 1990s while the more recent unabating bloody conflict dates back to March, 1997.

The Warri Crisis can be considered a microcosm of a wide range of conflicts developing in the Nigerian social system. It can be seen as a dramatic and extreme manifestation of what has been termed "manifest conflict processes" (MCPs): situations in which at least two actors or their representatives try to "pursue their perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by undermining directly or otherwise, the goal-seeking capability of one another (Sandole, 1986:4). In this regard, the transformation of the Warri conflict entails an understanding of its nature "before we can deal effectively with it, intellectually, emotionally and behaviourally". This involves a critical appraisal of both the structural conditions and the psycho-cultural factors which sustain the scale and intractability of conflict vortex in Warri. The structural conditions direct attention to forces which "can make a society more or less prone than another to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence" (Ross, 1993:35).

The psycho-cultural dispositions determine the overall level of conflict in a society in terms of "shared assumptions, perceptions and images about what people in a society value, their definition of friends and foes" and the means which groups and individuals use to pursue their goals (Ross, 1993:53). In other words, structural analysis of conflict focuses on how the

"organisation of society shapes action", whereas psycho-cultural inquiry "looks to the actors themselves and how they interpret the World". The latter consideration is particularly crucial for understanding complex condition of communal disorders such as Warri, since as Dennis Sandole (1987:10) has observed:

> People with different beliefs, values, and expectations effectively live in different worlds; One result of this is that they talk past each other. The more that they do, the more they may experience frustration and hostility. The frustration –hostility nexus at any level can escalate over time into self-perpetuating, violent conflict system.

However, as one expert has reminded us, what is important about conflict is "not its occurrence as such, but how parties attempt to deal with it" (Boulding, 1977:84). As will be seen in Chapter Three of this book, the tragedy of the Warri condition is that while the gathering storm of impending disaster (fermentation period) exceeded seventy years before confrontation and violent escalation, the response of the government (at both Federal and State levels) through the instrumentality of Judicial inquiry and arbitration was incomplete, indecisive and inconclusive. Indeed, some would argue, as the issue of Ogbe Ijoh Local Government Headquarters, under General Abacha suggests, that government's intervention in some respect was insensitive and aggravating. Mutual perception and misperception between protagonists in the conflict vortex in Warri about the intention of government (as a captive of social forces representing sectional interests) generated suspicion and cynicism towards judicial approaches and their embodiment of "Win-lose" solutions (zero-sum).

The rejectionist posture of disaffected groups arising from the structure of this conflict interaction inevitably presages bloody escalation (dubbed Mutually Assured Destruction) in the Warri Vortex. This outcome is inherent in the nature of Judicial systems and instruments: their " very structure and operating rules prohibit them from enhancing the issues ... to the point where the dispute may turn from being an adversarial situation to one where win-win solutions may be found" (Colosi; 1987:91). Thus, as Roger Richman (1985:512) has rightly argued:

> As a dispute settlement system, the court's function is to decide cases based on the facts presented and the controlling laws that govern the factual situation. Courts make decisions, on the evidence and the applicable law, considering only what is presented to them by the parties in an adversarial context. They allocate the decision (that is the impacts that flow from the decision) between the parties, usually along the zero-sum line but occasionally to the left of the line to the suboptimal negative-sum or lose-lose settlement.

As an alternative dispute settlement mechanism, conflict transformation techniques, facilitative mediation, interactive conflict resolution, appreciative inquiry, and constructive conflict management regimes – seek to change "adversarial situation to one where win-win solution may be found", These approaches (the 'Core-complex' of AAPW Crisis Intervention project in Warri) are characterised by mediation and negotiation rather than arbitration where the aim of "deal cutting" – getting the best deal for one's side is modified by the realisation of possibilities for joint gains (of consideration to getting a better deal for the other side as well. (Richman, 1985:165). Thus, given the nature of the conflict system in Warri and the failure over time of win-lose, zero-sum distributive bargaining through judicial instrumentalities to engender peace, AAPW Crisis Intervention Project (based on mechanisms of alternative dispute settlement through facilitative mediation) is aimed at transforming the conflict by "channelling it into competition for mutual ends" (Fisher, 1997:214).

In this context, the AAPW approach, as is consistent with the classical tradition of mediation, "sharply contrasts with the adversarial processes of adjudication or arbitration, and, at least theoretically, decreases the hostility that might result from litigation". As M. Ojielo puts it in his *Appropriate Dispute Resolution (1999)*, the "purpose of mediation is neither to judge guilt or innocence, nor to decide who is right or wrong". Rather, "its goal is to give the parties the opportunity to (1) vent and diffuse feelings, (2) clear up misunderstandings, (3) determine underlying interests or concerns, (4) find areas of agreement, and ultimately, (5) incorporate these areas into solutions devised by the parties themselves".

Objective of the Project

The objective of AAPW Warri intervention was, first to determine the structural conditions (forces which "make a society more or less prone than others to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence) and the psycho-cultural dispositions (the determinants of the "overall level of conflict in a society in terms of shared assumptions, perceptions about what people in a society value, their definitions of friend and foe and the means which groups and individuals use to promote or pursue their goals") . Second, to determine the requisite condition for conflict settlement in Warri metropolis against the background of complex historical and sociological factors that sustain the violence. And, third, to initiate practical problem-solving measures aimed at the transformation of relations between the warring factions.

In these regards, the project proceeded from the general assumption that understanding conflict systems involves analysing conflict structures and processes. This is so because the problematique of conflict negotiation and settlement is predicated on the following considerations (i) whether a "prescription would be unacceptable if it were not logically related to its analysis and (ii) whether a prescription based on faulty analysis would be unlikely to produce the desired consequences "(Walt, 1959:18). Thus, the fundamental premise of this project (and the most profound inference to be drawn from a survey of the Niger Delta) is that the conflict and destruction in Warri are not just a 'reaction formation" rooted in a "phylogenetically programmed, innate instinct which seeks for discharge and waits for the proper occasion to be expressed", but more importantly as a product of a complex and evolving historical circumstances rooted in the objective condition (the existential needs of various ethnic communities in Warri) of the society. As Eric Fromm explains:

> whether man's dominant passion is love or whether it is destructiveness depends largely on social circumstances; these circumstances, however, operate in reference to man's biologically given existential situation from it and not to an infinitely malleable, undifferentiated psyche, as environmentalist theory assumes.

Thus, the basic supposition upon which an interpretation of the recurrent conflagration in Warri (as in other Nigerian Communities) can be constructed is that such violence expresses both defensive or "benign" aggression (in service of the survival of the individual and his communities) often associated with character-rooted reaction formations such as sadism (the "passion for unrestricted power over another sentient being") and of necrophilia (the "passion to destroy life and the attraction to all that is dead, decaying, and purely mechanical"). On this view, the Warri melodrama expresses in elemental form what one theoretician has aptly termed the "pathology of conflict": rigidification and autistic hostility based on dominant metaphors and negative images of others. Its transformation also critically depends on engineering "shared vision of new patterns of sustainable relationships". As Morton Deustch (1973:57) trenchantly notes:

> If one wants to create the conditions for a destructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical characteristics and effects of a competitive process: poor communication, coercive tactics; suspicion; the perception of basic difference in values; an orientation to increasing the power differences; challenges to the legitimacy of the parties and so forth. On the other hand, if one wants to create the conditions for a constructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical effects of a co-operative process: good communication; the perception of similarity in beliefs and values; full acceptance of one another's legitimacy; problem centred negotiations; mutual trust and confidence; information-sharing and so forth.

Seen in the above context, the AAPW Crisis intervention project in Warri seeks to produce a constructive conflict transformation process by "creating the conditions which characterised an effective cooperative problem-solving process" as will be elaborated upon in chapter five of this book.

Literature Review

Extant classification of the complex and evolving literature on conflict, conflict management and transformation has reflected a wide and contending spectrum of epistemic and substantive

concerns involving "spatial," "issue" and ideological directions. The "Spatial paradigm" has been advanced by Donald Chilcote (1981) and R.J. Rummell (1975-1981), among others. It covers (i) general over-views of the field, (ii) Cross national studies, (iii) Comparative series of monographs and anthologies; (iv) area and configurative studies and (v) Institutional studies. The issue of paradigm, on the other hand, derives " from an impression that the motives, actions, and interactions of political actors are crucially related to the degree of tangibility of the values which have to be employed to effect allocation" (1964: 57). This consideration defines the variability of conflict types as could be seen in Kenneth Boulding's (1962) taxonomies (economic, industrial, international, ideological and ethical). Hence, James Rosenau's construct of issues according to (i) the cluster of values, the allocation or potential allocation of which (ii) leads the affected or potentially affected actors to differ so greatly over (a) the ways in which the values should be allocated or (b) the horizontal levels at which the allocations should be authorised such that (iii) they engage in distinctive behaviour designed to mobilise support for the attainment of their particular values. (Mansbach and Vasquez 1981:35).

The "ideological paradigm" has its epistemic root in the liberal and marxist thought, as mediated through logical positivist and historicist tradition, respectively. These gave rise to the orthodox and radical genre of literature on conflict analysis and management. The former, orthodox genre, as represented by such authors as Ralf Dahrendorf, Lewis Coser, David Lockwood, Raymond Aron, John Rex, and Randall Collins, is mechanistic and state-centric, and in analysis and interpretation " a consequence of its micro-orientation, its rationalist orientation and its focus on problems delimited by disciplinary boundaries" (Chilcote, 1981:74). The latter, radical genre, as represented in the works of critical theorists such as J. Habermas, T. Adorno, C. Offe, N. Poulantzas, F. Parkin and A. Giddens) tends to be dialectical, holistic and system-level in orientation: it construes conflict and change in terms of the "structural antagonism located in the relationship between basis and superstructure and the class conflict resulting from the opposition of interests among

the incumbents of basic economic functions". (Strasser and Randall, 1981:45)

The literature review that follows combine elements of the three paradigms as a composite basis of underscoring the sharply divergent theoretical (explanatory systems) directions in the literature on the structure of conflict and the requisite condition for peace. It recognises that "spatial categorisation" of literature could proceed under a broader framework of paradigmatic stipulation (orthodox vs radical genre) of the analytical direction which depends in turn on the "issue – area". First is the **General text**, that "attempts to integrate theory with substance", in relation to the causes and structure of conflict, as well as strategies and techniques of conflict management, resolution and transformation. The premises and thought forces enshrined in this category of literature largely derive from the writers' conceptualisation and visualisation of "conflict" as a basis of elucidating on explanatory schemes of conflict processes and transformation. In epistemic terms, a wide variation currently exists in the extant literature about the denotative and connotative dimensions of the term "conflict" which has in effect posed intractable problem for theory construction and analysis. As Clinton Fink (1968:430) explains:

> Since theorists differ widely in their conceptions of what constitutes conflict, theories which are equally general with respect to types of parties may nevertheless have quite different ranges of application with respect to types of psychological and behavioural patterns. Such differences are crucial because they affect the compatibility of general theories, the classification of conflict phenomena, the logical relation between general and special theories, and the relevance of various bodies of data to the testing and further development of a general theory.

Conceptual clarity is, therefore, central to the task of explanation and analysis of conflict phenomena, if such construct is not to be hopelessly delimited by spatio-temporal parameters. Generally considered, some definitions have focused on manifest behaviour. Others have placed emphasis either on differences in goals or perception. In the first category, for instance, for Morton Deutsch (1973:10), conflict exist "whenever

incompatible activities occur: an action that is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes, injures or in some ways makes the latter less likely to be effective".

In the second category of definition (goals), Jessie Bernards (1953:53) has contended that "conflict arises when there are incompatible or mutually exclusive goals or aims or values espoused by human beings". In the third category of definition (perceptual approach) Pruit and Rubin (1986:4) have asserted that "conflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously". Despite obvious compartmentalisation of views expressed, these definitional divergences are not necessarily mutually exclusive: conflict, as Ross (1993:14) notes, "occurs when parties disagree about the distribution of material or symbolic resources and act because of the incompatibility of goals or a perceived divergence of interests". As he elaborates:

> Focusing on behaviour (what people actually do) emphasizes a component that needs to be understood' and certainly simplifies methodology by avoiding the difficult question of the subjective states which precede action. The perceptual approach by suggesting that differences in interest are subjective, leaves open the question of the extent to which interests are actually incompatible, pointing out a key mechanism by which seemingly intractable conflicts can be resolved.

Seen in the above context, it could be argued that any definition that emphasizes any aspect of such a complex phenomenon as conflict to the exclusion of the other is essentially emasculated. Focusing on behaviours alone in conflict situation ignores motivational factors that condition action while " asking only about perceptions fails to distinguish between situations in which similar perceptions lead to sharply divergent behaviours "(Miller, 1972:930). Thus, these apparent definitional divergences reinforce the general conclusion of a number of analysts that "Conflict is a process, not a static condition, and that an important element involves the change in perceptions during the course of a dispute."

The above considerations underscore fundamental differences in extant literature concerning the causes, nature

and appropriate strategy of conflict management and transformation. Some writers have focused on micro-causal factors (psychological, phylogenetic and psycho-cultural) emphasising in the process the latent aggressiveness of human nature, environmental conditioning (socialisation and acculturation), relative deprivation, rising expectations and frustration-aggression hypothesis. Despite their analytical variation, psychological and phylogenetic theories of conflict and violence, they still attribute the cause of conflict in human society primarily to human nature: the innate or congenital aggressiveness of man. However, while the phylogenetic theorists see the human instinct of aggression as a biological legacy of our animal ancestry, the psychological theories invariably locate human bellicosity in the subconscious complexes of the mind. (Burton, 1962). From this basic premise the prescription often follow that "in order to achieve a more peaceful world men must be changed, whether in their moral or intellectual outlook or in the psychosocial behaviour." (Walts, 1959:18).

The seeming illogicality of the fundamental premise of this category of theories has been the focus of virulent attack in the literature. Human nature, these critics assert, is so "complex that it can justify every hypothesis we may entertain" (Aron, 1962:202). In other words, if the human society were always at war, or always at peace, "question of why there is war or why there is peace, would never arise." As one of this critics put it: "if human nature is the cause of war and if human nature is fixed, then we can never hope for peace. Human nature cannot by itself explain both war and peace. If human nature "is but one of the causes of war, then, even on the assumption that human nature is fixed, we can properly carry on a search for the conditions of peace "(Levi, 1960:419).

Other writers have emphasised macro-phenomena (sociological and socio-psychological) as a basis of explaining and comprehending conflict trajectories in social systems. The socio-psychological (group dynamics) factors include the nature of contact (growth, expansion and intersection between ethnic nationalities such as the Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo in Warri, for example), competition and threat, frustration, exploitation and

minority orientations (Bernard, 1952, Daniel, 1958 and Levy 1993). The sociological approach focuses on societal characteristics related to high levels of a variety of social conflicts. Rather than analyse individual or group dynamics, then, the sociological perspective concentrates upon the societal context in which these dynamics are defined in relation to multiple dimensions of social conflict. Structural factors in this context include value conflict, numerical ratio, stratification, mobility, division of labour and the economy, (Buckley, 1967, Guttman, 1959).

It is quite obvious from these extensive array of general literature on contending explanations of the cause of conflict that it is by "its very nature beyond any simple causation" (Foster, 1966:142). In other words, that endemic social and political conflicts in our societies invariably have multiple roots: "there is no single cause – which is more or less potent". Indeed, usually, there are multiple causes and important "contributing conditions rooted in historical relationships and brought to violence by a variety of catalysts" (Von der Mehden, 1973:113-114).

On this view, despite the divergent nature of explanatory patterns highlighted above and their limitation in terms of postulated conditions of parsimony and relevance (accuracy, generality, parsimony and causality) two major theoretical tendencies (spanning "spatial", "ideological" and "issue" considerations and integrating both micro and macro factors in conflict analysis) can be noted. One is psycho-cultural disposition which determines the overall level of conflict in a society in terms of shared assumptions, perceptions and images about "what people in a society value, their definition of friends and foes, and the means by which groups and individuals pursue their goals "(Le Vine, 1973, Mantagu, 1978; Avrach, 1991).

The other is the structural conditions (social structural conflict theory) which "directs attention to forces which can make a society more or less prone than others to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence" (Ross, 1993:7). Structural factors and structural theory transcend social stratifications (primordial or ideological differentiations reflected in social forces and social movement categorisations) and are generally interest

based, rational – choice, explanatory model which can "primarily explain who one's friends and foes will be when conflict develops". Thus, Michael Haas's (1974) generic categorization in his theories of social factors in conflict systems, based on structural symmetry and asymmetry in societal formations: temporal, spatial, Kinetic, entropic, allocational and transactional asymmetries.

However, both sets of explanatory paradigms are mutually reinforcing.

As Marc Ross (1993:9) has noted:

> Because structural and psycho-cultural explanations for conflict behaviour are so different, it is easy to view them as incompatible alternatives. Yet each set of factors explains different aspects of conflict behaviour. Making sense of something the other cannot fully explain. The fears and threats identified in the psycho-cultural explanation account for the intensity of feelings involved, but only the structural explanation can speak to why actions are taken in a particular direction.

It could, thus, be argued that from the standpoint of explanatory theory, the psycho-cultural variable provide predisposing factors which best predict a community's overall level of conflict, while structural components constitute intervening variables suggesting the direction of action. In other words, "structural explanations for conflict, violence, and warfare focus on how the organisation of society shapes action, whereas psycho-cultural explanations look to the actors themselves and how they interpret the world "(Ross, 1986:172). This synthesis and evaluation can be seen in the diverse literature on conflict and social change (Lauer, 1973): the Marxist and non-Marxist variants of conflict theory; the rise and fall or cyclical theory; the classical evolutionary theory and the multilinear theory of social evolution and the theory of modernisation. In their in-depth survey of these theoretical approaches, Susan Randall and Herman Strasser (1902:41) have noted, for instance, that:

> Common to all conflict theoretical approaches is that they explain change in terms of antagonism or tension-producing

> elements that are inherent in social systems. The causes of such conflicts leading to societal changes are especially sought in those elements of the social structure which, on the one hand, are related to the establishment and sanctioning of social norms and, on the other hand, to the control and allocation of scarce resources such as income, property, prestige, influence and authority.

The fundamental issue of divergence between orthodox (non-Marxist) and radical (Marxist) approaches lies in the conceptualisation of the "tension – producing elements" in terms of the character of the social forces contesting for the control of the state. In the unsettled milieu of Nigeria and other Third World societies, the character of these dominant social forces and the terrain of conflict is defined in primordial terms in the conventional literature (functionalism and Pluralism), while in the radical literature the source of social conflict and change relates to structural antagonism and class contradiction.

Similarly, R. J. Rummel's five volume synthesis, *Understanding Conflict and War*, attempts to integrate both micro-and macro-factors (psycho-cultural and structural) by placing "individuals within a sociocultural context, stressing that personality, society, and culture form a continuous whole and that they interact within a field" (Russet, 1995.277). Although often overlooked as a source of reference in the field, Rummel's massive effort has, as one reviewer put it, "significant, untapped potential to integrate or subsume many of the important strands of theory and research on such conflict "(Ray, 1998:127).

A collateral set of literature in the domain of the general texts and over-views is on conflict management, resolution and transformation. Although these concepts are often used interchangeably in popular discourse, in technical terms they denote significantly divergent approaches to peace restoration. While conflict management or conflict transformation could be considered a process, the resolution of conflict can be taken to denote a positive outcome. Nevertheless, as Onigu Otite (1999:15) had observed, "because there is hardly any permanent peace or permanent resolution or transformation of conflicts, it may be more appropriate to speak of conflict management as a means of coping with the processes of resolving or transforming

conflict". In other words, in some respects "the concepts of conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict management overlap both in concept and practice, the latter, however, "describing the structural and processual dimensions which deal with issue of conflict "(Otite, 1999:13-14)

As a process, conflict management/transformation is anchored on a key assumption about social reality: that the "phenomenon of conflict, in one form or another, is an inevitable and ever-present feature of society and social interaction". As C. R. Mitchell (1989) puts it:

> Conflict is inevitable because it can originate in individual and group reactions to situation of scarce resources; to division of function within society; and to differentiation of power and resultant competition for limited supplies of goods, status, valued roles and power-as-an-end itself.

However, what is important about conflict, as one authority reminds us. "is not occurrence as such, but how parties attempt to deal with it" (Boulding, 1977:84). According to Morton Deutsch (1973), there are basically two orientation to conflict management and transformation: competitive and cooperative. Competitive processes are associated with "zerosum" thinking and adversarial behaviour, while cooperative processes are associated with "positive sum" thinking and collaborative behaviour". Though the two orientations can be viewed as mutually exclusive, "a continuum can also be seen to exist between them", as Dennis Sandole (1987) rightly contends. "Deadly force, litigation and arbitration are intended, in descending order of severity, to impose solutions; in John Burton's (1986) framework, to 'settle' rather than 'resolve' conflicts. "Conciliation, traditional mediation, facilitated and unfacilitated problem solving, on the other hand, all involve, in ascending order of parties ownership of process and outcome, efforts to resolve rather that settle conflicts "(Wedge, 1987:2). In this context, the role of the third party in a "malignant social condition" is to provide a "functional equivalent": to " find, develop, institutionalise" and persuade parties to use other methods for the solution of their differences. Thus a plethora of literature which seeks to present such a "functional equivalent"

or alternative to violent or competitive means have surfaced in the last couple of decades with the expansion and professionalisation of Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS) which includes conflict analysis, peace research, peace education and peace action. Prominent among these works are J. P. Lederach (1996 and 1997) on "*Constructive Transformation of Conflicts*", D.J.D. Sandole and I. Sandole-Saroste (1987), D.J.D Sandole and H. Vander Merwe (1993) and C. W. Moore (1996) on *Facilitative Mediation*; M. Deutsch (1973), M. H. Ross (1983) on Constructive Conflict Management (CCM); J. Galtung (1994), Rupensinghe (1995), J. P. Folger and M.S. Stutman (1997) and Ronald Fisher (1997); and I. W. Zartman (2000) and Arruch and Black (1991 and 1993) on *Traditional Modes of Conflict Intervention*.

In addition to these general texts, there is the emergence of specialised Journals in the field and publication of research findings on dynamics of conflict and conflict management/ transformation. These include the *Journals of Conflict Resolution* (1957), *Peace Research* (1964), *Conflict Management and Peace Science* (1975) and *Peace and Change* (1985) as well as a host of others on international peacekeeping, negotiation and bargaining. Some of the insightful contributions overtime include K. Zechmister and D.Druckman, "Determinants of Resolving a Conflict of Interests: A Simulation of Political Decision-Making" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 17 (1973):63-88; R. J. Fosher, "Third Party Consultation as a method of Conflict Resolution: A Review of Studies" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27 (1983):301-334; J. W. Burton, "The Theory of conflict Resolution", in "*Current Research on Peace and Violence*. (Special Issue on conflict Resolution) IX, 3(1986), L. Ray, "The Alternative Dispute Resolution Movement" in *Peace and Change* (Special Issue on Conflict Resolution) VIII, 2-3 (1982); and W. Isard and C. Smith "Matching Conflict Situations and Conflict Management Procedures" in *Journal of Conflict Management and Peace Science* Vol. 5,1, 1980: 1-25.

The insights on the generative structure of conflict and possible transformative process derived from the general inquiry into conflict systems discussed above have found wide applications in area and configurative studies bearing on

different regions. Some studies in this regard have sought to extend the analytical concern of the 'Correlates of War Project' initiated by L. Richardson in 1960 to the African regional system in terms of critical investigation of the generative sources of "Somatic violence and destruction" (Civil disorders) and the requisite condition for peace through the instrumentality of proto-regimes. In this regard, as Sprague (1982:116) argued, "Social structure enters the theory as determining probable reinforcement schedules: in other words, social structure furnishes experimental conditions realising differing reinforcement phenomena"

Configurative Studies

Analysing the sources of conflict and violence in a regional system wrenched by crises of domestic political consensus and communal conflagration as in Africa involves, therefore, uncovering the "extraordinary complex mix of factors, including multi-ethnic and communal cleavages and disintegration, underdevelopment and poverty, and distributive Justice, as well as moral and intellectual bankruptcy of leadership (Ayoob, 1986; Azar and Moon, 1988). Pressures arising from domestic fissures, combined with widespread irredentism, vigilantism and external intervention to engender a spiral of violence with incalculable consequences for the stability and development of these states. General classifications and typologies of prevailing conflict mode and structural dynamics have been provided in the literature. Donald Morrison and Hugh Stevenson (1971) have for instance, proffered a mode of conceptualisation and typologies based on group categorisation: elite, communal groups and mass movements. Subsequent studies (Moon and Azar, 1984, Hill and Rothchild, 1986, Most and Starr, 1980) of conflict in Africa have tended to utilise this mode of analysis.

This could be seen, for instance, in Mohammed Said (1981) analysis of ethnicity and integration in Africa. The ethnic base of state power, he contends, is "revealed in the context of politics of support, or what Enloe (1980) calls "State security ethnic map". In Africa, a graphic feature of this 'Map' is the "extreme vacillation from one bloc of ethnic support to another with the

change of rulers and their regime "(Ayoob, 1986:7). In Nigeria, Chad, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, where "catastrophic balance between ethnic forces shapes the structure of politics, the "substantial violence trap where identity and violence are required to suppress ethnic revolt leads to the phenomenon of violence, reinforcing each other. In these instances, conflicts become protracted" (Azar 1978).

Although this mode of analysis has provided significant insight into the understanding of the generative structure of domestic fragmentation and conflict in African State, it has been widely seen to be insensitive "either to substantial difference in the form, intensity, and potential effect of conflict episodes that focus on limited issues in contrast with conduct in which the structure of authority and the integrity of the state are at issue" (Falton 1988:255). Seen in the context of changing social condition, a simplistic categorisation of conflict clusters based on primordial or ideological factors can be patently misleading. On this view, Gurr. (1991:168) has provided alternative classification and complex topology of African conflicts involving "mobilisation of people based on several overlapping identities: ethnicity and class, class and political association, ethnicity and political association - sometime all three."

In specific terms, the rapid and relatively extreme breakdown in the structure of social system of a number of Africa States associated with domestic insecurity results directly from an extraordinary complex mix of "underdevelopment and poverty and distributive Justice "(Ayoob 1986). The structural roots of these malignant social conditions (to use Morton Deutsch's category) resides invariably in three major contradictions in the social system of African societies (Alavi, 1983, Shar 1985, Sandbrook, 1985). One such contradiction relates to the history and nature of state formation in Africa as compared for instance, to its counterpart in Europe. Another contradiction derives from the "pattern of elite recruitment and regime establishment and maintenance". The implication for peace and security of these factors can be seen in the crisis of regime legitimacy which befell many African Countries in the last three decades. The dynamics of this crisis are primarily anchored to a third contradiction:

"relations of exploitation, domestic class structures, prostrate external dependence... and the nature of the client post-colonial states that these class structures have developed, also operate to intensify the crisis." (Onimode, 1988:2). These structural deformities of the African milieu are inexorably bound up with the social trauma and domestic insecurity in the region (Bassey, 1991, 1998). The transformation of this conflict generating properties of the African social milieu through cooperative processes associated with 'positive sum' thinking and collaborative behaviour has been the subject of a number of literature on the African regional system. These include J. V. Montville, *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multi-ethnic societies* (1991), I. William Zartman, *Ripe For Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (1989), F. Deng and I. W. Zartman (eds), *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (1991); I. William Zartman (ed) *Traditional Cures For Modern Conflict* (2000), Ali Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana* (1996), D. W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Culture Pathway and Pattern* (1992) and J. P. Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (1996).

The central concern of these literature on Africa is that endemic and protracted social conflict is destructive and should be prevented if possible or contained once it develops. In other words, that the effort to transform conflict should go beyond conflict limiting strategies involving altering incentives, pay-offs or the organisation of society (derived from structural theory). There is also an imperative need to "alter the dominant metaphors surrounding a dispute or the interpretations of the parties in conflict", which has been the focus of multi-level attempts to resolve conflicts in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire), Burundi and Sudan.

A related theme in this category of literature (Conflict manifestation/transformation) is implementational failures arising from systemic contradictions, informal group pressures, political attitudes and a multiple of interpersonal relationships. As Donald Rothchild (1982) notes: "In Africa, the list of implementation failures is long including those in Angola (1985 and 1992), Sudan (1982), Uganda (1985), Rwanda (1993), and Burundi (1994)... As such breakdowns continue, it is worth asking what kind of state regime is most likely to discourage the

unravelling of carefully negotiated peace agreements". State regimes in this context relate to the enabling political environment for conflict management. The contention (Rothchild, 1985) is basically that regime types (hegemonic exchange and polyarchy) could either engender stable and enduring policy environment (as in Botswana) or generate latent and manifest period of protracted social conflict (as in Nigeria under Abacha, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Liberia, among others).

Thus, while "hegemonic regimes" (e.g Abacha's Nigeria, Mobutu's Zaire, and Barre's Somalia) that centralised political power and emphasised hierarchical control by government often tend to impose serious restraints on the aggregation and channelling of group demands to policy elites, "hegemonic exchange" and "polyarchical" regimes allow access to "ethnic intermediaries and are more prepared to enter into direct or tacit negotiations with these interest group intermediaries".

The consequences for social system stability, peace and security in both types of state system have been graphically visible in Africa since the 1960s. As one analyst aptly notes:

> In the hegemonic exchange and polyarchical regimes, leaders fully aware of the fragility of their institutions, are more inclined to enter into ongoing negotiation with a wide array of interest groups in order to promote their state-building objectives... yet the tendency on the part of hegemonic regime is to exert central control and to repress social conflicts. The hegemonic regime, a resister of collective demands, thus, tends to repress opposition, inhibit free expression, limit the arena of decision-making, restrict public accountability and, with the exception of the highly ideological states, allow only narrow and restricted opportunities for mass participation. (Rothchild, 1985).

From both historical and comparative experiences, by suppressing communal and social forces, demands that the hegemonic regimes all too often (Ethiopia, Somalia, Zaire, Sudan etc) allow festering grievances to explode into open rebellion with incalculable consequences for the society. This situation is usually aggravated by a tendency toward military solutions to the ethnic and regional challenges, leading to "intractable conflicts between determined adversaries" as is currently the case in Zaire, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Rwanda. Hence the

prevailing state of insecurity driven by exclusivist zero-sum thinking and adversarial behaviour on the part of the state.

The extreme manifestations of this travail of political power and its attendant excesses have been the violent collapse of civil order and the emergence of a malignant social condition of insecurity breeding disorder, and repression as "those ruling the state have sought to maintain and preserve their absolute monopoly of state power" (Markovitz, 1987). The irrepressible challenge to this monopoly of state power by the dominant fraction of African elite is now the leitmotif of the democratic revolt and movement seeking to end decades of despotic rule.

By contrast, the hegemonic exchange and polyarchical regimes (Botswana, Mauritius and Gambia previous to the current dispensation) by allowing a broader range of representation for competing social forces and responsive channels for the articulation of collective demands, diffuses to a considerable extent latent grievances through the proclivity of "Leader's preparedness to co-opt and engage in limited exchange relations with his country's powerful ethno-regional intermediaries". Systemic stability resulting from this chanelisation of latent grievances of public accountability has created conducive and enabling environment for strategies aimed at conflict transformation. This is so because:

> More than the hegemonic regime, then, the polyarchic and hegemonic exchange regimes are processors rather than makers of demands. They are more inclined to accept the legitimacy of autonomous social interests, and, in an effort to promote certainty on part of various political actors, are inclined to work towards national unity by reconciling and negotiating with these powerful social forces. In large part, their pragmatism is born out of a recognition of the "Softness" of their state institutions, yet in some cases (Botswana, Senegal), it also demonstrates elite preferences for regulating conflict through more cooperative rituals of encounter. (Rothchild, 1981:57).

These manifest regime patterns on the African continent explains the fundamental variation in the resolution of protracted social conflict. Hence Donald Rothchild's (1998) conclusion that any proposed conflict management system in

Africa must perforce integrate group fears, whether rational or irrational and responsive governance as prerequisite for success.

Case Studies

The final category of literature in the field of conflict and peace studies involves case studies of specific conflict system in a specific country (such as Nigeria). Arend Lijhart (1971:691-693) has identified six types of such case studies: (I) theoretical traditional or single-country studies of no theoretical value, (ii) Interpretative studies that use theoretical generalisations but relate to a specific case and do not contribute to theory building; (iii) Hypothesis-generating studies of a number of cases, (iv) theory-confirming and (v) theory-informing studies of single cases within a framework of established generalisation; and (vi) studies of single cases that deviate from established generalisations.

The Nigerian case studies include J. J. Tseayo (1974), T. N. Tamuno (1991); R. Anifowose (1992), Eghosa Oshagae et al (1994); I. Albert (1994), Otite and Albert (1999). Generally, these studies focus on the social (structural, psycho-cultural and distributive) dynamics that generate the persistent syndrome of conflict and disorder in the Nigerian Federation. The tremendous diversity presented by the ethnic composition, socio-economic structure, and physical characteristic of the country has had far reaching spatial consequences for the nature and spiral of protracted social conflict in Nigeria. These conflicts have varied widely according to the intensity or scale of violence, the character of parties involved and spatial dimension of its trajectories. The unique combination of these features constitute the spectrum of conflict systems in the Niger Delta, for instance, with the Warri crisis as a specific manifestation.

However, in analytical terms, a composite understanding of these conflagrations requires an investigation into the structure and process of these conflict systems as the general literature reviewed above suggest (Deutsch, 1973; Ross, 1993). This is so because the "culture of conflict has typical patterns of escalation, redefinition, extension to new parties, and termination that have both structural and psycho-cultural components". It is only in

this context that it would be understood why, for example, boundary, or land disputes in certain parts of the country have developed into fearsome contests between communities while in other parts the same type of dispute have remained at the level of only latent disagreement .

As reflected in the general literature above, analysis of any conflict system requires investigation into its dynamic components as expressed in its manifest structure and process. The conflict structure comprises (i) conflict situation, (ii) conflict behaviour and (iii) conflict attitudes and perceptions in terms of their complex and multi-dimensional inter-relationship. Processes, on the other hand, express changing patterns in the behaviour of the parties as they "alter strategies and react to each other's action, making minor escalatory or de-escalatory moves, or initiating major changes such as adopting coercion instead of conciliation (Deutsch, 1969:11). By focusing on goal incompatibilities ("material" and "positional" goals, to use Hirsch's categories), a range of psycho-cultural conditions and a set of related behaviours conflict structure, provides the basis for classification or taxonomies of conflict (conflict types) in different social formations. In Nigeria, these conflicts range from communal bloody clashes over land to intra-clan violent disputes over succession to traditional throne (Otite and Albert, 1999).

A survey of these conflict developments in the Niger Delta Zone (Bassey, 1998) reveals a disturbing pattern of accelerated rise in the intensity or scale of violence arising from dwindling capital resources (land), demographic explosion, social fragmentation and decay, communalisation of political practice, catastrophic balance between ethnic groups, economic and political fissures and suppression and articulation of primordial and class interest. These situational conditions have constituted a veritable conflict vortex in the zone under consideration. Furthermore, it is obvious from the structure of the conflict in this geopolitical zone that the character of parties on conflict vary considerably according to the primary basis of group mobilisation (ethnic /communal identification, political factor/ association, occupational and class interests as well as institutional defenders or detractors). Similarly, the range of issues

or values involved vary from "material" resources to positional goods involving: (i) exclusive use or ownership of resources (e.g land, timber etc) that often generate boundary conflict, (ii) status prestige and procedure (e.g traditional institutions and LGA headquarters and (iii) those concerned with the continued existence of one of the parties in its present form, or in some form acceptable to members of that party (goals of survival such as that of MOSOP in Ogoni Land).

Thus, in his brilliant appreciation of the problems of ethnic minorities and governance in Nigeria, Rotimi Suberu (1999), attributes incessant ethnic minority upheavals to: (i) that "the centralising project of state-consolidation or nation-building" in Nigeria has "almost universally involved the cultural devaluation, political repression and or economic expropriation of the more vulnerable geo-ethnic segments of the political community"; (ii) that in Nigeria's plural social system, "group identity exerts a powerful and autonomous emotional, psychological, symbolic or consummatory role"; (iii) that ethnic minority "grievances have been ignited by competition for, and by real or perceived discrimination in, the allocation of such valued but increasingly scarce benefits of modernity as roads, clinic, schools, jobs and related distributive opportunities; (vi) that, the "expansion in socio-economic mobility and educational opportunities has facilitated the rise of new ethnic minority elite who are adept at giving coherent expression to communal grievances, and mobilizing their communities in response to changing political developments and opportunities"; and, finally, that ethnic minority "tensions and passions have been inflamed by the sheer incapacity or inequity of political institutions in many heterogeneous states".

In specific terms, these manifestation of minority ethnic upheavals in the Niger Delta is a political resultant of the flawed allocative system: shift from "the principle of derivation to those of equality and population of states") which benefits the major ethnic-nationalities and marginalises the minorities of the Niger Delta (Amuno et-al, 1999). For the oil producing minority states of the Niger Delta, the development of hegemonic rentier federal state system in Nigeria unleashed a systematic process of structural abnegations as the power elites at the centre reinforce,

legitimise, and rationalise their control of oil resources through Decree 15 of 1967, Decree 13 of 1970, Decree 38 of 1971 and Decree 6 of 1975.

These conflicts have been generally considered symptoms or structural fallouts of the deep and ubiquitous primordial segmentation of Nigeria's plural polity (Dudley, 1973, Bassey, 1989, 1999). As Onigu Otite has noted in the AAPW premier, *Community Conflicts in Nigeria* (1999):

> Nigeria... is a plural society. Here, there are group inter-cultural encounters in the process of fostering specific interests and aspirations in view of the limited common resources. In Nigeria, like in other plural societies, it is necessary to direct the analysis of conflicts to involve various cultures and strategic social institutions in the search for meanings conveyed through different lenses, logic and grammars. In this way, we can more comfortably and assuredly assist parties in conflict to identify and eliminate systemic problems in the cause of the resolution, transformation and management of conflicts.

In plural as well as pluralistic social systems dominated by deep and overlapping segmentation along primordial and functional lines, the nexus of competition, cooperation and consensus are parts of the same process of conflict identification and their resolution, transformation and management" (Otite, 1990, Kuper and Smith, 1971). These processes have been evident in the pattern of structural and distributive conflict in Nigeria sustained by prebendal political culture. The survival of the Nigerian State has come to depend on the complex balancing and "centre-periphery" management of these centrifugal pressures. Failure to resolve these conflicts "over access to commonly valued scarce resources, and over divergent perceptions of socio-political situations", as Onigu Otite (1990) has noted," has the high potential of allowing the conflicts to degenerate into genocide or fratricide as it occurred among the Ife-Modakeke [Yoruba] and the Tiv-Jukun of Nigeria" and, one may add, the explosion over sharia in Kaduna and Aba/ Umuahia.

Operational Strategies

As is evident in the review of the general literature above, conflict resolution through management and transformation can be a

"trap for the overbold and the unwary" (to use Kantian phraseology). It also requires an atomistic society such as Nigeria investment in the promotion of "consensus building, social-bridge reconstructions, and the re-enactment of order in society" through the instrumentalities of the state and civil society. Thus, the resolution and transformation of conflict through the circumspective management of a complex social order such as Nigeria "constitute some of the prerequisites of the social dimensions of development". If such conflict persist overtime as in Warri, it is bound to escalate into a "violent trap" with, as Rothchild (1969:598) notes, a "serious imbalance or disjuncture between order and development at any level of the social structure".

This observation provides both the epistemic and methodological basis for AAPW's conflict intervention: "the identification and analysis of conflicts and their prevention, resolution, transformation and management, through various agents and programmes in relation to peace and development at several levels and spheres of societies" (Otite and Albert, 1999). This is so because, since the character of these conflicts change overtime, it is often pertinent for the conflict management process to probe into the dynamic processes of these conflict systems. As one analyst has noted:

> It is commonplace that conflicts change overtime... These behaviour patterns of the parties in conflict constitute a process that changes overtime as the conflict develops giving rise to questions such as: Is the conflict repetitive and cyclical, or characterized by a linear pattern of escalation; or to what extent is the pattern of the interaction between the parties symmetric and to what extent one-sided? (Eckstein, 1964)

The dynamic processes of conflict developments in the Niger Delta Zone of Nigeria may be seen in the variability of issue, attitudes and behavioural patterns over time in terms of both escalation and recession. In this regard, three dynamic properties of these conflict system may be investigated: (i) how factional structures (goals, attitudes, behaviour) alter in response to changes in adversary or environment, (ii) the "differing patterns of communication and interaction" between the factions, and (iii) the structure of the relationship between the parties and

their environment. A knowledge of these issues are no doubt central to conflict intervention and certainly makes a difference whether the "conflict escalates, de-escalates, intensifies, dies down, expands or contracts", in the face of conflict management process. (see chapter four).

However, of major interest in the context of this project (and productive of understanding of conflict developments generally) is the crucial question: why differences over the same types of value (goal incompatibilities) between communities and factional groups in other parts of the zone have not resulted in violent conflict as in Warri or Port Harcourt noted above. In explanatory terms, the reasons could be located in the conflict tradition that had existed between these communities and factions over time. These are the psycho-cultural dispositions which many analysts have cited for conflict development where structural conditions could be held constant. As Ross (1993) aptly summaries:

> Conflict is about the concrete interests adversaries pursue and, at the same time, about their **interpretations** of what is at stake. Conflicts become intense not just because of the value of what is being fought over but because of the **psychological** importance of winning and losing (Ross, 1993)

This consideration is arguably a *sine qua non* of the success of any conflict management strategy. This is so because interests and perceptions matter, and conflict management strategies will "succeed only to the extent to which they pay attention to both." Indeed, the "intensity of psycho-cultural factors is often so high that until they are addressed, differences in the structurally rooted interests separating adversaries cannot be bridged." On this view, whether the value incompatibilities fuelling conflict in the Niger Delta are land, resources or positional goods such as Local Government chairmanship, crisis management and transformation projects should take due cognizance of the conflict tradition (the predisposing factor) in these communities: perceptions and images of the other side. In other words, the effort should go beyond conflict limiting strategies involving altering incentives, payoff or the organisation of society (derived from structural theory). There is also an imperative need to "alter the dominant metaphors surrounding a dispute or the

interpretations of the parties in conflict" which is the focus of psycho-cultural approaches to conflict management.

This consideration now underscores the gamut of conflict management procedures including conflict avoidance, prevention, settlement and resolution. Although for analytical reasons, these strategies are often treated as isolated artifact, in reality, however, it is "often difficult in practice to tell whether an activity is classifiable as conflict avoidance or prevention, settlement and resolution. Moreover, in coping with many conflicts, a wide variety of management techniques may be simultaneously employed" (Mitchell, 1981:279). Alternative conceptualisation visualizes the conflict management process as sequences of conflict interventions involving (1) conciliation (assist communication); (ii) consultation (improve relationship), (iii) arbitration (mediation with muscle); (iv) peacekeeping (control of violence). In operational terms, these phases express the linkages between "peace-making" and "peace-building," the overall strategy of which is to "de-escalate the conflict back down through the state" (Keashly and Fischer, 1990:438).

The conflict management and transformation techniques generally associated with each phase also vary according to conflict type and requisite strategy envisaged. That is, that the different methods of the conflict management process "differ in the components of conflict they primarily attempt to influence" (Mitchell 1981:277). Indeed, as H. Prein (1987:89) has argued:

> One of the reasons for the failure of a particular third party intervention may be that its application was inappropriate to the state of escalation at which it was attempted, as identified by changes in relationship, communication, follow-up with other interventions designed to deal with the other elements not focused upon by the previous intervention

These various conflict intervention strategies have been concretised in recent times in a number of conflict management /transformation procedures (Isard and Smith, 1980; Kelman, 1981). These include: (i) facilitative mediation, (ii) interactive conflict resolution (ICR), (iii) appreciative inquiry and (iv) constructive conflict management regimes. In the realm of technique, these procedures overlap and reinforce each other in

terms of identifying "conflict patterns and engaging in negotiation of agreements and settlements" (Wilmot and Hocker, 1998). Thus, these conflict transformation procedures generally require skill training based on strategies for active intervention: understanding conflict, tools for conflict analysis, building strategies to address conflict, influencing policy, intervening in conflict, coping with consequences and impact evaluation (Williams et al 1988). These are often accomplished through the: (i) development of adequate training and capacity building programmes and (ii) the development of strategic team building capacity for identifying strategic agents of change (Lederach, 1997).

The first operative condition (capacity building) involves, as Lederach (1997) explains:

> The process of reinforcing the inherent capabilities and understandings of people related to the challenge of conflict in their context, and to a philosophy oriented toward the generation of new pro-active, empowered action for desired change in those setting.

In specific terms, capacity building involves, among others, (i) developing dispute system design capacity, (ii) developing violence prediction capacity, and (iii) developing cultural resources for peace capacity. The last two issue areas have been the subject of extensive research and controversy in the literature. Early warning of violent political conflicts has benefited from correlational, sequential and conjunctural models (Brecke, 1998). Similarly, the development of cultural resources for peace capacity has been a subject of extensive multi-disciplinary studies in the contemporary period (Avrach and Black, 1990, Zartman, 2000). Their relevance in modern condition, however, remain inconclusive and suspect. As Zartman (2000:4) observes:

> the conclusions to be drawn are not clear, since failure is usually over determined. Conflicts today may be different in nature-modern and therefore impervious to traditional methods, yet African and thus resistant to international methods. The only conclusion that ring clear is that more work is required on the nature of both conflict and conflict management methods in Africa so as to improve the fit between the two.

Nevertheless, since, as Immanuel Kant reminds us, "we see things not as they are, but as we are", the structure of perception of any population is conditioned by their cultural values (belief systems) and "decoding cultural grammar" is a central component of conflict mediation and transformation "because it reveals the value placed on resources and the strength and centrality of symbols associated with their use" (Otite and Albert, 1999:7). The complexity and intractability of the crisis resolution and transformation process in Warri, as can be seen in the subsequent chapters, is an apt testimony to show that ethnocentric world views are crucial determinants in conflict resolution.

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Chapter 2

T.A. Imobighe

Warri Crisis in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Introduction

Inter-ethnic conflict involving Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws in Warri dates back to the colonial era. However, the recent unabating violence that has visited the crisis is essentially a phenomenon of the 1990s. Warri is a cosmopolitan town that has grown in importance, size and population with diverse cultures and socio-economic means. The tremendous growth of the city, consequent upon the discovery of oil in the area, has created considerable stress on its resources of land and other infrastructures. As the petroleum business accelerated the blossoming of Warri, more and more people moved into the city in search of greener pastures. This heightened the clamour for the city's limited resources especially in available land. The resultant effect has been the aggravation of the rivalry and tension between the three major ethnic groups in Warri—Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo. In recent times, the rivalry and conflict between these three ethnic groups have degenerated into recurring violence. The situation has since the 1990s been compounded by certain political developments (to be explained later) thereby turning Warri into a city persistently in a state of crisis.

Evolution of the Crisis

The basic root of the crisis in Warri stems from the claims and counter-claims by the three main ethnic groups in Warri (Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo) over the ownership of Warri land. These conflicting claims, by extension, have led to the questioning by the Ijaws and the Urhobos of the title of the Olu of Warri as the paramount ruler of Warri. Thus apart from the issue of land, there is the other important question of the suzerainty of the Olu over the whole of Warri.

The Itsekiris claim Warri as their homeland, just as Burutu is the homeland of the Ijaws and Okpe, Sapele, Ethiope and Uvwie Local Government Areas represent the homeland of the Urhobos. The fact that the name Warri is a corruption of the name *Iwere*, which the Itsekiri sometimes used to refer to themselves and their capital (Ikime, 1969:254), tended to add credence to their claim that Warri belongs to them. However, both the Ijaws and Urhobos, who have long history of residence in certain parts of Warri, question the Itsekiris' claim to the ownership of the entire Warri landscape. They believe they have unquestionable right over the areas of Warri inhabited by them. They therefore seek a recognition of their own ethnic traditional rulers, while rejecting the authority of the Olu, whom they feel should be regarded as the Olu of Itsekiri and not of Warri.

Although, like other ethnic groups of the Niger Delta region, Itsekiri enclaves exist within the other ethnic communities, Warri has remained the main concentration of the Itsekiri ethnic group. This fact and their well-organised centralised political system under the Olu, are important factors of Itsekiri dominance over the political and commercial life of the Oil City.

Another factor which tends to explain Itsekiri dominance of the affairs of the area, is their geographical location. By virtue of their location at the coast, the Itsekiris were the first to be exposed to the European traders and the British colonialists. They served as the "middlemen" in the slave trade that dominated that part of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the trade in palm produce that replaced the slave trade. Thus, the earliest trading posts and modern amenities like schools and health centres were established first in Warri before any other place. Itsekiri exposure to the early Europeans was particularly enhanced in the early 1870s when the Itsekiri paramount chief sent his eldest son, Don Domingos, to study in Portugal. After his studies, Domingos returned to become the Olu of Itsekiri, during which he put his training and exposure to good use and established a sophisticated political system in his kingdom. His reign witnessed flourishing commercial and diplomatic relations between the Europeans and the Itsekiris, which successive Olus were to build on.

The Itsekiri control of the trade in the Delta region earned

them much prosperity and political influence not only during the period of colonial rule, but also in the post-colonial era. This tremendous influence coupled with the earlier mentioned population concentration, made Warri to be synonymous with Itsekiri. This was especially so, in the eyes of the early missionaries and the British colonial administrators. This observation is buttressed by Obaro Ikime's reference to A.F.C. Ryder's work on Missionary Activity in Warri, in which he noted that "Ryder's *Warri Kingdom* means the Itsekiri Kingdom".[1]

The concentration of development in Warri by the British colonial authorities made Warri to be so strategically important that the early Europeans saw Warri as being synonymous with the Western part of the Niger Delta region. Thus when the colonial administration decided to reorganise Southern Nigeria into new provinces, following the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, the Western part of the Delta region, comprising Itsekiri, Ijaw, Urhobo, Isoko, Aboh and Kwale territories, was named Warri Province.

The Struggle over Ownership of Warri

The issue as to who settled first in Warri is a matter of great historical controversy between the Itsekiris, the Ijaws and the Urhobos. Each group claims to be the first to settle in Warri and tries to buttress its claim with carefully selected data. In other words, each group tries to interpret available historical data to suit its claim. It is not, however, the intention of this study to go into that controversy here. The truth is that the three ethnic groups have long historical claims to the portions of Warri inhabited by them. Another important historical fact is the long-standing Itsekiri dominance of the geo-political and economic affairs of Warri. To explain Itsekiri ascendancy, it will be necessary to trace the history of Warri from the period of British colonial rule.

British Colonialism and Itsekiri Ascendancy in Warri

Before the imposition of British colonial rule in the area, the three main ethnic groups, Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo, operated as separate independent political units. Their respective

geographical locations determined their occupations and the commodities these ethnic groups produced. The products of the coastal communities complemented those of the hinterlands; hence, they enjoyed what could be regarded as relatively well-organised and mutually profitable commercial relations. Where there were quarrels, these were usually minor frictions arising from their social and commercial transactions.

The pattern of British penetration of the region was to undermine their relatively peaceful relations. Since the penetration started from the coast, the Itsekiris were the first to be "pacified" before the British moved into the Urhobo settlements. The Itsekiri resisted the British for a while before they bowed to the superior weapon of the invaders. After reconciling themselves to the imposition of British rule, the Itsekiris turned out to become trusted friends of the British and served as tools in the latter's penetration of the hinterland. The Urhobos particularly hated the Itsekiris for their role in the British occupation of their land and the subsequent preferential treatment the Itsekiri received during the period of colonial rule.[2]

An important factor of the British penetration that worked in favour of the Itsekiris in their claim over the ownership of Warri land, is the fact that it was Chief Dogho, an Itsekiri, who signed the legal documents which conveyed the land to government. This partly explains why all the legal decisions on the land issue up to 1936 went in favour of the Itsekiris. The court judgements did not however stop the Urhobos from persisting in their claim over the portions of Warri occupied by members of their ethnic group.

It could thus be said that the unabating rivalry and tension between the Itsekiris on the one hand, and the Ijaws and Urhobos on the other, which seem to dominate the politics of the region over the years, has a lot to do with the imposition of British colonial rule. It fostered antagonistic relationship between the three ethnic groups as each tried to undo the other in the process of adjusting to the new political and social order in which they found themselves. The decision to group these hitherto independent ethnic groups together under Warri Province, in which the Itsekiris occupied a position of dominance, was bound to invite the adverse reaction of the other two ethnic groups.

Thus, throughout the period of colonial rule, the Ijaws and the Urhobos were united in their common objective of countering the enforced political association with the Itsekiris. The pressure on the British colonial rulers to dissolve the political marriage between the three groups under the umbrella of Warri Province got partial fulfilment in the British decision in 1930 to reorganise the Province into ethnic divisions. This reorganisation led to the creation of Jekri-Sobo, Western Ijaw, Sobo and Aboh Divisions.

The reorganisation has been described as a partial fulfilment of the desire of the Ijaws and the Urhobos, in the sense that these new divisions were to operate under Warri Province. Besides, the exercise did not fully satisfy the ethnic composition of the Province as part of Urhobo was grouped with Itsekiri, while the whole of Isoko was grouped with Sobo Division.[3] Perhaps only the Ijaws derived considerable satisfaction from the exercise with the creation of Western Ijaw Division. Even then, the exercise still left an Ijaw enclave — Ogbe Ijaw within Warri. This notwithstanding, the exercise, to some extent, was to ease the tension between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris for a very long time. In fact, it was not until 1997 that the two ethnic groups were to experience a major crisis over the location of the headquarters of the newly created Warri Southwest Local Government Area. More will be said about this later in this chapter.

While the reorganisation brought about relative peace between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, the same could not be said in respect of the relations between Itsekiri and Urhobo. The Jekri-Sobo Division included five Urhobo clans, which continued to agitate for their separation from Itsekiri. (Ikime, 1969:249-259). Their agitation was to remain a constant source of Urhobo-Itsekiri tension and hostility until 1938 when the two ethnic groups within the Jekri-Sobo Division got their separate native administrations. The five Urhobo clans — Okpe, Uvbie, Agbon, Oghara and Udu were constituted into what was known as Western Urhobo Native Administration, while the Itsekiri area became known as Itsekiri Native Administration, both operating under the Jekri-Sobo Division. The Jekri-Sobo Division remained in existence until 1949 when the Western Urhobo Native

Authority was transferred to the Urhobo Division. With this transfer, what was left of the Jekri-Sobo Division became known as Warri Division. This meant that Warri Division was now technically an Itsekiri area. This is because the Division was now made up of only the Itsekiri Native Administration (Ikime, 1969:266). The implication of this was to reinforce the Itsekiri claim that Warri is their homeland.

One would have thought that the separation of the Urhobo clans from the "Jekri-Sobo Division" would end the tension between the Itsekiri and the Urhobo. This was not to be so. Two issues remained unresolved, which helped to perpetuate the tension between the two ethnic groups. One of them had to do with the presence of Urhobo community (Agbassa) in the new Warri Division, around which fresh agitation for inclusion in Western Urhobo continued. In 1949, they formally requested to be transferred to Western Urhobo Native Authority (Ikime, 1969:266). The rejection of the request was to further heighten the tension between Itsekiri and Urhobo. This has remained so up till now.

Similarly, there exist Itsekiri communities in the Urhobo clans of Okpe, Ogharefe and Agbon that form part of the Urhobo Division. Although these Itsekiri communities are not eager to be separated from the Urhobo communities, this is not to be interpreted as meaning an end to the perennial conflict between the two ethnic groups. Other sources of friction abound, which tend to perpetuate tension between the two groups. One of such sources of friction has to do with the tendency of the Itsekiri to extend the authority of the Olu to the Urhobo communities among whom they settled. This, in the case of Okpe, led to the dispute over the ownership of Sapele, which had to be settled in court in favour of the Urhobos.

The creation of Western Ijaw also did not eliminate the presence of Ijaw communities in Warri. The existence of an Ijaw community—Ogbe Ijaw in Warri was to create an uneasy peace between the two groups until the situation blew open in 1997 when Warri Southwest Local Government Area was created and the headquarters was moved to the Itsekiri-controlled Ogidigben instead of Ijaw-controlled Ogbe Ijoh.

The Olu of Warri Controversy

After nearly an interregnum of one century, the Itsekiris selected Olu-elect in 1935. The Urhobos were opposed to the installation of an Olu. The Urhobos believed that since the Olu would be the only traditional ruler in the Jekri-Sobo Division, it could be wrongly assumed that his authority covered the entire Jekri-Sobo Division. They could not countenance any move that would possibly add credence to the Itsekiri claim that they owned Warri, inclusive of the five Urhobo clans. Thus, when the colonial authority acceded to the installation of the Olu, the event, understandably, increased the determination of the Urhobos to press for separation from the Itsekiri-controlled division. Some of them also felt that the five clans should come together and establish their own traditional rulership to serve as a unifying factor among the Urhobos.

The fear of the Urhobos was to materialize as the Itsekiri, soon after the installation of the Olu in 1936, actually conveyed the impression that the Olu had full powers over the Urhobos and the Ijaws. The situation was worsened by the Itsekiri demand that the Olu should be called the Olu of Warri instead of Olu of Itsekiri. The Urhobos were vehemently opposed to the move. They argued that since Warri was the name of the entire province, associating Warri with the Olu title would create the impression that all the people of the province were subject to the rule of the Olu. (Ikime, 1969:253). To the Itsekiris, the demand was not an unusual one since, from time immemorial, or at least before the long interregnum, there had always been an Itsekiri Kingdom of Iwere, Ouere, or Ouwere, which was later corrupted into Warri with an Olu as head. Although the British colonial authority did not accept the Urhobo argument (Ikime, 1969: 253-254), they nonetheless refused to accede to Itsekiri request. The British action thus helped to reduce the tension between the Itsekiri and the Urhobo for a while.

In 1951, the Itsekiris revived the issue of changing the title of the Olu of Itsekiri to the Olu of Warri. At this time, a new government was in control of Western Region, after the regional elections, which were conducted under the party system, following the promulgation of the Macpherson, constitution. The

Action Group-controlled government of Western Region, under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo, was sympathetic to the Itsekiri request. Even though the Urhobos restated their protest that the action would give the impression that the Olu was paramount chief of the province, the government, in May 1952, went ahead to change the title of the Olu of Itsekiri to "Olu of Warri". At a point, the members for Urhobo and Isoko in the Western House of Assembly suggested that the name of the Province be changed to Delta Province as a way of placating their respective constituencies. The logic behind this suggestion is that changing Warri Province to Delta Province would mean that the domain of the Olu of Warri would be Warri town. This solution was what the Action-Group controlled Western Region finally adopted. Unfortunately, by the time the government acted on the suggestion and changed the name of the Province from Warri to Delta Province, the Urhobos were too angry to be placated by the compromise action. Even after the separation of the Urhobo area from the then Jekri-Sobo Division, the presence of some Urhobo communities in what was carved out as Warri Division helped to sustain the Urhobo opposition to the change. These Urhobo communities in Warri have remained opposed to the action to date.

The Itsekiri-Ijaw Local Government Headquarters Controversy

Although the creation of Western Ijaw Division during the reorganisation of the 1930s reduced the tension between the Ijaws and Itsekiris, it did not completely eliminate the sources of friction between them. This is because there still existed within what was left of the old Warri Division, some Ijaw communities — Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma — who wanted their own separate local government administration due to what they regarded as Itsekiri marginalisation. In 1991 when Warri Division was split into two local government areas—Warri North and Warri South — these Ijaw communities were grouped with Warri North even though they were geographically located in the South. The exercise meant that for these communities to get to their local government headquarters at Koko, they had to traverse about five local governments.

The Ijaws saw the exercise as a deliberate attempt to impede their meaningful participation in the affairs of the local government administration. When, in response to protest, the Federal Government directed in 1992 that the affected Ijaw communities should be moved back to Warri South, the Itsekiris went to court to stop it. The Itsekiri opposition to their demand to be regrouped with Warri South convinced the Ijaws that the Itsekiris were interested in their economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural extinction. They therefore became more determined than ever to intensify their agitation to be separated from the Itsekiri-dominated local government administration. (Peretemode, 2000).

Thus, when in December 1996, the Delta State Military Administrator, Col. J.D. Dung announced the creation of Warri Central and Warri South Local Government Areas with Ogbe-Ijoh as the headquarters of the latter, the Ijaws greeted the announcement with great joy. They were happy that their dream of having their own separate local government council had materialised, and that, at last, they were free from the yoke of Itsekiri domination. They took steps to ensure the immediate take-off of the new Local Government Council. They raised funds to refurbish and rehabilitate old structures to serve as the temporary secretariat of the new local government council.

It turned out that what Dung announced was different from what the Federal Government actually created. What was published under the Federal Government Decree No.36 of 1996, creating new States and Local Government Areas, was the creation of Warri Southwest Local Government with Ogidigben (an Itsekiri town) as headquarters. The Ijaws, understandably, felt betrayed. They believed that Itsekiri conspiracy had once more denied them of their political right. Their bitterness immediately translated into violent demonstration in which the Itsekiris became the obvious target. The violence, which erupted, soon engulfed the whole of Warri and its environ. It led to an unprecedented destruction of life and property. For some time, it was impossible to use the waterway linking Warri to Escravos and Benin River. The activities of the oil companies — Shell and Chevron — operating in the area were brought to a halt by the activities of rampaging youth.

While the running battle continued, the youths of the three main ethnic groups, who actually masterminded the escalation of the inter-ethnic violence, also saw the crisis as an opportunity to vent their anger on the government and the oil companies operating in the area, and to demand their "pound of flesh" for the long years of neglect and the ecological degradation of their land. The destruction of property was widespread and was not limited to any particular ethnic group. In addition, the rampaging youth also destroyed government property and damaged oil installations. Oil workers were at times held hostage and were usually freed only after the payment of ransom. The security forces were somehow helpless, especially as they were often outmanoeuvred by the Ijaw youths who demonstrated a copious mastery of the terrain.

Impact of the Conflict on Development

Weighed against the background of the immense resources the nation generates from the area, Warri and its environ could be said to be relatively underdeveloped. Of course, because a few oil-related industries have been sited in the area, Warri has over the years attracted a huge crowd of job seekers from different parts of the country. The incursion of migrant workers into the Oil City without corresponding efforts to expand social infrastructure and amenities in the city has turned many parts of Warri into urban slums. Besides, the ecological degradation of the land has particularly affected the local inhabitants who can no longer carry out their traditional farming and fishing activities.

The outbreak of hostilities in 1997 has taken its toll on the development of Warri. The destruction that has taken place will need a lot of developmental resources to restore Warri back to the pre-hostility status of the early 1990s. Since hostilities began in 1997, very few new investments have come into the area. Of course, no investor would like to put his money in an environment that is so patently insecure, as Warri has been since 1997. Even many of the big companies with considerable investments in Warri have moved their headquarters from Warri to Port Harcourt. In fact, many of them now only maintain

skeletal services in Warri. This drift of investors away from Warri has aggravated the unemployment problem in Warri, which in turn, has compounded the security problem of the Oil City. Jobless youths roam about the streets and seem to derive their livelihood from the cycle of violence that has visited the city since 1997. Without rehabilitating these youths and initiating them into legitimate occupational endeavour, it will be extremely difficult to restore peace in Warri.

Besides, the ethnic hostility that has marked the landscape of Warri history over the years, to some extent, has impeded the opening up of Warri for proper development planning. It has affected the allocation of land for meaningful development. The tendency by each ethnic group to hold on firmly to its enclave within Warri has greatly impeded the proper utilization of the land in Warri for productive development that would benefit all its inhabitants, irrespective of their ethnic background.

Warri Crisis in Nigeria's Contemporary Geo-Political Realities

The crisis in Warri brings into question the integrative thesis usually associated with urbanization. This relates to the belief that increasing urbanization can bring about the transformation of the relationship between different ethnic groups from a mere mechanical association to an integrated society based on organic solidarity, cemented by increased inter-dependence and harmonization of shared values and goals. Regrettably, this thesis has failed to materialize in the case of Warri. In other words, rather than the expected evolutionary change towards ethnic integration and peaceful co-existence, what has taken place in Warri is a heightened awareness of ethnic identity, extreme communal disharmony and a more intense rivalry and hostility. In other words, despite centuries of inter-marriages and functional exchanges, entrenchment of pristine identities and cultural boundaries has remained the lot of Warri, as far as inter-ethnic relations are concerned.

Warri's peculiar situation can be traced to the pattern of settlement at the time that the different ethnic groups migrated into the town. When they came to the territory which came to be known as Warri, rather than mix together, each group settled

in a separate area; either by choice, or by the directive of those who granted them right of settlement. With time, these settlements became exclusive enclaves of the affected ethnic groups. Because each group lived as a separate socio-cultural unit, they were not detached from their original cultural roots. Understandably, no transcendental culture emerged from the long years of association between the different ethnic groups to supplant their individual cultures.

This pattern of separate settlement for each ethnic group has its advantages and disadvantages; perhaps more disadvantages than advantages. Admittedly, having an exclusive ethnic enclave provides a greater opportunity for easy mobilization of the group for joint action. At the same time, it makes the group susceptible to much vulnerability. Such vulnerability can take the form of discrimination in the spread of social amenities or other opportunities. Where an ethnic group is dispersed among other groups, it will be difficult to target it for any discriminatory treatment. Other forms of vulnerabilities include the possible isolation of the group for hostile treatment in the form of sanction, or other forms of physical coercion. For instance, if the settlement pattern in Warri was mixed and interspersed between the three main ethnic groups, it would have been extremely difficult for the aggrieved parties on either side to carry out the type of concentrated massive destruction of property that took place.

The crisis in Warri could be replicated in many of Nigeria's cosmopolitan cities e.g. Kaduna, Lagos and Kano, with the same pattern of settlement, especially, if care is not taken to address the whole issue of indigene and non-indigene dichotomy within the Nigerian polity. In some of Nigeria's big cities today, there are enclaves of different ethnic nationalities whose longevity of stay in the various sections of the city in which they settle ought to qualify them for the status of indigenes of their respective cities of settlement. Unfortunately, because Nigeria, irrespective of the length of residence, still maintains this anachronistic indigene and non-indigene dichotomy, Nigerians living outside their places of birth do not feel any sense of belonging to the communities in which they live. In order to be politically relevant,

several of them have been compelled to agitate for their own separate administrative units. This is usually the case, where the affected group constitutes a viable ethnic enclave, like the case of Modakeke in Ile Ife, Osun State.

It is therefore understandable why the creation of ethnic local government units is being suggested as a possible formula for resolving the crisis in Warri. The argument is that since the different ethnic groups cannot live together peacefully under a common administrative unit, let them live apart in different local government units as a price for peace. The creation of a separate local government for Modakeke has been mooted as a solution for Ife-Modakeke conflict. The formula is also what has been adopted in the management of Aguleri-Umuleri conflict.

Creation of ethnic local governments as a way of managing ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is not in the nation's best interest because of its implications for national cohesion and integration. Assuming, for instance, all the ethnic enclaves in Warri are constituted into separate local government areas, can one avoid doing the same for the ethnic enclaves in Sapele and some of the other big cities elsewhere with similar problems? Apart from its implications for national cohesion and integration, such an exercise could open a Pandora's box of demand for ethnic local government creation in our big cities.

Even today, waves of migration are still taking place in Nigeria, leading to the creation of new ethnic enclaves that can in future challenge the authority of the original inhabitants of such places. In many rural areas in Nigeria today, just as happened in some parts of the country many years back, migrant farmers are moving into communities with good farming land, thereby creating new settlements that will eventually grow into ethnic enclaves. For instance, within the past two decades, waves of this type of migration have led to the emergence of Igbira ethnic enclaves in many parts of Edo and Ondo states. In most cases, the instruments granting them rights of settlement, which are based on mutual understanding, are not properly documented. One cannot therefore rule out the possibility of future generations of these Igbira migrant farmers claiming traditional rights of ownership over the portions of land they

occupy. Are we likely, in response to this possible future scenario, going to create more ethnic local governments in the affected places? This is why the nation should not rush into the suggestion of creating ethnic local governments as an easy way out of the various incidents of inter-ethnic conflagrations in different parts of the country.

This is not to say that more local governments should not be created where there are ethnic enclaves. Of course, more local governments should be created for developmental purposes and to reflect the demographic configuration of any particular area. For instance, in the case of Warri, there is the need to create more local government areas as a way of opening up the Oil City for rapid development. In this sense, the creation of Warri West Local Government Area with the headquarters at Ogbe-Ijoh or Ogidigben, which ever is the case, should not be seen as creating a local government exclusively for the Ijaws or the Itsekiris but for all the people within the territorial boundaries covered by the new Local Government Area. This is the only way new local government creations can serve the development purposes for which they are meant without inviting the danger of ethnic exclusivity.

What the nation needs is not the factionalisation of the country into ethnic entities, but a well thought-out package of integrative measures that would harmonise Nigeria's ethnic diversity and turn it into an asset instead of a liability. To this end, two mutually reinforcing propositions are put forward here to deal with the problem at both the grassroots and national levels.

Two aspects of migration problem impinge on the solution that is being proffered here for solving inter-ethnic conflicts at the grassroots level, out of which one is particularly relevant to the situation in Warri. The first relates to the situation where the period of settlement by the various groups is chronologically known. In this sense, the issue of prior settlement and hence, the right of ownership of the land, is not in doubt. What is needed under such circumstances is the harmonisation of the rights and needs of the parties. This could be done by guaranteeing the users of the land the right to use the land while

they, on their part, recognise the right of ownership of those who own the land and extend to the latter, the recognised traditional courtesies attached to such right of ownership. In the absence of any tradition to guide the parties, then both parties would work out mutually acceptable courtesies to follow.

The second aspect, which directly impinges on the Warri situation, is much more complicated than the one highlighted above. This is a situation where the historical chronology of settlement is so sufficiently blurred or deliberately distorted by the parties that it is difficult to say exactly which group had prior right of settlement. It is in this sense that the situation in Warri tends to fit into the case where all the parties, besides their need of the territory, could be regarded as joint owners of Warri. Admittedly, records of early visitors to the region and past court judgements, to certain degree, have established the historical fact of Itsekiri prior settlement in parts of Warri. At the same time, we must equally acknowledge the early waves of migration of Ijaw and Urhobo communities into parts of Warri who, due to the longevity of their stay and their disconnection from their home-based communities, earn the right to claim Warri as their homeland as well.

In this situation, it is difficult to apply the straightforward concept of rights and needs harmonisation formula earlier discussed. For a complicated case of this nature where all the parties have long-standing claim on the territory, none of which can be discountenanced for the other, the concept of "our land" fits into the suggested integrative solution that would transform inter-ethnic relationship within a city from a mere mechanical association into an organic whole. The concept of "our land" could serve as a win-win problem-solving mechanism for addressing the sensibilities of all the ethnic groups laying claim to the particular city. If applied at the global level, the concept could translate into "our world".

The application of the concept to ethnic conflict in a particular territory will enable the various ethnic groups to see the particular city or territory as their common heritage, to which they have a collective responsibility to develop. In this sense, the creation of new administrative units, like local government, would be seen

as part of the strategy to open up new areas in the city for meaningful development to the benefit of all its inhabitants irrespective of ethnic coloration. The adoption of the concept of "Warri our land", for instance, would enable all the ethnic groups in Warri to see the territory as their common land and become joint stake holders in the development of Warri for the welfare of all its inhabitants. In this case, whether a local government is created in an area mainly inhabited by the Ijaws, Urhobos or Itsekiris, such a local government would not be said to have been created exclusively for the Ijaws, Urhobos or the Itsekiris, but rather for all the people within the territorial space covered by the affected local government. It is by focusing on development and not ethnicism as the primary motive for creating local governments that we can ever hope to build bridges for the various ethnic groups to reach out to one another and not work at cross-purposes, but for their common co-prosperity.

Of course, such a solution to the problem at the micro level can be meaningful only if necessary constitutional measures are taken at the macro national level for the concept of common heritage as it applies to the inhabitants of our cities, to flourish. It is in this sense, the anachronistic indigene and non-indigene dichotomy should be addressed. There should be constitutional provision to enable Nigerians to automatically enjoy the privileges of indigenes of the cities and States they decide to live in, after a specified period of residence in the place, which should not be more than five years. If this can be done, the excessive manifestation of ethnicism that is presently trying to tear the nation apart will be effectively checked. Most importantly, it will help to facilitate the management and resolution of the various ethnic conflicts ravaging the Nigerian political landscape.

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Chapter 3

T.A. Imobighe

Earlier Attempts at Managing the Warri Crisis

Introduction

In recent years, the inter-ethnic rivalry in Warri has attained such a high level of unabating tension, frequently punctuated by violent clashes, that Warri has now come to epitomise a society persistently in a state of crisis. Although conflict is inevitable in the interactions between human beings (Dudley Weeks, 1992, p.ix), and often serve as a creative element in human society (John Burton, 1987, pp.137-138), the horror that has visited the Warri crisis is a pointer to the fact that conflict could equally be very destructive if it is not properly managed (T.A. Imobighe, 1993, pp.37-38).

The fact that all human societies, communities and organisations experience conflictual relationships at one time or the other is definitely not in doubt. What is problematic is the manner such conflicts affect the relevant societies, communities, organisations or individuals. This problem of how conflicts impact on the relationship between the parties involved is, however, a factor of management. In other words, whether a conflict will be destructive or productive, will depend on the manner in which it is managed.

Management relates to the application of technical, human and conceptual skills in the manipulation, control, or utilisation of resources of men and material to accomplish some specified ends. Within the context of conflict management, it has to do with the direction, control or resolution of conflict.

If a conflict is well managed and resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties, it could lead to some qualitative development in the relationship between them. This is particularly so, if the resolution of the conflict leads the parties involved to devise problem-solving procedures to guide their future relationship, as well as change the existing climate of mutual distrust and animosity to one of mutual understanding

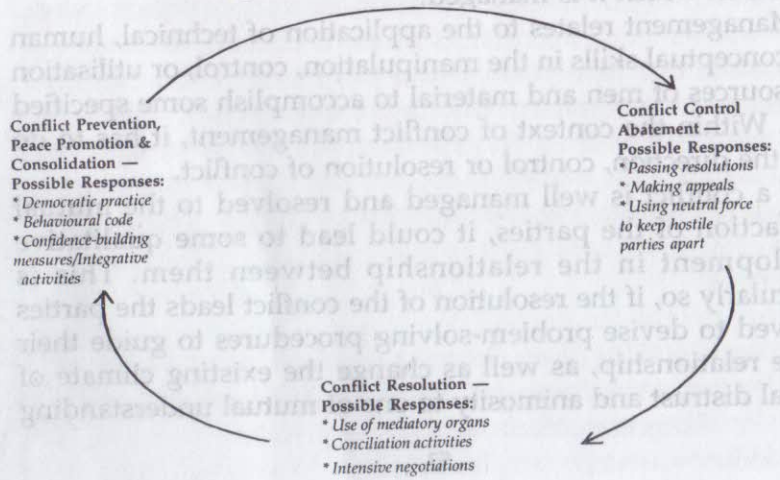
and creative cooperation between them. If, on the other hand, a conflict is badly managed as to lead to escalation, it could become harmful and lead to unnecessary dissipation of scarce resources. This is what has happened in the Warri episode. Over the years, the crisis in Warri has been managed essentially through the judicial process and the use of security forces to suppress the crisis.

Before we look into the problems besetting these approaches, it will be necessary to develop a model of an integrated conflict management system, which is meant to give a comprehensive picture of the range of activities embodied in a proper conflict management process. Using this model, the way the Warri crisis has been handled in the past will then be critically examined.

Integrated Conflict Management System

The concept of an integrated conflict management system, developed elsewhere by the present writer (T.A. Imobighe, 1997, Chapter 18), sees conflict management as a process involving three levels of activities. These include conflict prevention and peace promotion; conflict control and abatement; and conflict resolution. Although the three levels of activities are not mutually exclusive, taken together, they represent what is illustrated below as "the conflict management circle"

Integrated Conflict Management Circle



The integrated conflict management model emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to the management of conflict. This means that conflict management efforts should, first and foremost, seek to eliminate the conditions that create an environment for conflict. In other words, we should not wait until conflict erupts before taking action, but should rise up against the conditions and situations which are directly responsible for conflictual relationship. This means developing "early warning system" that will indicate where conflict is brewing or imminent in any particular region in order to facilitate an early response to prevent violence or communal carnage.

If efforts to ease tension and promote peace should fail and conflict should erupt for whatever reason, then conflict management moves to the second level of activity, which is to control and abate conflict through a variety of measures. The intention at this stage is to prevent the escalation of hostilities and create a propitious atmosphere for the third and final stage, which is the actual resolution of the conflict.

It is at the third stage that intensive negotiations are put in place to settle all the fundamental issues associated with the conflict. Once the issues involved in the conflict are successfully resolved, conflict management is said to have gone full circle. It also means the relationship between the parties involved in the conflict has returned to a tolerable level of friction where normal interaction can once more be cultivated. At this point, the efforts of conflict managers are again directed towards measures to promote and consolidate peace, and prevent future conflicts.

As could be seen from our illustration, different types of conflict management measures are needed at each of the three levels of responses. The measures needed at the level of conflict prevention and peace promotion include the establishment of a behavioural code, confidence-building measures, cooperative ventures or integrative activities and the promotion of democracy, especially at the intra-state level: i.e., involving the people in the decisions affecting them. The measures often used at the level of conflict control and abatement include appeals for restraint, evolving general principles or guidelines for settlement and

arranging cease-fires, use of force to stop violence and deployment of a neutral or peace keeping force to separate hostile parties. It is at the level of conflict resolution that intensive negotiations, various forms of conciliatory moves and the use of mediatory organs are put in place to iron out the differences between the parties.

Perhaps, a basic setback in the management of conflict in Nigeria, as elsewhere, has been the failure to see conflict management in this holistic manner. In most cases, conflict management effort treats each of the above levels of activities in isolation of the others, as if each one is a separate entity. Consequently, partial gains at one level are not usually followed up by intensive action at the other levels in order to consolidate such gains.

For instance, in the Warri crisis, as we shall see later in this discussion, the suppression of conflict by the deployment of security forces to the area is often regarded as an end in itself. Such abatement efforts are not followed up with intensive negotiations to resolve the fundamental issues involved in the crisis. Of course, suppression of a conflict is not the same thing as resolving the conflict. The failure to take advantage of the presence of a neutral force to engage the hostile parties in serious negotiations to resolve the fundamental issues involved in their conflict, for instance, has led to undue prolongation of such troop deployment.

Land is at the centre of the Warri crisis. The corresponding unanswered question is who owns Warri. Land conflicts are among the endemic type of conflicts in Nigeria. They are also among the most intractable to resolve, because land is a very important and highly prized resource. Human sustenance is derived from land; hence, there is a special attachment to it by all human societies. Alienating a people from their land is like removing them from their root.

The fact that the problem has been very acute in Warri is due to ecological degradation of the land and water resources of the area and the surrounding territories by the operations of oil and gas companies. Another contributing factor is the country's fast growing population and the instability in its

administrative structure (states and local government areas). These two factors have combined to put a lot of pressure on existing facilities and resources, leading to frequent antagonism between the various communities who share such facilities and resources. The problem is complicated by the failure of government to ensure that the proliferation of administrative units is matched by pertinent policy decisions that reinforce national integration.

Other factors that have contributed to the aggravation of land conflicts in the area include inefficient use of available land; frequent migration of people into areas of relative advantage; and contradiction between traditional and government perception of land ownership and leasing rights.

Conflict Management Approaches Used in the Warri Crisis

In considering this, we must first identify the primary role-players in the crisis. As indicated in chapter two, three ethnic communities — Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo—are the main parties to the crisis, while the various Nigerian Governments (federal, state and local council) play the role of a third-party mediator. The three parties to the crisis, over the years, have used a combination of the judicial and violent approaches in their respective responses to the conflict. The government, on its part, has concentrated on coercive and judicial approaches in the form of deployment of military and paramilitary forces to suppress the crisis and establishment of judicial panels or commissions of inquiry to look into the conflict.

Judicial Method

The conflict in Warri has had a long history of management through the judicial process dating back to the 1920s. Between 1921 and 1971, over twenty court judgements had been given on the perennial land dispute in Warri. Majority of these cases even got as far as the Supreme Court, while a few got to the West African Court of Appeal and the Privy Council in London. A good example is the 1926 case of Ometan on behalf of Agbassa Urhobo versus Chief Dore Numa on behalf of the Itsekiri. In the suit, Agbassa challenged Itsekiri's right of ownership of Agbassa

area of Warri. The judgement at the lower court had it that Agbassa community was given permission by the Olu of Itsekiri to settle on the land, for which they render service to the latter. This judgement was given in 1926. In 1931 the case went to the Supreme Court which confirmed the decision of the lower court. The case then went to the Privy Council, which also confirmed the decisions of the earlier courts in 1933 and apportioned one pound as the annual tribute payable to the Olu. The case resurfaced in 1949 and 1957. In 1973, the case again got to the Supreme Court, where the earlier decision on the matter was upheld.

While majority of the judgements established Itsekiri ownership of most of Warri, a few established Urhobo or Ijaw ownership of certain portions of land in Warri (D.A. Tonwe, 2000, pp.8-10, and J.O.S. Ayomike, 1988). In 1934, for instance, Saba village community within Ogbe-Ijaw went to court over a disputed parcel of land against Ogbe-Sobo (Aladja). They won the case on the evidence they gave that their ancestors got permission to settle in the place from the Olu (D.A. Tonwe, 2000, pp.10-11). While the Urhobo community lost this case to the Ijaw for lack of historical evidence of their prior occupation of the place, Okere-Urhobo got a judgement against Itsekiri in 1973, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court, that Okere-Urhobo was never part of the Olu's kingdom (A.S. Akpotor, 2000, pp.12-13).

Another aspect of the judicial method relates to the numerous tribunals or commissions set up by Government to look into the crisis at the various times it escalated into violence and wanton destruction of life and property. Among the most recent of such commissions are the Justice Nnaemeka-Agu Commission of 1993, the Justice Al-Hassan Idoko Commission of 1997 and General Magashi Panel of Inquiry of 1999. While the government is usually enthusiastic and quick in setting up the relevant commissions and panels of inquiry, such enthusiasm is not usually translated into action at the level of release and implementation of the findings of such judicial commissions and panels. Thus, up to the moment of writing, no government white paper has evolved in respect of the three commissions mentioned above.

This lack of enthusiasm on the part of government to carry through its conflict management processes to their logical conclusion is not limited to the Warri conflict. In a previous study by the present writer, it was found that once it succeeds in suppressing a particular conflict through the deployment of security forces, the tendency is for the government to relax its efforts until there is another conflagration (T.A. Imobighe, 1997, Chapter 18).

While the judicial method has been one of the most popular techniques in the management of the Warri conflict, the fact remains that the various court judgements, judicial commissions and panels have not brought about the resolution of the conflict. The Warri experience has again underscored the basic weakness of the judicial approach to conflict resolution. One basic weakness of the judicial method of conflict management is that they usually bring about outcomes that are not mutually satisfactory to the parties. They usually end up in win-lose outcomes, thereby leaving a lot of bitterness in their trail. For instance in the case of Warri, while these judgements have, to some extent, recognised the right of Itsekiri ownership of most parts of Warri, they have not sufficiently addressed the issue of harmonising the rights and needs of the parties. Because the interests of the Ijaws and Urhobos have not been adequately taken care of in most of the court judgements, they have tended to discredit the court decisions on the argument that the Itsekiris got favourable judgements through fraudulent means (V.F. Pretemode, 2000, see Appendix A, Peretomode's Report). Ironically, while passing a vote of no confidence on the courts, the two groups seem quite happy with the few cases they won and do not feel that the judgements given in those cases were obtained through fraudulent means.

The above shows the extent to which people can go in discrediting court decisions that do not favour them. As long as the judicial process does not seek to harmonise the interests of the parties involved in a conflict, so long will it be difficult to produce a mutually satisfactory outcome. It is pertinent, therefore to restate here the point that has been discussed in Chapter Two of this book that the best way to achieve peace in Warri is for the

parties to subscribe to the thesis of "Warri our common land", so that all the inhabitants of the town, irrespective of their ethnic background, can collectively take up the challenge of developing Warri for their common co-prosperity. This means that the longevity of residence of the various ethnic enclaves in parts of Warri should entitle such groups the right of equally referring to Warri as their own homeland, which should also entitle them to some rights that need to be harmonised with those of the Itsekiris, the primary owners of Warri.

Coercive Method

This relates to the use of force or other coercive means to manage a conflict. Coercive techniques could take the form of third-party use of military or paramilitary forces to intervene in a violent conflict to enforce peace, bring about an end to hostilities or suppress the conflict. The resort to violence by parties involved in a conflict to force a settlement that is favourable to themselves on their opponents is also part of this. The use of coercive methods by either a third party or parties to a conflict does not usually guarantee a permanent resolution of the conflict. At best, it can only provide a temporary relief, serving as a control mechanism to de-escalate the conflict or create some semblance of peace while necessary measures are put in place to resolve the issues involved in the conflict. Therefore, for coercive techniques to have a salutary effect, those concerned must take advantage of the uneasy peace to work out a permanent solution to the relevant conflict.

The Warri conflict, especially since 1997, has witnessed unprecedented use of violence by the three main ethnic groups — Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo — involved in the conflict, with each group claiming, rightly or wrongly, that its use of violence is a reaction to the prior perpetration of violence against it by the other party or parties. The resort to violence or force does not usually lead to a permanent settlement of inter-communal conflict. This is because parties to a conflict do not willingly submit to force. Where they are compelled to submit to force or succumb to violence, they usually accept the situation only as a temporary price to be paid for their inferiority in the power equation. And once they are able to overcome their deficiency,

they usually fight back with greater vehemence and force. This is exactly what has taken place in Warri since 1997, one violence begetting another and so on, until the town became totally enmeshed in a cycle of unending violence.

Government's role in the management of Warri conflict has also been marked by frequent resort to coercive techniques. In fact, when the present crisis erupted in 1997, the first reaction of Government was to deploy security forces to the affected areas to enforce and maintain peace. Such deployment of security forces is usually the first step before resorting to other measures like the setting up of judicial commissions or panels earlier highlighted. While the pattern of government response is usually the same for all inter-community disturbances, e.g., Ife-Modakeke, Ogoni, Zango-Kataf, etc., the type of force used in any particular case usually depends on its intensity. In the case of the present crisis in Warri, the government started with the deployment of ordinary Police personnel. When they proved incapable of coping with the situation, units of the "Mobile Police Force", specially trained for riot control, were drafted to the area. When they too could not cope, then military personnel were deployed. Because of the intensity and intermittent nature of the disturbances, the military units including especially, the naval forces in the area, have maintained a state of alert since the outbreak of the crisis in 1997, ready to come to the aid of the units of Mobile Police Force deployed to the area to maintain what has become an uneasy peace.

Overall Assessment of the Earlier Methods Used

Using our integrated conflict management model as a framework for assessing the past attempts at managing the Warri conflict, it could be said that past efforts have failed to adopt the integrated conflict management approach. Consequently, nothing has been done to comprehensively deal with the perennial conflict in the Oil City. There has been relative neglect of conflict prevention and resolution aspects of our conflict management circle. Not much has been achieved at the level of actually resolving the fundamental issues involved in the conflict. The judicial method that has often been resorted to by the parties

or third parties has failed to resolve the problem. In fact, it has created more bitterness instead of bringing relief to the parties.

In the area of conflict prevention and peace promotion, very little has been done to build mutual confidence and trust among the parties. The techniques of system re-examination and correction have not been effectively used to address the accumulated grievances of the parties to the conflict. Until we entrench the culture of routine system re-examination and correction, the nation's ability to take timely measures to remove possible causes of friction will be limited. It is in this regard that one will suggest that there is the need to address the indigene and non-indigene problematique of the Nigerian political system. This is necessary if we are to put to rest the basic feeling of insecurity by Nigerians any time they are operating outside their places of origin.

The failure of Government to deal with the peculiar socio-economic problems of Warri as indeed the whole of the Niger Delta region has helped to raise an army of jobless youths ready to cash in on the conflict. Clearly, the Warri conflict has played into the hands of these jobless and embittered youths who see the conflict as an opportunity to demand their pound of flesh as an atonement for the long years of neglect.

It is only in the area of conflict control and abatement that Government's use of coercive measures has recorded limited success. Because the attraction was to the coercive as against problem-solving techniques, little was done to go into the fundamental issues affecting the Warri conflict or allay the fears and concern of the parties.

As we noted earlier, the use of force or other coercive means to put down disturbances, as was the case with Warri between 1997 and year 2000, has limited utility. However, such utility is okay only as long as the coercive action is not meant to be an end in itself but a temporary measure to provide the congenial atmosphere to effect a negotiated settlement between the parties to the conflict. Unfortunately, because in the Warri case no effective action has been taken to resolve the fundamental issues involved in the conflict, inter-communal violence has remained a recurring problem since the outbreak of the crisis again in 1997.

This has resulted in the drafting of unprecedented large number of security forces to the affected areas, thereby turning Warri, more or less, into a garrisoned territory. What can be concluded from the present situation is that although there seems to be an uneasy peace in Warri, what has happened is not a resolution but a suppression of the conflict.

The problem with the deployment of security forces that is not backed by intensive mediation efforts is that it unnecessarily prolongs the stay of such security forces. In fact, longevity of stay has been the fate of security forces deployed to quell inter-communal disturbances in various parts of the country. This is because the units of Mobile Police Force frequently deployed to quell disturbances in Nigeria have neither the mandate nor the training to act as conflict resolution facilitators. In other words, they lack the expertise to get the parties in conflict together to work out a mutually acceptable solution to their problem.

To overcome this basic weakness of the country's conflict management efforts, two possible options could be considered. The first option is the empowerment of the nation's security forces so that while they maintain the uneasy peace between the disputants, they can equally function as facilitators for the resolution of the relevant conflicts. This could be done by the inclusion of conflict/crisis management exercises in their training syllabi at the officers' level.

The second option is to build up a corp of Mediators who can take full advantage of the presence of security forces, and act as facilitators by bringing the parties in conflict together for intensive negotiations, with a view to finding a lasting solution to their conflicts. It is within the context of this second option that the intervention in the Warri crisis by the "Academic Associates PeaceWorks" team becomes critical. The extent to which this intervention has helped in enhancing the prospects of a lasting peace in Warri is the subject of the subsequent chapters of this book.

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Chapter 4

Celestine O. Bassey

Crisis Intervention Survey: Data Analysis and Evaluation

As suggested in the opening chapter, the Warri conflict is a microcosm of a wide range of manifest conflict disorders, which have engulfed the Nigerian Society in the last decade. However, as in any other human environment, what is important about the Warri conflict is not its occurrence but how the parties involved in the conflict attempt to deal with it. In this regard, a survey research targeting the three ethnic groups involved in the conflict has been undertaken.

It proceeded from the general assumption that understanding conflict systems involves analysing conflict structures and processes. In pursuit of this objective, the researchers have sought through questionnaires and structured interviews to inquire into the requisite conditions for peace in Warri and how these responses could shape requisite constructive conflict intervention and management strategies in the metropolis. The aim is to evolve a possible outcome that offers a solution that is acceptable to all sides, thereby transforming the conflict into a cooperative situation.

Methodology

Three separate studies of the warring communities in Warri were undertaken at the beginning of the crisis intervention project within a comparative framework of survey research: Professor V. F. Peretomode for the Ijaw community, Dr. A. S. Akpotor for the Urhobo community and Dr. D. A. Tonwe for the Itsekiri community. The three researchers have sought through structured interviews and questionnaires to assess:

(i) Conflict tradition in Warri (questions on perceptions of historical development of conflict in Warri);

(ii) Structural conditions (questions on forces which can make a society more or less prone to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence; that is how organization of society shapes action)

(iii) Psycho-cultural dispositions (questions on the determinant of the overall level of conflict in a society in terms of shared assumption, perceptions about what people in a society value, their definitions of friends and foes, and the means which groups and individuals use to promote or pursue their goals); and

(iv) Conflict settlement (how to develop and promote "win-win" strategies based on techniques of facilitative mediation, interactive conflict resolution or constructive conflict management that offers solutions acceptable to all parties involved).

Given the demographic pattern in Warri, the survey research was based on probability sampling method, using cluster and multi-stage sampling techniques. Within each population cluster (Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri), streets and households were randomly selected. To account for several social characteristics (such as sex, age, group, occupation and education), a stratified sampling procedure was adopted. This is what best ensures representativeness in view of our research goal. Sampling units, were households or families. The reports of the three scholars on Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo communities were subsequently synthesised and evaluated into a single report, which served as the basis for the AAPW conflict intervention project in Warri. The separate reports are included in the appendices to this book.

The goals of the analysis are to determine conflict tradition which explains why differences occurring in the same type of values (goal and means incompatibilities) between the communities in Warri have resulted in violent conflict unlike what obtains in other metropolis; how factional structures (goals, attitudes, behaviour) of the warring communities alter in response to changes in adversary environment; the differing patterns of communication and interaction" between Urhobos, Ijaws and Itsekiri; and the structure of the relationship between

these protagonists and their environment. It is felt that a knowledge of these issues is central to any intervention effort in the Warri crisis and that it will certainly make a difference whether the "conflict escalates, de-escalates, intensifies, dies down, expands or contracts", in the face of conflict management process.

In the section below, the synthesis and evaluation of case studies of the three ethnic communities in Warri will be presented according to the specified headings for the preparation of this report:

(i) Causes of the Warri crisis

(ii) Factors sustaining the violence

(iii) Settlement profile

(iv) Suggestions for lasting peace

(v) Major role players in the crisis

(i) **Causes of Warri Crisis:**

The three case studies of the Urhobo, Ijaw and Itsekiri communities generally have agreed that the recurrent ethnic violence in Warri is a result of a complex mix of historical development and contemporary political and sociological factors. The growth, expansion, and intersection of the three ethnic groups in the past four hundred (400) years and administrative policies of the British Colonial power have engendered a "catastrophic balance" between contending ethnic forces in Warri and have shaped the structures of politics in the area. The reciprocal trajectories of communal violence between the Ijaws and Itsekiris, and the Itsekiris and Urhobos since early 1990s have resulted in the phenomenon of a "violence trap", in which identity and violence reinforce each other.

In concrete terms, the causes of conflict between the three ethnic groups reside in goals and means incompatibilities, varying from material resources to positional goods, involving:

a. Dispute over ownership of Warri land and corresponding "settler" designation for "migrants";

b. Suzerainty of the Olu of Warri. For the Itsekiri, the

Olu is a paramount ruler of the "Itsekiri homeland" (Warri): an institution they claim has existed in antecedent Itsekiri Kingdom since 1480 AD. For the Ijaws and the Urhobos, the Olu's paramountcy starts and ends within the Itsekiri community. To them, the Itsekiris' claim is logically unsound, politically indefensible and sociologically untenable;

c. The corresponding dispute over the legitimacy of claim by non-Itsekiri ethnics to separate Local Government Councils in Warri Metropolis; and

d. Royalties from mineral resources and mutual claims of marginalisation arising from either demographic factors (Itsekiri vis-à-vis Urhobo and Ijaw) or hegemonic control and utilisation of political apparatuses to advance parochial goals to the detriment of other communities.

These structural conditions, the respondents from each of the ethnic communities generally agree, have set the foundation and context for the violent conflict development in Warri since the early 1990s. This conclusion is consistent with the research findings in the three ethnic groups in Warri. For example, in an attempt to assess the perception of conflict development in Warri in the three ethnic communities, the respondents are asked: "In other metropolis (Benin, Port-Harcourt, Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, etc) people of different ethnic backgrounds have co-existed and lived side by side, but why in your opinion do you think it is different here in Warri?" Tables of percentages provided by the researchers from the respective communities reinforce mutual perception of these factors, although from the standpoint of parochial interest.

Why, Unlike Other Metropolises, Is Warri Prone to Conflict?

Table 1A: Ijaw Respondents (120)

S/NO	Responses	NO.	%
1.	Three ethnic groups claiming traditional ownership of Warri or sections of Warri.	115	95.8
2.	Overlordship of one ethnic group (the Itsekiri) over the two other groups (Ijaw and Urhobo), expansionist tendencies, arrogance and claim of superiority of the Itsekiri and their Olu and latter's habit of treating other aborigines (Ijaw and Urhobo) as customary tenants	115	95.8
3.	Lack of unity among the three ethnic Groups (Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo), mutual suspicion of one group to undo the other, hatred between the Itsekiri and the other two groups	100	83.0
4.	Neglect by government (both State and Federal), government support of one ethnic group (Itsekiri) against the others (Ijaw and Urhobo).	48	40.0

Table 1B: Urhobo Respondents (500)

S/NO	Responses	NO	%
1	Change of title from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri	500	100
2.	Land ownership – Overlordship of Olu of Warri over all lands	400	80.0
3	Overlordship of Olu of Warri over traditional institutions in Warri	400	80.0
4	Structural Problem—Political marginalisation of the Urhobos in Old Local Government Area.	430	86.0
5.	Underdevelopment and Unemployment	430	86.0

Table 1C: Itsekiri Respondents (300)

S/NO	Responses	NO	%
1	Struggles for ownership and control of Warri by other ethnic groups	52	17.3
2	Presence of oil wealth	170	56.6
3	Efforts by the Ijaws and Urhobos to change the title of Olu of Warri.	48	16.0
4	Marginalisation of the Itsekiri as a minority ethnic group within the State structure	30	10.0
5	Awareness		
	Total	300	100

From the above tables, it is fairly obvious that in terms of "goal incompatibilities" between the three ethnic communities in Warri, the issue of land ownership is probably the most crucial, emotive and intractable. While for the Itsekiri, the land ownership issue is a foregone question, both the Ijaws and the Urhobos dispute Itsekiri's claim to ownership of Warri from both historical and legal standpoints. Two hundred and twenty two (222) respondents in table IC (Itsekiri) representing 74% of that group interviewed mentioned land and related oil wealth as the dominant source of dispute between Itsekiris on the one hand and Urhobos and Ijaws on the other. As the summary from the Itsekiri case analysis puts it:

> The geographical area, which was Warri division, and which became Warri Local Government Area, but now divided into Warri North, Warri South and Warri West Local Government Areas, is ***Land of the Itsekiri People***, sometimes referred to by historians as Itsekiri country or Itsekiri Territory, thus making Warri synonymous or interchangeable with the Itsekiris.

Again, that:

> The Itsekiris are settlers in Burutu Local Government Area (Ijaw homeland); Okpe, Sapele, Ethiope, Uvwie Local Government Areas (Urhobo homeland) and Ologbo (Edo State). To them, the Urhobos and Ijaws are settlers in the Itsekiri homeland of Warri. It is strange however that the Ijaws and the Urhobos don't want to accept settler status elsewhere, yet, they think others are settlers in their own land.
>
> Against this hegemonic claim, 95.8% of the respondents from the Ijaw community asserted that the major cause of the conflict is that unlike most other cities, the three ethnic groups (Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris) claim ownership of sections or all lands in Warri. Equally crucial is the fact that the Ijaw case analysis indicates that 95.8% of the respondents felt that Warri, owned by three ethnic groups, is being claimed by one ethnic group as theirs, while viewing the other two groups as customary tenants. Some respondents recalled that the Warri Traditional Council set-up on September 16, 1977, never functioned because of the disagreement between the Itsekiris and Ijaws as to the official language to be used. The Itsekiri insisted that their language should be the only official language of the Council, while the Ijaws insisted that if it is not English language, then it must be Itsekiri and Ijaw languages. The Itsekiris and the Olu refused and the Ijaws withdrew from the Council.
>
> Similarly, the data from the Urhobo community survey confirms the centrality of the land ownership as a fundamental cause of the crisis. Four hundred (400) of the total respondents (80%) maintain that land ownership tussle sustains the conflictive relationship between the Urhobos and the Itsekiris. According to them, the Itsekiris have no historical proof of land ownership in Warri. They claim that the court judgements in favour of Itsekiris in the 1920s and 1930s were due to the influence of the Itsekiri on the British "mercenary" judges. They further claim that the land on which the present Olu's palace is built was bought in his private capacity from the Oforudu family of Ekurede, Warri, in 1971, and that aborigines do not buy land.
>
> A related issue to the dispute over land ownership is that of "overlordship of the Olu over Traditional Institutions in Warri". For the Itsekiri respondents this follows logically from Itsekiri's ownership of Warri. In support of this position, the respondents provided copious historical and legal justifications, ranging from Professor Alan Ryder's documentation in *Benin and the European, 1485 – 1897* to series of legal judgments from the 1920s to the present.

On the contrary, a considerable number of respondents both from Ijaw (95.8%) and Urhobo (80%) communities see this claim as an affront and collateral source of the protracted social crisis in Warri. For example, the Ijaw community case study notes that:

> The change of the title from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri which made the Olu to begin to arrogate power and supremacy over the Ijaws and Urhobo aborigines of Warri and the tendency of the Itsekiris to equate Warri Local Government Councils to Itsekiri Kingdom before outsiders, gives the impression that the Olu is the owner and ruler of Warri. This is despite the fact that the laws of the Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Law 1959, Cap. 37, excluded the three Ijaw Clans/Councils of Ogbe-Ijoh and Isaba, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma, from the overlordship and jurisdiction of the Olu.

> The Urhobo report is also unequivocal about the generative source of conflict associated with the "overlordship of the Olu". The data from the survey confirms this. All respondents, 500 (100%) traced the cause of the Warri crisis to the change in title of the Olu ship. According to the survey report, the most crucial remote cause of the Warri crisis is traceable to the change or promotion of the Olu of Itsekiri to the Olu of Warri, and his consequent movement from Ode-Itsekiri (Big Warri) to Warri metropolis (Small Warri) in 1952, courtesy of the then Action Group Government of Western Nigeria,

led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The change in title was part of the Awolowo Government's attempt to elevate the Olu to the same rank as the Alaafin of Oyo and the Oba of Benin. Of importance is the interpretation of this change of title by the Itsekiri to mean the overlordship of the Olu over Warri affairs, particularly, the ownership of all lands and control of traditional institutions.

While the two factors above that is, land and paramount leadership of the Olu, could be considered to be the major generative sources of the conflict in Warri among the three ethnic communities, other equally vital issues, such as political, economic and social factors, have overlapped in a variety of forms to create the current vortex of violent confrontation in Warri.

(ii) Factors Sustaining the Violence:

As noted in our introduction, conflict in the Warri metropolis dates back to the colonial era. The current violent trend dates back only to the early 1990s and the more recent and unabating bloody exchanges go back to March 1997. In order to determine the factors sustaining this accelerated scale of violence (dubbed "Mutually Assured Destruction" by the press following the May-June, 1999 Mayhem in Warri), the researchers posed two sets of questions to their respondents. The first set of questions is aimed at assessing the structural conditions, that is, to elicit how the organisation of society in Warri shapes action or forces which make Warri more or less prone than other metropolis to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence. The second set of questions is aimed at psycho-cultural dispositions, that is, to determine the overall level of conflict in the place in terms of shared assumptions, perceptions about what people in the society value, their definitions of friend and foe, and the means which the affected groups and individuals use to promote or pursue their goals.

The first set of questions relating to the structural conditions include:

(i) If in the past, there have been problems between the Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ijaws, why do you think this problem is escalating today rather than reducing?

(ii) As an Ijaw, Urhobo or Itsekiri, how do you relate to or see other ethnic communities in Warri?

(iii) Are you being denied your ethnic rights by other communities?

(iv) Who owns Warri and what do you want to see happen to other ethnic communities other than yours in terms of control of Warri?

Comparative responses to these questions are represented below:

Why the problem between the Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws is escalating today?

Table 2A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Failure to return Warri South Local Government Headquarters to Ogbe-Ijoh	113	94.1
2	Continued domination, oppression, arrogance of the Olu and Itsekiris and their claim to superiority, overlordship and ownership of Warri. They view Ijaws and Urhobos as customary tenants.	111	92.5
3	Failure of government to come out with the truth and take decisive decision over the Warri crisis e.g. failure of the Federal Government to release and implement reports of Panels set-up to look into the crisis—reports whose recommendations are perceived to favour the Ijaw and Urhobos.	97	80.8
4	Long years of unsettled rivalries	64	53.3
5	The attitude of multi-national companies and lack of development in Warri and the Niger Delta.	59	49.1
6	Refusal to shift ground on long-held positions, the existence of communication gap between the groups and failure of dialogue to yield positive results.	51	42.5

Table 2B: Urhobo Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	Inadequate and biased government approach to the crisis	400	80.0
2	Inflammatory statements, speeches, utterances and paid advertisements in newspapers	250	50.0
3	Clash of superiority between Itsekiris and Urhobos	100	20.0

Table 2C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	Intensification of efforts by Ijaws and Urhobos to control Warri	115	38.3
2.	Ijaws' belief in the use of violence	115	38.3
3.	Struggle to share from oil money	13	04.3
4.	Government inaction to violence by Ijaws	57	19.0

A cursory analysis of Tables 2A, B and C, shows that the undercurrent of violent and adversarial relationship between the Itsekiri and the Urhobo on the one hand, and Itsekiri and Ijaw on the other, hinge on a multiplicity of factors arising from perception and misperception of hegemonic intent on the part of contending social forces in each of the communities. In Table 2A, there is a general consensus among the Ijaw respondents in two areas as to why the problem between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris escalated rather than reduced. First, is the relocation of the Warri South West Local Government Area Headquarters from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben. This singular act they claim, heightened awareness by the Ijaws that the Itsekiris "were hell bent on their continuous oppression, marginalisation, overlordship, show of superiority and seizure of Ijaw land in Warri and its environs".

Second, is the widespread perception of failure on the part of Government in terms of its judicial and administrative responsibilities. The Federal Government, it is asserted, failed to release and implement results of Panels set up to look into the Warri crisis – reports whose recommendations are perceived to favour the Ijaws and Urhobos. As a result, they contend that

the Itsekiris are exerting much power and influence on the Federal Government.

For the Urhobo respondents, "the inadequate and biased Government approach to the crisis was singled out (80%) as the central factor escalating the crisis. Most respondents posit that the unending nature of the Warri crisis should really be traced to government's unwillingness to follow "the path of truth, justice and fair play", thus agreeing with the second factor cited by the Ijaw respondents. The case report drew attention to an open letter to the Head of State by Chief B. O. Okumagba, chastising the Olu for perpetuating the crisis by making it difficult for the Government of Col. D. Dung to use decree 14 to release the Idoko's report on Warri crisis.

For the Itsekiri respondents, the grievances of the Ijaws and the Urhobos stated above are nothing but empty rhetoric against imagined grievances. A summary of the factors sustaining the crisis from an Itsekiri standpoint include:

(i) Creation of Delta State and the attendant majority status of the Urhobos who have supported the Ijaws "vehemently in their extermination plan of the Itsekiris. This would not have happened in the larger Bendel State".

(ii) Government's intentional inaction and connivance with Col. J. D. Dung in creating Warri South Local Government Area with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh.

(iii) Unwillingness of the Ijaws to renounce violence.

(iv) The ability of the Itsekiris, to match the fire-power of the Ijaws whom they believe enjoy the subtle support of the Urhobos.

The survey reports documented under Table 3A, B and C depict the manner each of these ethnic groups perceive the other groups in Warri and the manner they relate on the basis of the expectation of hostility from each other.

Survey Question: As an Ijaw, Urhobo or Itsekiri, how do you relate to or see other Ethnic Communities in Warri?

Table 3A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	As rivals	26	21.6
2	Potential enemies/killers	15	12.5
3	Friends and Neighbours	79	65.8

Table 3B: Urhobo Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	As rivals	400	80.0
2	Potential enemies/killers	400	80.0
3	Friends and Neighbours	100	20.0

Table 3C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	As rivals	82	27.3
2	Potential enemies/killers	218	72.6
3	Others	-	-

Table 3A shows that in spite of the hostilities between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, majority of the respondents from the Ijaw community (79 representing 65.8%) still consider both Itsekiris and Urhobos as friends and neighbours. It is however significant that twenty-six (26) respondents (21.7%) and fifteen (15) respondents (21.5%) respectively, regard Itsekiris as rivals and potential killers/enemies. On the whole, the respondents say they have no problems with the Urhobos in Warri.

Table 3B summarizes the viewpoints of the Urhobo respondents on their perception of other ethnic communities in Warri, four hundred (400), representing (80%) of those interviewed, see the Itsekiris as rivals, enemies and killers. This category of respondents is also very vehement against the change of title from the Olu of Itsekiri to the Olu of Warri and his overlordship status. They do not believe in peaceful co-existence with the Itsekiri ethnic group. All 400 respondents look at the

Ijaws as friends, brothers and neighbours in their battle for supremacy in Warri against the Itsekiris.

Table 3C, on the other hand, reveals the siege mentality that had developed in the Itsekiri as a consequence of prevailing perception of being "surrounded by hostile neighbours". Two hundred and eighteen (218) respondents uncompromisingly regard both Ijaws and Urhobos as conflictual rivals rather than friends and neighbours. This dominant mindset on the part of the Itsekiris also conditions their response to the final set of questions on the structural factors in the Warri metropolis as could be seen in Table 4C and 5C.

Survey Question: Are you being denied your legitimate rights by the other Ethnic Communities?

Table 4A: Ijaw Respondents

S/No.	Responses	No	%
1	Land	42	35.0
2	Royalties from mineral resources and Employment	81	67.5
3	Political Positions	90	75.0
4	Traditional Instruments	26	21.6
5	Administrative Headquarters	120	100

Table 4B: Urhobo Respondents

S/No.	Responses	No	%
1	Land	420	85.0
2	Royalties	380	76.
3	Political Positions	370	74.
4	Traditional Instruments	220	44.0
5	Administrative Headquarters	150	30.0

Table 4C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/No.	Responses	No	%
1	Land	95	31.6
2	Political Positions	75	25.0
3	All of the above, i.e. land, political control, oil wealth, traditional institutions and administrative headquarters	130	43.3
4	Others	-	-

In terms of "rights denial", Table 4A reveals that the theme of "marginalisation" has been a major constant factor in the Ijaw relationship with other ethnic communities, especially the Itsekiris, in Warri. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents (100%) stated that the relocation of Warri South Local Government Area from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben is the most important right denied the Ijaws in Warri. This is followed by political rights (90 respondents representing 75%). One of the respondents from Ogbe-Ijoh drew attention to the fact that in the Warri Local Government Councils, Itsekiris have 13 wards and Ijaws 12, yet the Ijaws have had no Local Government Chairman, and no Councillor in any area represents them either in the State House of Assembly or House of Representatives.

Eighty-one (67.5%) respondents indicated that the Ijaw people's right to employment and "royalties" from mineral resources from this area are being denied them. As one of the respondents put it: "the prospect of an Ijaw person getting a job with the oil companies in Warri is slim. The Ijaws are denied jobs because the Olu has a company which recruits staff for the oil companies, especially Chevron. The Olu will never employ an Ijaw man. He will prefer a person from another tribe if he cannot find an Itsekiri.

The response from the Urhobo community (Table 4B) agrees significantly with those of Ijaws on royalties from oil (67.5%) and the issue of political position (75%). All 500 respondents felt very strongly about issues of denial of legitimate rights by Itsekiri (their traditional rivals). But as to specific level of denials the respondents differed. This of course shows the degree to which such denials affect different Urhobo clans and the concomitant level of awareness.

The metaphor of reciprocal conflict dominates the structure of responses (Table 4C) of the survey from the Itsekiri community. From the earlier stated premises that the causes of the conflict are inter alia: (i) "the persistent failure by the Ijaws and the Urhobos to realise that Warri is Itsekiri homeland, and (ii) the "non-acceptance of settler status by the Ijaws and Urhobos", all the respondents asserted that their legitimate rights were being threatened by other ethnic communities; Land (31.6%), political position (25%), combination of other values (43.3%).

Hence the conclusion by the Itsekiri community in the survey that:

> "It is the determined desire of the Ijaws and Urhobos to take undue advantage of the minority stature of the Itsekiri in the Nigerian context by going into alliance, and using their overwhelming size and resources, to suppress the Itsekiris until the latter are prepared to surrender their inalienable and God-given right to exist as a separate and distinct ethnic group with a homeland of their own within the Nigerian polity."

The Urhobos and the Ijaws assert that all the land which the Itsekiris are claiming, rightfully belong to the former and that though these lands were Government owned, they were fraudulently acquired and later sold "to their Itsekiri brethren". And that despite the court judgment against them, the Itsekiris still arrogantly claim them. This situation, they contend, was further aggravated by the military administration of Group Captain Ibrahim Kefas under whom six plots of land were allocated in the GRA to the Olu as against the usual one plot agreed upon. This deprived other prominent Urhobos the right to land allocation in the GRA.

With regard to royalties from mineral resources, 76% of the respondents contend that by virtue of the seeming paramountcy of the Olu of Warri, he "cornered all oil royalties to himself and his brethren; and that he alone receives the state and local stipends. Thus, there seems to exist considerable symmetry between the litany of complaints of the Ijaws and the Urhobos against perceived domination by the Itsekiris on the issues of land, royalties and political positions.

On the whole, the dispute between Itsekiris and their Ijaw/Urhobo neighbours seems to assume a zero-sum dimension, in which the pay-offs of both sides always add up to $x + (-x) = 0$. On the other hand, there is also some attitudinal expression that accommodation by one side may be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Empirical support for this observation is provided in the responses to the final set of questions under this category: Who owns Warri and what do you want to see happen to the other ethnic communities other than yours in terms of the control of Warri?"

Survey Question: Who owns Warri and what do you want to happen to other Ethnic Communities in terms of control of Warri?

Table 5A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No.	%
1	Ijaws	5	04.1
2	Itsekiris	-	-
3	Urhobos	-	-
4	The three ethnic groups.	115	95.8

Table 5B: Urhobo Respondents

S/No.	Responses	No.	%
1	Ijaw and Itsekiri Part Ownership	100	20.0
2	Urhobo	400	80.0

Table 5C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/No.	Responses	No.	%
1	Itsekiri	295	98.3
2	Ijaw	-	-
3	Urhobo	-	-
4	The three ethnic groups	5	01.6
5	Others	-	-

From Tables 5A, B, and C it could be concluded that of the three ethnic communities, only the Ijaws (96% of respondents) exercise some restraint or necessary accommodation on the issue of ownership in Warri. However, this observation needs to be taken side by side with earlier views on the causes of the conflicts and factors sustaining the conflict from the Ijaws respondents.

For the Urhobos (Table 5B), out of 500 respondents, 400 (80%) claim Warri belongs to the Urhobos. They argued that the Urhobo clans of Agbarha and Okere control 85% of the land in Warri with over 300 streets. Itsekiris only occupies 281.1 acres of land in Warri. Out of 268,734 census figure for 1996, Urhobos constitute, 250,000. Only 20% of the respondents indicate that Warri is jointly owned by the three ethnic groups and that each ethnic group should keep its own boundaries.

As table 5C shows, the Itsekiri respondents are uncompromising and unapologetic about Warri as "Itsekiri

Homeland". About 98.33% assert complete ownership of the land. Regarding the related question as to what should happen to the other ethnic communities in terms of control of Warri, 91.66% argued for absolute control by the Itsekiris and only 8.33% conceded coexistence as the best way out of the existential dilemma in Warri. This is a marked contrast to the position of the Ijaws.

The second set of questions, as noted above, focuses on the psycho-cultural dispositions of the protagonists in the Warri crisis, which account for the intensity of the feelings involved, by exposing the morbid fears and antipathies of the disputants and the means they consider necessary in pursuing their incompatible goals.

These questions include:

i. **How would you describe an Urhobo/ Ijaw /Itsekiri?**
ii. **Would you marry an Ijaw/Itsekiri or Urhobo?**
iii. **How is your prospect in life (job, material well being accommodation) affected by other ethnic groups in Warri?**
iv. **Have you ever been helped by people of other ethnic origin?**
v. **Is violence the only means of settling scores among the different ethnic groups in Warri?**
vi. **If no, what must be responsible for the continuation of the bloody confrontation among the ethnic factions in Warri?**

Table 6A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Hostile images (a) of Itsekiris	120	100
	(b) of Urhobos	21	17.5
2	Marriage (Yes)	111	92.5
3	Life prospects (negatively affected)	120	100
4	Helped by other ethnic groups (Yes)	105	87.5
5	Violence only means (No)	120	100

	if peaceful means fail (Yes)	105	87.5
	Reason for continuation of violence:		
	•Local government H/Q relocation to Ogidigben	113	94.1
	•Oppression and discrimination	111	92.5
	•Government inaction	97	80.8
	•Policies of NNCs	59	49.1
	•Failure of dialogue	51	42.5

Table 6B: Urhobo Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Hostile Images (a) of Itsekiris	400	80.0
	(b) Of Ijaws	25	05.0
2	Marriages (a) Yes	400	80.0
	(b) No	100	20.0
3	Helped by other ethnic groups: (a) Yes	130	26.0
	(b) No	50	10.0
4	Life prospects (negatively affected)	200	40.0
5	Violence only means No	500	100
	if peaceful means fail: yes	475	95.0
6	Reason for continuation of violence:		
	•Local government H/Q relocation to Ogidigben	150	30.0
	•Oppression and discrimination	430	86.0
	•Government inaction	400	80.0
	•Policies of NNCs	380	76.0
	•Failure of dialogue	250	80.0
	•Overlordship of Olu	400	80.0

Table 6C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Hostile Images (a) of Urhobo	26	08.6
	(b) Of Ijaws	240	80.0
2	Marriages (a) Yes	-	-
	(b) No	270	54.0
3	Helped by other ethnic groups: (a) Yes	85	28.3
	(b) No	215	71.6
4	Life prospects (negatively affected)	300	100
5	Violence only means No	300	100
	if peaceful means fail: yes	295	98.3
6	Reason for continuation of violence:		
	•Belief by Ijaws in violence	205	68.3
	•Genocidal intent of other ethnic groups	59	19.6
	•Elite conspiracy/failure of dialogue	28	09.3

As could be seen from specific indices in Tables 6A, B, and C, the Warri crisis and the violent dimension it has taken since the early 1990s is aggravated by a multiplicity of psycho-cultural variables which condition divergent perceptions of substantive issues by the three ethnic descriptive metaphors, such as "violent people", "greedy people", "unreasonable people" and " pirates", which the various communities cultivated against one another. As Ross (1993) aptly observes: "conflict is about the concrete interest adversaries pursue, and at the same time, about their interpretations of what is at stake. Conflicts become intense not just because of the value of what is being fought over, but because of the psycho-cultural graphic in Table 6C, where the Itsekiris respondents have combined a high degree of complex of grandeur (e.g. refusal to marry Ijaw and Urhobo) with an intense degree of hostile images that are productive of zero-sum conflict.

This stance on the part of the Itsekiris may again reflect the siege mentality of being " surrounded by hostile neighbours" as earlier noted. However, a combination of these "malignant" factors have transformed the Warri society almost into a veritable entopic system dominated by strain, diversity, contention, conflict, diffraction and fragmentation which, for many inhabitants, have created the spectre of hobbesian nightmare.

The preceding view of the structural factors and psycho-cultural predispositions in the survey reports of the three case studies suggest a syndrome of "competitive exclusion" in social exchanges between the Itsekiris and their ethnic rivals in Warri. This arguably stems from their irreconcilable world views. At issue are two conflicting visions of the social order, two different views of the historical process (in terms of lateral growth, expansion, intersection and conflict of the three ethnic groups), and the two variant visions of the future (see table 5C).

Furthermore, what gives these exchanges a tragic quality is that each view might have succeeded but for the existence of the other. Each group had the power to prevent the other from realising its objectives; and none can achieve it's own objectives without the co-operation of its opponent. It is not surprising therefore, that despite years of legal battles (since the 1920s) and political manoeuvring, the three communities are still far

apart from their defined political, economic and social objectives (i.e., utility function), in the face of opposing interests.

(iii) Settlement Profile:

Given the obvious fact that both the state and federal government interventions in the past have abysmally failed to resolve the conflict and violence in Warri, the survey instrument construct in this context was designed to find out why these interventions failed and what the warring communities themselves consider the basis for any durable peace in Warri. Thus, the following questions were posed to the respondents:

i. **What do you know about efforts of state and federal governments to settle the conflict in Warri?**

ii. **Are there other ways of ensuring peace in Warri?**

iii. **One of the major problems in Warri is how the different ethnic communities see each other (enemies, killers etc). How can these negative images be changed to reduce the generational problems of mistrust and disharmony in Warri?**

iv. **If some members of your community are preparing to attack other communities, would you run to the police to stop them?**

v. **Are community leaders representing the interest of their communities or their personal material interest?**

vi. **Would you encourage frequent/ occasional meetings of the various community leaders, non-governmental organisations, youth leaders etc., to exchange views on effective ways of checking outbreak of violence in Warri?**

Tables 7A, B, and C summarize comparative significant responses from each of the ethnic communities in Warri.

Survey question: What do you know about the efforts of State and Federal Governments to settle the conflict in Warri? Are they working?

Table 7A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Judicial Panels/commission of enquiry	110	91.6
2	Deployment of military personnel to maintain peace	120	100
3	Holding meetings with leaders of ethnic groups	63	52.5
4	Are these interventions working: Yes	15	12.5
	No	99	82.5

Table 7B: Urhobo Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Judicial Panels/commission of enquiry	360	72
2	Deployment of military personnel to maintain peace	500	100
3	Holding meetings with leaders of ethnic groups	370	74.0
4	Are these interventions working: Yes	-	-
	No	500	100

Table 7C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No	%
1	Deployment of military personnel to maintain peace	110	36.6
2	Not much in terms of ensuring peace	164	54.6
3	Aggravating problem by considering relocation of the local government headquarters	26	08.6
4	Others	-	-

There is a general consensus from the presentation on Tables A, B, and C that the various ethnic communities have negligible faith in government in terms of its ability and willingness to resolve the Warri crisis. For divergent reasons, these respondents found government responses to be indecisive, incomplete and inconclusive as a result of over-politicisation and instability of governance.

The perceived failure of consecutive federal and state governments, to ensure a stable environment in Warri through a comprehensive peace policy, beyond what is seen as a "fire brigade approach", has presently resulted in a state of "armed peace" in Warri. This situation necessitated the next set of inter-related questions.

First, are there other ways of ensuring peace in Warri? Second, what can the Warri people themselves do to ensure peace, knowing that violence only destroys and peace builds?

Ways of ensuring Peace in Warri

Table 8A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Restore or return the Warri South Local Government Headquarters to Ogbe-Ijoh	120	100
2	Create separate local government councils in Warri for the three ethnic groups	117	97.5
3	Change the title of the Olu of Warri to what it was traditionally prior 1952, the Olu of Itsekiri	114	95.0
4	Release and implement all Commissions Reports on the Warri crisis	110	91.6
5	Provide jobs for the youths and develop Warri	99	82.5

Table 8B: Urhobo Respondents

S/N0	Responses	No.	%
1	Change the title of Olu of Warri to its original title	500	100
2	The Okere-Urhobo and Agbarha-Urhobo clan heads, already recognised, should be given equal status with Olu of Itsekiri	350	70.0
3	Create separate local government councils for the three ethnic groups in Warri with properly delineated wards and constituencies	500	100
4	Each of the three local government councils should have its traditional rulers council with rotational Chairman.	350	70.0
5	Release and implement all Commissions' Reports concerning the Warri crisis	370	74.0
6	Evolve massive agro-industrial scheme for job creation	360	72.0

Table 8C: Itsekiri Respondents

S/NO	Responses	No.	%
1	Dialogue and frequent meetings between the various community leaders, non-governmental organisations youth leaders etc., to check outbreak of violence	300	100
2	Intervention by non-indigenes	35	11.6
3	Renunciation of violence by the affected parties	73	24.2
4	Create three Local Government Councils for the three ethnic groups	400	80.0

As Table 8 suggests, most respondents in the various ethnic communities find the state of violence in Warri unacceptable. Peace for them is therefore an option that cannot be compromised. As one of the Urhobo respondents put it, "since they have tested violence and bloodshed and seen that it is not working as they would want, let them come *en masse*, boys and girls, men and women, old and young, rich and poor, and embrace peace". Hence the affirmative answer given by respondents in the various ethnic communities to the question: "Would you encourage frequent and occasional meetings of various community leaders, non-governmental organisations (e.g. churches, associations, unions, youth leaders etc to exchange views as an effective way of checking the outbreak of violence in Warri?"

iv. Suggestions for Lasting Peace:

Table 8 shows a remarkable symmetry between the Ijaw and Urhobo respondents, thus highlighting the deadly issues and the terrain of violence and often mutually destructive confrontation between contending forces of Itsekiris and their neighbours. It also calls for the expectations of inexorable change in some sociological treatises on the Niger-Delta region which in the Durkheimian mode, had generated optimism in the 1950s and 1960s that increasing urbanisation (as in Warri) will ensure the movement from mechanical to organic solidarity: increased interdependence of ethnic groups, or some possibilities in reconciliation of values and goals, or opportunities for social mobility and cooperative relations between individuals and strata across ethnic or communal divisions.

Two processes are central to Durkheim's formulation. The first is the process of "individuation", which is manifested in three related forms: social structure, culture and political perception. The second central process evident in Durkheim's analysis is that of group confrontation and accommodation in which there is initially " an increasing reliance on the collective organisation of ethnically-defined groups, a heightened awareness of ethnic identity, and a more intense hostility". Thus Durkheim's analysis and projection offers a theoretical basis for the expectation of evolutionary change towards ethnic integration and peace in situations of extreme communal disharmony such as Warri. This is true insofar as it involves a conception of increasing contact, harmonious inter-relationship and progressive withering away of ethnic inequality by a process of evolutionary change.

While there have been some significant processes of integration in Warri among the divergent ethnic communities over the past century (Ikime, 1969), it is now fairly obvious that the " salad model" is more realistic than the "melting pot model" as a theoretical basis for conflict settlement in Warri. In other words the entrenchment of pristine identities and cultural boundaries (despite centuries of inter marriages and functional exchanges) still dominates inter-ethnic relationships in Warri.

The expectations arising from the "melting pot" were based on an assumption that in plural societies, individuals certain of their roles, will become detached from the original matrix and enter into new relationships across the ethnic lines, thereby creating new inter-ethnic social structures, both formal and informal. Second, in terms of culture, there is an expectation of irreversible process by which individuals come to share many of the same basic institutions as well as a common language. And third, in terms of politics, individuals may take a form in which members of the subordinate group are incorporated progressively into the political system of the dominant group. Sociological support for such a development in Warri is minimal.

The "salad model", on the other hand, takes the plural conditions, as they presently exist in Warri, as given. Instead of fundamental withering away of primordial structures and

values, the model assumes new relationships resulting from the progressive division of labour over time largely superimposed on the old divisions, thereby elaborating rather than changing the plural structure of the society. The "suggestions for a lasting peace" in the three case surveys of Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw communities should be seen in this light.

PROPOSAL I: IJAW CASE REPORT

1. Restore Warri South Local Government headquarters to its original place, Ogbe-Ijoh.
2. Create separate local government areas in Warri for the three ethnic groups.
3. Change the title of Olu of Warri to what it was traditionally prior to 1952, the Olu of Itsekiri.
4. Release and implement all Commission Reports on the crisis.
5. Provide jobs for the youths and develop Warri.

PROPOSAL II: URHOBO CASE REPORT

1. Change the title of Olu of Warri to its original title, the Olu of Itsekiri.
2. The Okere-Urhobo and Agbarha-Urhobo clan heads already recognised should be given equal status with the Olu of Itsekiri.
3. Create separate local government areas for the three ethnic groups in Warri with properly lineated wards and constituencies.
4. Each of the three local government areas should have its traditional rulers council with rotational chairman.
5. Release and implement all Commission Reports concerning the crisis.
6. Massive agro-industrial scheme for job creation.

PROPOSAL III: ITSEKIRI CASE REPORT

1. There must be respect for court decisions and use of constitutional means.
2. Dialogue must remain the only way to solving the problem.

3. Recognition of settler status by all groups in areas where they are settling.
4. Violence should be renounced by all groups.
5. Violence must not be rewarded.
6. Efforts should be made towards genuine reconciliation.
7. Government must be impartial.
8. Government policy should ensure that oil royalties and development get to oil producing communities.

v. Major Stakeholders in the Crisis:

Ijaw community:

For the Ijaw community, the major role players in the conflict can be divided into two major groups:

1. The youths and
2. The leaders of the *Izons* in Warri

The Youths: These are the fighters when it is necessary to retaliate in any provocation. Most of them are unemployed. Being jobless and hungry, they find solace in the crisis situation as they consider such a situation as an opportunity to be engaged, to be useful to themselves and their ethnic-group; to remove the yoke of the perceived oppression and degradation of the Ijaws.

For the purpose of the Warri Crisis workshop, four youth groups are identifiable. They are:

a. *The MENBUTU* group
b. *The AWAR* group
c. *The MILLAR* group or old NPA group
d. The *OLABRAKO* pre-group

An examination of these groups shows that each has an established organizational structure headed by an Amayenabo which is highly respected, revered by members of the group. His words are considered as law. In times of crisis, he co-ordinates the activities of his group. In his youth group, there is an *OLOTU*, Commander-in-chief, under whom are the LIONS - the fighters. Each group has its own liaison office and so on. The Amayenabo of the various youth groups, also meet together to plan strategies of self-defence and retaliation when necessary.

It is generally observed that in a crisis situation, the youth leaders in most cases, if not all cases, do not inform the prominent leaders of their ethnic groups of their plans before carrying them out. This is due to the crisis of confidence that characterizes the youth-elder relations, the elders being known to be too conciliatory.

The leaders: The second group of stakeholders are the elders, the leaders of the *IZON* ethnic groups in Warri. This people, by virtue of their prominence come to be major players in the Warri crisis.

They are the prominent figures whom government often calls upon to help appeal to their youths to remain calm and maintain peace while the solution to the crisis is being worked out. They are also the persons who articulate the position of the Izons and make it known to Government. They act as liaison officers between their people, the Izons, including the Izon youths and the federal and state governments in times of crisis and in times of peace.

The Urhobo community

The major stakeholders in the Urhobo community can be divided into three main groups. These groups have tried in the past to work out modalities for peace settlement. They have also made their opinion known at various times about the causes of the Warri crisis as well as proffered possible solutions.

A) Youth organisations
1. Urhobo-Okere, Warri youths
2. Agbarha, Warri youths
3. National Union of Urhobo students

B) Urhobo Unions.
1. Urhobo Progress Union
2. Urhobo National Assembly
3. Urhobo Social Club, Lagos
4. Urhobo National Forum, New York, U.S.A.

The Itsekiri Community
1. The Youths
2. Community Leaders

What Warri people themselves can do to ensure Peace?

Table 9A: Ijaw Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No	%
1	To forgive and forget the bitter past and emphasise those things that unite the group	102	85.0
2	Avoid encroaching on the rights and heritage of others, accepting collective ownership of Warri as a reality, avoid referring to others as customary tenants	88	73.3
3	Appeal to youths to shun war as a means of settling conflict and to maintain peace, law and order always	72	60.0
4	Dialogue – bi-monthly or quarterly meetings between the ethnic groups, inviting other ethnic groups to participate in each other's annual festivals etc.	63	52.5

Table 9B: Urhobo Respondents

S/No	Responses	No	%
1	Constant dialogue between community leaders, traditional rulers, youth leaders, NGOS., Christian bodies etc., to exchange views, define what they want, and peace propaganda	390	78.0
2	Unity of purpose, believing in joint ownership of Warri without supremacy of overlordship of any kind, and stop derogating others.	250	50.0
3	Constant appeals to government and oil companies to create jobs in Warri	300	60.0
4	The people of Warri to reach a compromise, declare a truce, so that an independent study can be carried out. Since the dispute is over land, every ethnic group should confine themselves to their areas without encroaching on others	200	40.0

5	Appeal to ethnic leaders to stop funding violence and making provocative utterances. Youth should forget about violence and ask their leaders to provide them with jobs	320	64.0
6	Appeal to government to implement Commissions of Enquiry reports and create three Local Government Councils for the three ethnic groups	400	80.0

Table 9C; Iteskiri Respondents

S/NO.	Responses	No.	%
1	Dialogue	192	64.0
2	Concerned parties to renounce violence	73	24.3
3	Leaders of the ethnic groups to truly embrace peace initiatives	17	05.6
4	Use of non-indigenes for third-party intervention	35	11.6

Chapter 5

Judith Burdin Asuni

Academic Associates PeaceWorks' Intervention in the Warri Crisis

Introduction

Academic Associates PeaceWorks has conducted several interventions into other violent communal crises in Nigeria. Activities in Warri were therefore planned, based on experience learned from previous interventions. The organisation worked on the Tiv/Jukun problem in Wukari from 1997 to late 1999, at which time a sustainable peace was achieved between the two ethnic groups which had been fighting sporadically for over a decade. A lower key intervention was made into the problem between Ugep and neighbouring communities in northern Cross River State, and another undertaken between the Mangu and Bokkos communities in Plateau State. Interventions in Ife/Modakeke in Osun State and Takum in Taraba State were suspended at a certain point due to lack of funding, but were resumed in 2001.

From previous works we have learned that it is necessary to involve a variety of groups in a peacebuilding process and that it is vital that the people themselves take ownership of their own peace process. We also discovered that it is necessary to involve governments at all levels in both being aware of the process as well as contributing to it. And we equally learned that peacebuilding is a long-term process, both in achieving some degree of peace and in dealing with obstacles that can disturb the peace and sidetrack the process. Therefore peacebuilders must be persistent, dedicated and patient. They must also be observant and analytical of all new occurrences.

The intervention which AAPW planned in its proposal to the United States Institute of Peace in September 1998, changed and evolved in response to new developments, obstacles arising and suggestions from the peacebuilders themselves. A great deal of success has been achieved. A great deal more needs to be done, which confirms the view that peace is a continuous process.

The AAPW intervention started with a case study of the Warri crisis, which was conducted by five scholars- two neutral professors and one researcher from each of the three ethnic groups in Warri. This study was then analysed by six mediators, again two from each of the three ethnic groups, who had been trained in the skills of conflict management. The implications from the case study guided future activities. These mediators then helped AAPW staff to select and train thirty youth leaders, followed by thirty community leaders - again chosen from the three ethnic groups. Both the youths and adult leaders set up peace fora and met periodically to conduct enlightenment activities and to deal with rumours. These activities under USIP funding were supplemented with a peace education workshop for teachers from secondary schools in Warri and subsequent establishment of peace clubs in a number of schools. Local government staff, youth and adult leaders from four local governments in the Warri area were also trained in the skills of conflict management. The latter two activities were funded by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives. Numerous conciliation and enlightenment visits were made by the mediators, who also organised meetings of the Warri Peace Forum. The mediators and AAPW Executive Director also visited the Governor and other Delta State officials, the Warri local government chairmen, and staff of oil companies working in the Warri area, to brief them and include them in the peace process. The whole process was supervised and supported by frequent visits of Academic Associates PeaceWorks staff.

This chapter first documents the various activities conducted as part of AAPW's intervention, then draws out the lessons learned and implications for future peacebuilding work.

1. Case Study

A case study is our usual first step in any conflict intervention. It is essential to carefully examine the basic issues; the parties involved; their perceptions of each other; their positions, interests and needs; as all of these point the way to solution.

The case study for the Warri intervention was planned in May 1999, shortly before the new civilian government was sworn

in. The study was co-ordinated by Prof. Celestine Bassey, with Prof. Thomas Imobighe as advisor and co-analyst. One scholar was chosen from each of the three ethnic groups: Prof. Peretomade (Ijaw scholar), Dr. Tonwe (Itsekiri) and Dr. Akpotor (Urhobo scholar). It was planned that the 5 scholars would stay together in Warri, to facilitate easy coordination and communication. Chief Dr. Mrs. P.E.B. Uku, an Itsekiri member of the National Corps of Mediators, volunteered her house for our use. Unfortunately violence broke out in Warri on June 5, just after the installation of the new government and just when the case study was to begin. Nothing could be done during the months of June and July, due to suspicion of anyone moving around and asking questions. Also many of the residents had fled the area. Finally the scholars were able to do the research in August, but it was impossible for the Ijaw and Urhobo to reside in an Itsekiri area. Therefore Prof. Bassey moved with each scholar separately.

The team was only able to have planning meetings outside of Warri, usually in Ekpoma (Prof. Imobighe's base). In September the research team met in Ekpoma to develop a pattern for reports, which were submitted in mid-October. Profs. Imobighe and Bassey compiled a joint report from the three separate ones. The joint report was analysed by the six mediators in late October, and formed the basis for the search for common ground among the various ethnic groups. A meeting was also held in Lagos in early October, to map out activities for the rest of the intervention. The case study has been described in more detail in Chapter Four.

2. Case Study Analysis and Training of Mediators

Nigeria's current President, Olusegun Obasanjo; AAPW's Executive Director, Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni; and Richard Salem of Conflict Management Initiatives in Evanston, Illinois, conceived the idea of a national corps of mediators in 1993. The idea reached fruition in 1994 when twenty respected and respectable community leaders converged at the Africa Leadership Forum in Ota, Ogun State for training in "Conflict Management". The outcome was the formation of the National

Corps of Mediators, consisting of senior Nigerians who were skilled and committed to preventing or managing communal conflicts in their area. After some preliminary efforts, the Corps was put on hold when General Obasanjo was arrested. In 1997 the British Council expressed interest in the corps, which was resuscitated with British funding. It was further expanded in 1998, incorporating a number of people specifically from the Niger Delta, and currently includes approximately forty five trained mediators. Mediators, it must be noted, have been instrumental in all of AAPW's interventions to date.

One member of the existing corps and five new mediators were trained for the Warri intervention. Chief (Mrs.) P.E.B. Uku, an Itsekiri lawyer and retired senior civil servant, joined the Corps in 1998. The new members included:

- Chief E.E. Ebimami, a retired Ijaw banker and member of the government peace committee
- Rev. Prof. C.A. Dime, a university professor and first President of the Ijaw National Congress
- Chief W.A. Digbori, an Urhobo retired civil servant
- Chief Wilson Eboh, an Urhobo broadcaster and member of the government peace committee
- Mr. Eni J. Umuko, an Itsekiri university lecturer and member of the government peace committee

The training of these new mediators, along with the analysis of the case study was held October 27-29, 1999, at the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Effurun, on the outskirts of Warri. The analysis of the case study was led by Professors Imobighe and Bassey, while the conflict management training was led by AAPW staff, including Ralph Ekeh, Patterson Ogon and myself.

Objectives of the Meeting

- To analyse the Warri case study with the participation of elders who are actually involved in or affected by the conflict
- To train these elders as mediators who can positively intervene in the conflict

The Programme

Most of the first two days of the programme consisted of basic

conflict management skills. The mediators spent considerable time analysing the Warri conflict. They spent the first part of the session stating the usual ethnic positions and objecting to the findings of the case study. Predictably, each group felt that the other groups did not understand their position and so tried to force it on them. After allowing each mediator to talk and air grievances, we moved on to group work. The mediators used a table to identify the major parties, their needs and fears as:

MAJOR PARTIES	NEEDS	FEARS
Ijaws	Land, political relevance, Local Government, security, recognition, development, respect,	Disrespect of traditional rulers; marginalisation, oppression, exclusion, negative image
Urhobos	Freedom, respect, land political relevance, Local Govt., recognition of traditional rulers	Marginalisation, oppression, exclusion, negative image, disrespect for traditional rulers
Itsekiris	Land, respect for traditional ruler, security, development, freedom	Extinction, domination, exclusion, marginalisation, disrespect for traditional ruler, and for court orders
Federal Government	Political stability and peace, revenue	Economic sabotage, national fragmentation
State Government	Same as federal	Same as federal
Local Government	Same as federal	Loss of control, insecurity
Multinational companies	Profit, security	Insecurity, economic sabotage
Common Grounds	Land, political relevance,	Marginalisation, oppression, disrespect, insecurity

From the above, the mediators developed the concept of **"Our Land"**, in which all three groups are viewed as belonging to Warri and having rights to live and prosper there. At the end of the workshop, the mediators had formed a cordial team and one man pronounced himself "born again" to peacebuilding.

Outcome

The six mediators, two from each ethnic group worked together to identify youth leaders who were to be invited to the workshop in a few weeks time. The mediators were to start mindset-change-activities within their respective groups and prepare first the youths and then the elders for up-coming conflict management workshops.

The mediators have a key role in mobilizing members of their respective ethnic groups, as well as working collectively to spread peace awareness in the community. They also formed a body to represent the civil society of peacemakers in Warri. The mediators and AAPW invited the four local government chairmen in Warri division to a meeting in PTI, Effurun on Monday 8 November. From there we proceeded as a group to meet state government officials in Asaba. We were able to meet some of the officials and brief them about our work in Warri. Unfortunately the governor was in Abuja, so the meeting was rescheduled.

3. Training for Warri Youth Leaders

Youth leaders are usually one of the first groups that we train in a new community, bearing in mind that when the youths stop fighting and are reoriented to peace, the fight stops. We asked the six mediators to identify key youth leaders, and from comments made during the workshop, it would appear that we had the real leaders in the Conflict. The mediators briefed the youths, both before and during the workshop, to develop a positive mindset. Previous to this occasion, the mediators had asked about security arrangements for the workshop, and we had replied that the mediators themselves were our security. They were responsible for keeping their youths in order. This they did to a great extent and the thirty youths, ten from each of the three ethnic groups, lived and worked together peacefully during the workshop.

The Youths' Workshop was held November 10-12, 1999. After much discussion with the mediators it was decided that the youth leaders be taken to a quiet, isolated hotel where they would not be distracted by diversions of the city or reinforced in their positions by people from home. We visited the Ibru Centre (a venue for religious retreats, started by a prestigious Urhobo man) during the mediators' training and agreed with the director there that the youths were not likely to be "spiritual" as desired by the centre. Therefore we should choose a secular venue. We also wanted to use a neutral venue (not in any one of the three ethnic areas) but still within Delta State. We had previously suggested Benin City, but the mediators felt strongly that the problems of Delta should not be taken outside the state. The final choice was the Gordon Hotel, Ibusa, which is about 20 minutes from the outskirts of Asaba. It certainly was isolated — no telephone, a quiet village setting with little public transport after dark. It also was a conducive setting where the youths could stroll informally and encounter each other after the workshop.

Objectives

- To bring together the youth leaders from all sides of the Warri conflict, in order to get them talking to each other again
- To train these leaders in skills of conflict management
- To give them the opportunity to analyse their own conflict and to look for mutually agreeable solutions
- To assist the youth leaders in developing an action plan to implement these solutions

Participants

The workshop participants included ten Ijaw, ten Itsekiri and ten Urhobo Youth Leaders. Being seen to be neutral is very important in Warri, where feelings of under-representation, marginalisation and preferential treatment are frequently expressed. Thus, we were careful to invite equal number of youths and mediators from each of the three ethnic groups. We were also careful to give everyone equal recognition and opportunity to speak. In the first evening we spent four hours

allowing each of the thirty participants to describe his own feelings and perceptions of the Warri crisis. From comments made by participants, it appeared that we had succeeded in getting the real leaders in the conflict, both the generals and the field soldiers. Because we asked for the real fighters, all of the participants were male. A number of participants commented that they had not seen former friends since the conflict started in 1997 and were meeting again for the first time at the workshop. Several observers in the neighbourhood commented that they wouldn't have believed that these fighters would actually sit down together to talk. In addition to the thirty youth leaders, the six mediators also attended the workshop. We brought them in as guest facilitators occasionally, as we hoped that they would be able to teach conflict management skills to others.

The Programme

Our approach to conflict management is very interactive, with as few "lectures" as possible. Much of the first morning was spent in setting expectations, ground-rules and introductions of all present using partnering in Sharing our Stories. This sets a conducive, relaxed atmosphere for the workshop and gets people mixing from the beginning. After the pre-workshop questionnaire, we spent the rest of the day in listening to each of the thirty participants' views of the conflict. I randomly started with a self-declared politician who happened to be Itsekiri and proceeded systematically around the circle. Thus, most of the Itsekiris spoke first and said vague things about not knowing the causes of the conflict beyond the relocation of local government headquarters. By the time that it reached the turn of the Urhobos and Ijaws, they were very outspoken about the condescending attitudes and political and economic dominance of the Itsekiris. Many of these issues had come out in the case study, but a few new insights were gained by us. However, I believe that some of the youths did not fully appreciate how the other sides felt. The last speaker happened to be Itsekiri and he gave a very emotional, explosive response to the Urhobo/Ijaw criticisms. I concluded by saying that it is essential that these

emotions and resentments are recognised and dealt with before the conflict can be resolved.

The next morning we discussed causes and types of conflict, and the issues raised the previous evening were examples of these. We then moved on to communication, with practical exercises led by our training officer, Ralph Ekeh. The afternoon was devoted to analysis of conflict in general and the Warri conflict in particular. We were often told that the Warri crisis was special, that it was different from any other conflict in Nigeria. However after using our experiences in Wukari, Takum, Ife/Modakeke and Zangon Kataf to demonstrate different methods of analysing conflict, the participants began to see that theirs shared certain similarities with other conflicts. They then broke into small groups to analyse the Warri conflict, and predictably the group reports were similar. However the important thing is that the participants learned how to analyse their conflicts themselves.

Friday morning was devoted to strategies for handling conflict, including collaboration, negotiation and mediation. The participants then went back to their small groups to generate solutions to the Warri crisis. For the first time in our 7 years of working in various parts of the country, no single group was able to agree upon solutions. A similar thing had happened with the mediators two weeks previously when they shouted and stuck to their positions for some time, until we moved them into focused group works. At the end of this, they were able to agree upon the concept of "our land" belonging to everyone, thus eliminating the old dilemma of settlers vs. indigenes.

Causes of the Warri Conflict

The ostensible cause of the 1997 crisis was the shifting of the local government headquarters. However the case study also identified a number of resource and psychological issues in the conflict. The youths identified the following as being the causes of the Warri crisis:

- Local Government creation
  Shift of headquarters location
  Uncertainty as to what were requested from local governments, by whom and what was really approved
  Local councils rearranged in new LGAs
  Illogical LGA boundaries and headquarters - misnomers of Warri North, Central, South, Southwest
  Government favouritism of certain personalities
  Behind-the-scene lobbying by elders
  Escalation from the local government to Niger Delta level
- Issue of ownership of Warri
  Settler vs. indigene - both Itsekiris and Urhobos claim to be original indigenes
  Who owns the land and the oilfields - who gets the royalties
- Accumulated grievances
  Cultural domination by minority (Itsekiri)
  Overlordship
  Awolowo's change from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri - not acceptable to other groups
  Based on political allegiance of various groups
  Term "Warri" only for the Itsekiris
  Urhobos not included in local governments
  Local councils are ethnically heterogeneous but all controlled by Itsekiris
  Feelings of oppression, marginalisation, second-class citizens, lack of self-determination
  Dominance of Itsekiri language, even in the Traditional Council
  5% given to Traditional Council accrues only to the Itsekiri, not to the Ijaw and Urhobo
  Discrimination in employment even in federal institutions and oil companies
- Suspicions, negative stereotypes, exaggerated stories/ rumours
  Move from individual to group identity
  Truth not known and lies not known
- Poverty, joblessness
- Jealousy of oil company facilities and those who benefit from them
- Breakdown of communication
- Lack of collaborative problem-solving

- Divide and rule allowed
- No communication with government
- Benefactors fuel the crisis - e.g. Arms dealers
- Self-aggrandisement
- Elections rigged against the Urhobos
- Non-implementation of government white papers
- Colonial legacy of imbalance in education, legal cases, leases
- Differentiation between Warri Urban and Warri Province
- Misrepresentation of facts in the media
- Itsekiri refusal of the state capital in Warri has led to lack of development
- Disrespect for the rule of law
- Role of the multinationals in discriminatory employment and providing logistics for the fighting

Outcome

At the end of the day, the Youth Leaders came up with seven proposed activities:

1. Establishment of a Warri Peace Forum
2. Education of other youths about fears and needs of each other and the need to work together. The youth leaders in each faction should speak to their own people.
3. The various factions should work together on enlightenment campaigns on the common grounds discovered.
4. They should also jointly hold rallies at primary, secondary schools and at the grassroots, e.g. markets
5. They should also organise sports and cultural festivals which bring the various groups together in peaceful and enjoyable ways.
6. Use of the media, jingles, etc. to highlight the peace effort (funding from oil companies, government, donor agencies, etc.)
7. Attendance at cultural festivals of other ethnic groups-security of guests to be guaranteed by the host youths

The suggested activities listed above also show that the participants wished to apply their new skills in enlightening

others and in working collectively. An informal measure of the effects of the workshop is that at the beginning the participants stayed with members of their own ethnic group, in the workshop, at the group lunch and after hours. However by the end, the participants were mixed up and moving freely together. People even made comments about being happy to see and interact with old friends or relatives whom they could not meet at home since the crisis. This of course was partially orchestrated as we purposely mix people in groups and put them in situations where they have to work together. The A-B-C triangle of conflict says that change occurring in any one of the three parts: Attitude, Behaviour, or Context will create change in the other parts. By modifying the context, people have to change their behaviour and in turn their attitudes to be in consonance with the behaviour. Many times people like these youth leaders would have liked to change their behaviour but lacked the impetus or freedom to do so. Putting them in a conducive environment allows this change to occur.

We are also involving the state and local governments in this effort. The Chairman of Warri North Local Government related his experiences during the crisis about ten days before in which a village in his area was destroyed by youths from another ethnic group. The Deputy Governor narrowly escaped death when irate road transport workers attacked him during his reconnaissance visit to the riot site in Effurun. These government officials recognize that conflict management skills are necessary not only for members of the community but for they themselves.

4. Training for Community Leaders

A similar workshop was held for community leaders from November 24-25, 1999 at the PTI Institute near Warri. The youths who had been trained in Ibusa and the mediators went home to prepare their elders for this workshop. Ten youths, representing the three different ethnic groups, attended the first day of the elders workshop and appealed to them to be tolerant and constructive. I believe that the short speeches by the three youth leaders made the elders realise that the times are changing and that if they want to be current, they have to change too. Ten

leaders were invited from each of the three ethnic groups. In addition to twenty four leaders who came, the six mediators also attended the workshop.

Objectives

- To bring together the elders and community leaders from all sides of the Warri conflict, in order to get them talking to each other again
- To train these leaders in skills of conflict management
- To give them the opportunity to analyse their own conflict and to look for mutually agreeable solutions
- To assist the community leaders in developing an action plan to implement these solutions

The Programme

The mediators observed that many of the elders were busy people and would not be willing to attend a three-day workshop; therefore we reduced it to two days, with the possibility of having a follow-up later. Much of the first morning was spent in setting expectations, groundrules and introductions of all present using partnering in Sharing our Stories. This sets a conducive, relaxed atmosphere for the workshop and gets people mixing from the beginning. After the preliminaries, we worked on sources of conflict, communication skills and methods of analysing conflict. The participants then broke into three small groups to analyse their own Warri conflict.

The next morning the groups reported back, and the three analyses were very similar. The facilitators drew out the common grounds identified. We then went through conflict progression and escalation of conflict, drawing on the stages which they had seen in Warri. We then dealt with strategies for avoiding escalation, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The participants then returned to their groups to generate solutions. After the experience with the youths, we carefully drew out the common grounds and pointed them in the direction of workable strategies before they went into group work.

The working groups' discussions were lively and sometimes loud but in the end, they produced results. The common grounds identified by the participants included the need of everyone for:

1. Peace
2. Respect for the Rule of Law
3. Non-violence
4. Rehabilitation
5. Respect
6. Resource development
7. Development
8. Security
9. Employment
10. Local Government creation
11. Freedom
12. Survival

Outcome

At the end of the day, the community leaders came up with seven proposed activities:

1. Channel of communication
2. Setting up of an inter-ethnic committee
3. Re-orientation of youths and elders through workshops, seminars, etc.
4. Pressure on government to invest in rehabilitation
5. Group action to put pressure on the multinationals
6. Development and employment
7. Local Government creation

The elders met together before they left the workshop venue. One of the participants took the responsibility for coordinating the group informally and the elders' group met periodically over the course of the next year. Eventually the Ijaws and Itsekiris continued meeting, while the Urhobos were excluded. This is discussed more under political implications.

5. Peace Education Training

Academic Associates PeaceWorks received a grant from USAID/OTI to conduct peace education training for secondary school teachers in Warri, as part of the larger intervention sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace and USAID/OTI. The four-day training was held December 6-9, 1999 at PTI, Effurun, Warri. Twenty teachers were in attendance.

The objectives of the peace education program were:

- To train the teachers in basic principles of peace education using techniques of experiential learning
- To empower the teachers to establish peace education and peer mediation programmes in their schools
- To equip the pupils through the teachers with basic skills in conflict management, so that they can improve their relationship with others in school, home and community for sustainable peace
- To build cooperation between youngsters and adults in making their communities more peaceful

The Programme

The peace education training was four days long and basically took the teachers through a program which they might implement in a year or more. Thus the workshop itself was longer than our usual three-day format for community leaders and was in that way more relaxed but also more comprehensive as we dealt with not only content but also format. By the end of the workshop, the teachers absorbed the principles and some of the techniques of experiential education. Therefore we debriefed frequently, discussing with the participants both the content to make sure that they understand it well enough, not only to teach it to others but also the approach so that they comprehend why we do things in certain ways. The teachers practised the techniques themselves, and set up role plays and lead brainstorming. When the principals came on the last day, they were impressed with what their teachers had learned in four days and were therefore more willing to help the teachers implement the programs in their schools.

At the end of the December training, the teachers formed a Peace Educators' Club, with a five-person steering committee, and Chief E.E. Ebimami, our community mediator in Warri, as their advisor. Because the training took place shortly before the Christmas recess, the first meeting was scheduled for January 19, 2000.

6. Warri Peace Education First Follow-Up Visit

The first follow-up was carried out on the 11th February 2000 by two AAPW staff members – Thelma Ekiyor, Project Officer-Niger-Delta and Ralph Ekeh, Project Officer- Training with two members of the Corps of Mediators – Chief E. E. Ebimami and Chief Digbori. The aim was to check on the schools that attended the Peace Education Programme to determine their level of success in the implementation of Peer Mediation and Peace Education programme and help to overcome stumbling blocks.

Because the peace education training happened shortly before the Christmas vacation, the teachers were not able to implement their training, but intended to do so immediately school resumed in January. However, at the beginning of the new term, the Delta State Government embarked on a reorganisation of secondary schools where morning and afternoon sessions were merged. This led to confusion and disorganization in the schools. Government combined the school sessions that were usually held separately in the mornings and afternoons. Therefore, some classes then had over 100 students, with too few chairs to go round. Teachers didn't even know to which school they belonged, and principals were unsure of who were their students and teachers. At that stage, it had been impossible to implement the peace education programme. The teachers promised to re-start the programme as soon as the complications of administering two school sessions were sorted out.

7. Warri Peace Education 2nd Follow-up Visit

The 2nd follow-up visit was carried out on the 11th of April 2000 by Ralph Ekeh. This was also to check on the progress made by the schools in the implementation of peer mediation and peace education programs in their schools. Happily, by the time of our second follow-up visit, things had settled down in the schools. Teachers actually had assigned classrooms and were trying to conduct regular classes. About 1/3 of the schools had been able to initiate peace education. Most schools in Nigeria are understaffed and underfunded, with very crowded timetables, so 1/3 of the schools implementing the peace education program is acceptable.

8. Training of Local Government Officials, Youth Leaders and Elders

From December 1999 to April 2000, AAPW carried out conflict transformation and management training workshops in 15 Local Government Councils of Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa States under the sponsorship of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives.

The Objectives

- To build the capacities of the local government officials, traditional rulers and youth leaders towards a greater understanding of the processes and dynamics of conflicts within their communities.
- To provide skills in conflict prevention and transformation for government officials, traditional rulers and youth leaders in each local government area for them to be able to respond to and manage conflicts positively and constructively in their communities.
- To establish a permanent synergetic conflict management committee in each local government area that will be pro-active in monitoring and intervening in conflicts as they may occur in the communities.

Locations

The 5 local government councils were identified as areas which had experienced violent conflicts and those with potentials for explosion and re-occurrence. Ideally, we would have liked to train all of the local governments in the Warri area. However, because there were still legal issues concerning the location of the headquarters of Warri Southwest Local Government, and because the elected officials (who were mainly Itsekiri) had not moved to the designated headquarters of Ogbe-Ijoh (which is in Ijaw territory), we did not include it in the five local governments for the Delta State training. Instead we took the other four local governments in the Warri area, starting with Warri South, followed by Uvwie, Udu and Warri North, as well as Bomadi which is outside of Warri but conflict-prone. During the course of our workshop in Warri South, a problem came up between the Urhobo and Hausa communities, which was resolved with

the assistance of everyone present. We then moved on to Uvwie Local Government, a largely Urhobo area where participants felt that their major problem was with the motor park touts but not their neighbours. The next workshop in Udu showed otherwise, as they were preparing for war with their Uvwie neighbour. Our mediators had some success in tempering this threat.

The Warri North workshop could not hold in Koko, the LG headquarters, as the Ijaws did not feel safe in going to this Itsekiri stronghold. Luckily however, the Local Government chairman, who had been at our briefing in November, was willing to pay the balance to transport and accommodate participants in the neutral town of Sapele. The participants and the chairman himself were very happy to have this opportunity of bringing the two sides together as they had wanted to meet but didn't know how to do it. This confirms the importance of having a neutral third party who can bridge the gap between parties in conflict. Immediately after the workshop, with the sponsorship of the Local Government Chairman, the peace committee started carrying out enlightenment programmes both within and outside Koko. The committee had requested a speedboat for the two groups to make such visits together. Unfortunately, this was not provided by the state government. However, after the workshop, the Ijaw committee members were able to visit Koko for the first time since the crises. This led to the beginning of the return of exiled Ijaws to rebuild their houses. This return has been marred periodically by local outbreaks of violence between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, but the situation is better than before the workshop.

Two of the mediators, Chief Ebimami and Chief Digbori helped to organise, facilitate and follow-up on these local government trainings. A third mediator, Chief. (Mrs.) P.E.B Uku, was instrumental in persuading the Warri North chairman to fund part of that training. Fortunately, these three represented the different ethnic groups: Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri respectively. The sight of the three of them working together is a good model for how members of the community should cooperate.

Outcome

The follow-up visits which were made in the months of March-May were to monitor and evaluate how the training had impacted on the community at large and how the peace committees formed after the workshops were performing. We believe that these local government trainings were good for several reasons. One is that they gave us an opportunity to reach various parts of the community, both geographically and socially, that we might not otherwise have reached. For example, in Uvwie, the Chairman was extremely enthusiastic. He had read our book before the workshop and he came in frequently. Another very active participant was a pastor who happened to have a Ph.D. in psychology. Some of the women leaders were definitely grassroots. The workshops brought together people who might not have ordinarily met. Also it gave conflict management skills to key members of the local governments, both councillors and civil servants. At the end of each workshop, a peace committee was set up. Reports to date show at least that some of these committees have been active in keeping the peace in the local government.

9. Conciliation Visits

The mediators, youth leaders and elders who were trained in conflict management were expected to conduct enlightenment and conciliation visits, first with people of their own ethnic groups and then with mixed groups. After the training of youth leaders and elders in November, the youths started meeting immediately. Indeed, youths from all three ethnic groups came to the elders' workshop to encourage them to work together constructively. The youths in particular contacted other youths about the new peace process. After their training in November, a number of the elders reported back to their traditional rulers, who are the Olu of Warri for the Itsekiris, the two Urhobo kings, and several Ijaw Peres in the Warri area.

Initially, the mediators tended to make conciliation efforts with people from their own ethnic groups. Even the two Urhobo mediators from the Okere and Agbarha kingdoms tended to work with people from their own side. Gradually the Itsekiris and Ijaws began to meet together, seemingly facilitated by the

Isokos, another ethnic group not resident in Warri but included in the Delta South senatorial district. The elders whom we trained have met several times, although never with all parties present. Although a number of meetings were called, the three groups never actually met together as the Warri Peace Forum until November, 2000 — a full year after their initial training. This has limited their effectiveness, except as a way of keeping communication open.

10. Follow-Up Visits

We have found in other interventions that it is essential to monitor and visit peacebuilders regularly. Nothing hardly goes according to plan, and Warri is no exception. The original proposal to USIP included conciliation visits by the mediators and AAPW staff following the workshops for youths and elders, to run from December 1999 to January 2000. Then a major conciliation meeting with key leaders was scheduled for February 2000, with more follow-ups from March-September 2000.

Because of the additional activities in Warri, AAPW staff spent a great part of December 1999 and January 2000 in the area, and so were able to monitor things easily. In February we were in Rivers State, so we came back for two monitoring visits. In mid-March three Warri chiefs came for the launch of our book, "Community Conflicts in Nigeria". This gave us the opportunity to sit down and discuss the way forward. We made another follow-up visit in April 2000, which coincided with a meeting of the Elders Forum. This coincidence was timely as a misunderstanding arose among several of the mediators and we were able to help to resolve it. Frequent contact was made by phone with the various mediators during the months of May-August.

AAPW staff made another three visits to Warri in September and October. The first purpose was to monitor recent developments, especially that of the current court case which the Itsekiris had instituted against the State Government. Mediators on all sides were keen that this should not disrupt the peace process. The visits were also to organize the meeting of

the Warri Peace Forum, which eventually was held in November 2000.

After the November meeting, the mediators conducted enlightenment visits to their communities. AAPW staff visited Warri again in January and March 2001. In addition two of the mediators from Warri participated in the Saturday Forum on Conflict Management which was held with the President of Nigeria in Abuja on February 17, 2001. The Governor of Delta State, the Olu of Warri and several other community leaders were also present and this gave us the opportunity to share information and experiences. Mediators from the three ethnic groups and I visited the Governor in Asaba in mid-March, to seek government support for the Warri peace process.

All of these follow-up visits were used to reinforce the peace process and to clear misunderstandings. For example, at the April meeting of the Elders Forum, one of the mediators was absent. He had missed several other meetings, and people from the other ethnic groups began to make the assumption that he was getting so much money from the government and companies, that he didn't bother to come to the peace meetings anymore. Another mediator, who had contributed a lot to the peace process in time, energy and contacts, took offence at her colleague's repeated absence and wrote a strong letter to him. The first person in turn took offence and decided to drop out of the peace process. He was particularly offended, for during the peace meeting, he had been dealing with a threat to his life. It took a series of phone calls to sort out this misunderstanding and bring the peace process back on line.

11. November 2000 Warri Peace Forum

After a number of delays, the youths and elders from the three ethnic groups finally met together at the Warri Peace Forum from November 16-17, 2000. This was the first time in a year that the youths, elders, mediators, Profs. Imobighe, Bassey and I had met together as a group, joined by Mr. Blessing Abam, our new Niger Delta Project Officer. We spent considerable time on the first morning, reviewing what had happened in the one and half years of the intervention. Very few people knew everything

that others had been doing, so it was a good opportunity to catch up. We also reviewed the shortcomings of the process to date. As expected, participants had varying perceptions of the past one and half years. Many Ijaws and Itsekiris were happy with recent developments, especially those who were near the centre of power. However the Urhobos were vehement in their resentment of their exclusion from the 3Is Forum. This reiterated the need for all relevant groups to be involved in a peace process.

As a refresher for previous participants and training for new members, we reviewed the conflict cycle, sources of conflict, and conflict analysis. Mr Abam and I had recently conducted workshops for shell community development liaison officers, and used the Nembe conflict in neighbouring Bayelsa state as a relevant example.

Much of the second day was spent in group work on transforming the Warri conflict. We divided the participants randomly into three groups - representing the Urhobos, Ijaws and Itsekiris. Thus, there was a two in three chance of someone role-playing a member of a different group. The participants really got into their roles and it was comic relief to hear a radical Ijaw youth expounding the position of the Itsekiris or an Itsekiri explaining why the Okere Urhobos must have active political roles in central Warri. The groups came out with strategies for sustaining peace in Warri, which are described in Chapter Six.

12. Enlightenment Visits

At the November meeting of the Warri Peace Forum, it was decided that the mediators needed to conduct enlightenment visits to the outlying areas. As of 2001, people in Warri town were aware that peace should still reign, but people in the villages still retained should their suspicions and occasional skirmishes occurred.

The enlightenment visits were conducted in December 2000-January 2001. The two Urhobo mediators, Chief W.A. Digbori and Chief Wilson Eboh, conducted enlightenment visits, each in his own kingdom, Agbarha and Okere respectively. Both kingdoms are in Warri town, so the usual technique was to address various groups as they held meetings. The Ijaw and

Itsekiri mediators decided to address their groups separately when appropriate and together in places where the two ethnic groups co-reside. Chief Dr. Mrs. Uku and Mr. Umuko conducted a number of programmes with Itsekiris in the Warri area. Many riverine areas have both Itsekiris and Ijaws, so Chiefs Uku and Ebimami went together by boat to a number of those communities.

Water transport in the riverine communities was extremely expensive. Either one used the community boat, which might go only once a day or every few days, or one chartered a boat at a very high price. The two chiefs visited as many communities as possible with the funds available. In virtually every community, the people expressed appreciation for the visit of the mediators and asked for further training in conflict management. We visited the Chairman of Warri North Local Government in March 2001. He requested further training, particularly of his Itsekiri and Ijaw youths together. The groups are now mixing more than before, but tension still exists. The USIP grant ended in March 2001 but more work remains to be done. We have discussed this need with Chief James Ibori, the Delta State Governor in March 2001, and we hope that the state will provide funds to continue the much-needed enlightenment work.

Factors Complicating the Peace Process

The past two years of work in Warri have been interesting and fulfilling. Although we have not brought about "a permanent solution" to the long-standing conflict, we do feel that good progress has been made. In the process we have encountered a number of issues and obstacles, which are documented here, as they have implications for peace processes in other areas outside the Niger Delta and even Nigeria.

High Stakes in the Niger Delta

This is an issue which is particular to the oil-rich Niger Delta. We have worked all over Nigeria and with a variety of people. When the National Corps of Mediators was established in 1994, the members agreed that they would volunteer their time and

effort free of charge. Only their expenses would be paid. This was reiterated during further trainings in 1997 and 1998. This has worked well in most parts of Nigeria. However, in the Niger Delta, where oil companies or government pay sitting allowances of N20,000 ($200) a day for simply attending a meeting, we have to continuously deal with demands from participants for such money. Participants at our workshops in Warri continued to attend, even after learning that there would be nothing in their pockets at the end of the day. However, some of our other workshops have reduced from 50 participants the first day to 25 by the third day. It is also difficult to know why some people have joined the peace process- for political, monetary, or prestige reasons. We continue to push the idea that people must own their own peace process. We also believe that true peacebuilders will be self-selective when the rewards are slim.

If companies and government pay $200 a day to community leaders working on peace efforts, it is of course to their disadvantage to be too successful in their job. When company or government employees get a cut of payments to community members, both sides are inclined to make half-hearted efforts. One government official commented that he hoped the community still had enough "pepper" (referring to red hot pepper) element to keep things flowing. This happens all over Nigeria, where conflict situations require intervention, but the stakes are higher in the Niger Delta. Thus, real peacebuilders have an uphill task in making other people believe in their genuineness and in bringing about a positive mindset change in other people. The goal is to show them that ultimately it is to everyone's benefit if an area is peaceful and economically and socially developed.

The other issue, of course, is that because of the huge amounts of money circulating around the Niger Delta, conflicts have become magnified. These are both communal and personal conflicts. The various ethnic groups lived relatively happily in Warri until oil revenues became a source of competition. Thus, it is to one's benefit to be viewed as an important community leader who must be taken into consideration by government or companies. Some people who were invisible while the conflict

was on, are happy to go to the President or the MD of Shell and tell him that there is peace in the land. People are also very suspicious of each other, each feeling that the other has sold out or gotten enough to make him content. They are quick to voice these suspicions, of which there may or may not be some truth, making it difficult to know who is genuine and whom to trust.

The Role of Politics - the Three Is Forum

Nigeria is a country of approximately 120 million people with over 350 different ethnic groups. Resource allocation is often based on ethnicity or religion. Even census figures are unreliable, as ethnicity and resource allocation are involved in falsification of numbers. Political and ethnic alliances run deep.

AAPW intervention in the Warri crises started at the time that the new democratic government of Governor Chief James Ibori was installed on May 29, 1999. The three ethnic groups involved in the 1997 violence and the June 1999 crisis that followed soon thereafter were the Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws. The Isokos, a neighbouring ethnic group, were not involved in the crisis. The Isokos had tried without success to intervene after the 1997 crisis. Soon after the AAPW training activities in late 1999/early 2000, the Isokos approached the Ijaws about possible mediation into the Warri crisis. The Ijaws held a meeting and agreed to this intervention. A meeting was then convened in February 2000 by the Isokos at Iyede, a few kilometres from Ughelli. The Ijaw and Itsekiri groups were represented by five elders each. The Three Is Forum was born at that meeting. The elders collectively visited the head of each ethnic group. An agreement to work collaboratively towards a peaceful atmosphere for development was reached at the meeting.

Members of each group were later increased from five to ten each. In March 2000, the group sent a mixed delegation of 30 members to meet with President Obasanjo. The meeting was covered by Nigerian television and CNN. Over the next few months, the forum intervened proactively in several incidents that could have disrupted the peace process. These usually involved confrontations between small groups of various ethnicities.

Things appeared to be going well, from the viewpoint of the Itsekiris and Ijaws. But where were the Urhobos? While the Urhobos were not major stakeholders in the original 1997 conflict (which was between the Ijaws and Itsekiris), they did demonstrate some support for the Ijaws. And the Urhobos were the major actors, along with the Itsekiris in the June 1999 crisis, the cause of which is not clear. Thus the Ijaws, Itsekiris and Urhobos were the original parties to the Warri conflict and the Isokos were not involved. By March 2000, however, the Urhobos were expressing their discontent at being left out of the Three I's Forum.

After some months, it became clear as to what was one of the motives of the Three I's Peace Forum. While there might have been a peacemaking element, there were also political and economic elements. Delta State, like the other thirty-five states in the Nigeria Federation, is divided into three senatorial districts. In the case of Delta, they are Delta North, Central and South. The Isokos, Itsekiris and Ijaws are the major groups in South, with a few Urhobos living in Warri Urban. However the majority of the Urhobos live in, and politically control, Delta Central, Delta North senatorial district is dominated by the Igbos and other groups resident in the area of the state capital, Asaba. At the time that this peace forum started, there was also discussion about establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the long-awaited avenue through which oil revenues would be returned to the oil-producing part of the country. It was generally assumed that the state which produced the largest percentage of oil would be given the position of the Managing Director of the NDDC. Although figures were not exact, it was also assumed that Delta State was the biggest oil producer in the country, the largest percentage of which came from the coastal area in Delta South senatorial district. Therefore the major ethnic groups in Delta South, i.e. the Ijaws, Isokos and Itsekiris, thought that the MD would come from one of their groups and so they joined together as a lobbying force.

The three groups each nominated three candidates for the position of M.D. of NDDC. Our mediator, Chief E.E. Ebimami, was one of the Ijaw nominees. He had been a very active member

of the Three I's Forum, along with Chief Mabiaku, a senior Itsekiri politician. They had made several visits to Abuja, to inform the President of peace moves in Warri and consequently Ebimami gained a high profile.

This forum began to crack, however, around September 2000 when the Itsekiris made a court case against the Delta State Government over relocation of the disputed headquarters of Warri Southwest from Itsekiri territory back to the Ijaw town of Ogbe Ijoh. The Delta State Legislature made the move over a year ago, but it took the Itsekiris some time to put in their case. The Ijaws felt that this reflected lack of genuine interest in a peace and a number of them, including the national leader, Chief E.K. Clark, withdrew from the forum.

The forum also failed in one of its objectives. In the end, the M.D. position of the NDDC was given to an Urhobo man, not to anyone from the Three I's Forum. However the forum continues as a meeting point for the Isokos, Itsekiris and Ijaws.

At the November 2000 conciliation meeting of the Warri Peace Forum, we were emphatic that the Urhobos must be part of any peace process there. This was reiterated by the Delta State Governor during the February forum with the President, and later during our visit to him in March 2001.

The Rule of Law

One issue mentioned above is the legal case, taken by some Itsekiris against the Delta State Government. The Itsekiris, having received early Western education and having many lawyers in their midst, are prone to court cases and frequently talk about "the rule of law". The legal case was taken by a few Itsekiris who are councillors in the controversial Warri Southwest Local Government. They do not have the support of the other Itsekiris, especially those who have been working for peace and who have actually adopted the approach of conflict management. On the second day of the conciliation meeting there was a new Itsekiri woman who was in attendance for the first time. In the midst of the discussion of "Our Land", she took a firm stand that other groups should let the Itsekiris dominate Warri, as they have nowhere else to go. Other participants cut in and said, "Let's

not go backward, she hasn't been here before, she doesn't know the new approach". It is unfortunate that a year ago a decision was made that when we were doing the USAID/OTI sponsored training with local governments, we skipped Warri Southwest, as it was still unsettled. Even though the legitimacy of these councillors is in doubt, perhaps if we had been able to work with them, they might not have instituted the court case.

The general feeling among the Ijaws, in particular, and the Urhobos, to some extent, was that the decision by the Itsekiris to challenge the decision of the State Government to relocate the headquarters of Warri Southwest Local Government to Ogbe-Ijoh was not in tune with the spirit of reconciliation that had brought about the then uneasy peace in Warri. To many of them, nothing meaningful could be achieved without first resolving this issue.

The Itsekiris, on the other hand, strongly believed that given their minority status within the Delta State geo-political setting, they needed a legal protection to avoid their being disinherited from the land, which they view as being historically theirs. Many Itsekiris believed that there was a conspiratorial coalition between the Urhobos and Ijaws against them, and that the purpose of the coalition was to use their majority voting right in the Delta State House of Assembly to alienate the Itsekiris from their land.

The interesting reaction here though is that both Itsekiri and Ijaw mediators and leaders worked behind the scene to get the case postponed. The judgement was due on November 10, 2000. Both Ijaw and Itsekiri leaders anticipated real problems from their own groups if they lost the case. The Ijaws also assumed that Itsekiris had paid off the judge, so they were pessimistic about the outcome. During my visit to Warri in September, I learned about the case and we visited some key leaders, looking for a way of getting the case either dropped or postponed. This was reinforced during Prof. Imobighe's visit in October, at which time he determined that the on-going peace process could not withstand any shock a judgment on the court case would have on the parties. When others became aware of this, they used behind-the-scene methods to get the court judgment postponed. This helped to reduce the tension which had been building-up from September to November 2000, and the peace process remained on track.

Conclusion

There are a number of factors which can disrupt any peace process: politics, personal allegiances and suspicions, economic interests are some of them. I believe that the Niger Delta is peculiar, in that the stakes are so high that they magnify pre-existing problems.

This summary of Academic Associates PeaceWorks' activities and experiences in the Warri intervention shows that it is vitally important to monitor and react quickly to events which can disrupt the peace process. It is necessary to be continuously observant and analytical, in order to understand the various issues involved.

Chapter 6

T.A. Imobighe and Celestine Bassey

Sustaining Peace in Warri: The Way Forward

The survey reports on the Warri crisis, discussed in chapter four, and the AAPW conflict transformation intervention that followed, which form the subject of chapter five, point to two basic facts about the Warri crisis. The first relates to the long and tortuous history of the conflict while the second has to do with the fact that the Warri condition is a highly complex vortex in which sociological and psychological relationships and internal systemic factors are closely enmeshed. The complexity of the conflict, especially in terms of its factional structure and differing patterns of communication and interaction, was well manifested during the series of AAPW conflict transformation training workshops for the mediators, the youths and elders, who were drawn from the three main ethnic groups involved in the Warri imbroglio. Given the long history of the conflict, which is discussed in chapter two, it became obvious that the process of conflict mitigation and transformation in Warri was bound to be generational rather than episodic. After all, altering attitudes, seeking mutual outcomes and reinventing behaviour toward reconciliation and cooperation, are not things that could be done overnight.

Thus, from the outset, the intractability of the relevant parameters of the conflict and the inherent combustibility of the environment that sustains the conflagration in Warri were quite apparent. As noted in chapter four, whereas there had been some significant process of integration in Warri among the feuding ethnic communities over the past century (Otite, 1990), it was also fairly obvious that there existed vital gaps in the level of integration for Warri to be regarded as a truly "melting pot" of diverse groups organically linked together and able to pursue their shared values and interests in a peaceful atmosphere. Obviously, the expectations arising from the "melting pot" model

of Warri, which were based on the classical assumptions of increased interdependence of ethnic groups in plural societies, have failed to materialise. In other words, the expected harmonisation of values and goals across ethnic strata and communal divisions has not taken place in Warri.

In the modernisation paradigm, the general projection about the structure of conflict in a society exhibiting a "mechanical solidarity" such as Warri, is that conflict between the distinct ethnic collectivities will decline as horizontal structures increasingly cut across vertical ethnic divisions. This perspective, as incisively articulated by Emile Durkheim, contradicts the "plural" perspective, commonly referred to as the "salad model", which stresses the enduring nature of plural divisions, the discontinuities between sections differentiated by ethnicity, religion or culture and the high probability of violence in the process of political change. The "salad model" takes the plural conditions as given. Instead of fundamental attenuation of primordial identities and values through the collapse of cultural boundaries, the model assumes that new relationship resulting from the progressive division of labour over time is largely superimposed on the old divisions, thereby elaborating rather than changing the plural structure of the society. As M.G. Smith (1968) explains:

> Cultural uniformities or intersectional personal associations, cannot directly erode or transform the corporate structures for the reason that sectional divisions and relations are based on the other principles such as race or exclusive corporate solidarity. In a plural regime, individual qualities are irrelevant for the determination of the social identity, which is ascriptive and corporate in base and significance.

The plural society in this analytical tradition is, thus, characterised by "disensus and inherent instability" which invariably raises the problem of finding some constitutive principles of "superior validity to economic interest as a basis for consensus and integration". As could be seen in the Warri vortex, often in such societies, the prevalent problem of differential incorporation has generally elicited structural conflict resulting at times in fundamental change. The defining

characteristic in the dialectic of this conflict may be seen in "political terms, as the relationship of the means of power, the precipitant of revolution being any factors affecting this structure of relations, and not necessarily economic process and change" (Kuper, 1974, 242). On this view, Furnivall, Smith and Kuper have linked the systemic crisis in plural conditions, such as Nigeria, to three levels of differential incorporation resulting in cultural, social and structural pluralism. Thus, Onigu Otite has argued in the Nigerian context that:

> The Nigerian society is a social system compounded by contested demands on access to scarce resources especially in the political and economic fields. It is a society defined by natural cleavages and man-made conflicts. Natural membership of ethnic groups and occupational specialisations threatened by the expanding interests of other multiple users in the same or adjoining ecological zones — provide grounds for the emergence of conflicts.

The latent expressiveness of the Nigerian plural condition and the intractability of structural and distributive issues like fiscal federalism have inevitably created the "terrain for violent and often mutually destructive confrontations between contending factions vying for domination". (Marenin: 1988 : 217). Thus the Nigerian state, in Gramscian terms, lacks the organic relations between political society and civil society", which characterises the "integral state" where hegemony implies "consent rather than domination, integration rather than exclusion, and cooperation rather than suppression" (Gramscian, 1971, 56). The reproduction of the catastrophic balance between ethnic forces and the structure of politics in Nigeria could be observed at a micro-level of social relations in Warri in terms of how parochial ethnic loyalties have proved stubbornly intractable despite crisis intervention efforts such as that of Academic Associates PeaceWorks Projects (see chapter 5).

In the context of these overbearing realities in Warri, modernisation and Marxian analytical perspectives and prognosis, which view ethnicity as "an evanescent, retrograde phenomenon" that would either give way under the "imperatives of development" or be "ultimately transcended by class solidarity", have proved largely irrelevant. Warri, Ife-

Modakeke, Zangon-Kataf, among others, have suggested instead that, as David Welch (1993) put it, "more common, in fact, has been the case in which national identity and class solidarity have been subsumed within ethnic groups, which are the critical actors." In effect, according to Welch's observation, "ethnicity has encapsulated class, providing in the process a basis for intense conflict".

It could thus be argued that the nature of communal conflict as well as the dominant pattern of social relations in such systems is conditioned by the structure of the socio-psychological properties of group dynamics in plural societies. These properties embody three clusters of variables that operate at different levels of societal matrices that are generally obvious from the responses to survey questions about Warri, which we analysed in chapter four. They include:

(i) Those pertaining to the individual (e.g. internalisation, projection);
(ii) Those operating at the group level (e.g. institutionalisation, situational patterning); and
(iii) Processes which link the two levels: specifically an individual's ethnic identity and "sense of group position" (Pettigrew, 1958).

What the above observation suggests is that inter-group relations in systems with antecedent of protracted conflict tradition, are mediated by cultural identity as the "intervening variable between the individual and his group context" (Kinlock, 1974). This fact often makes some traditional models of conflict resolution based on psychological models derived from interpersonal relations irrelevant, incomplete and indecisive in the context of such communal animosities as in Warri (Coogler, 1978, Lasch, 1979). In this regard, the prognosis for the "way forward" in the Warri crisis mediation and conciliation process must not only take cognizance of, but also re-examine, the contending group positions as to the prerequisites for lasting peace in Warri (see chapter four).

For the Ijaw community, the suggestions include:

- restoration of local government headquarters to Ogbe–Ijoh;
- creation of separate Local Government Areas in Warri for the three major ethnic groups (i.e., Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo);
- changing the title of Olu of Warri to Olu of Itsekiri;
- release and implementation of all Commission Reports on the Crisis;
- provision of jobs for the youths; and
- development of Warri.

The suggestions by the Urhobo community include:

- the change of title of Olu of Warri to Olu of Itsekiri;
- recognition and conferment of equal status (of Olu) to the Okere–Urhobo and Agbassa–Urhobo clan heads;
- creation of separate Local Government Areas for the three ethnic groups in Warri with properly delineated wards and constituencies;
- the release and implementation of all Commission Reports concerning the Crisis; and
- setting up of massive agro-industrial scheme for job creation.

For the Itsekiri community, the suggestions include:

- respect for court decisions and use of constitutional means to pursue grievances;
- commitment to dialogue and renunciation of violence;
- recognition of settler status by all groups where they are settlers;
- avoid rewarding violence;
- efforts towards genuine reconciliation;
- impartiality of government; and
- payment of oil royalties to oil-producing communities.

The above positions by the three ethnic groups were reinforced in subsequent workshops and conciliation meetings organised by AAPW for youths, traditional rulers, elders and mediators. While some of these positions overlap on some issues, the three ethnic groups had their respective areas of emphasis, clearly portraying their fears, concerns and sensibilities. For

instance, the Ijaws and the Urhobos emphasised the issues of separate local governments for the ethnic groups and the changing of the Olu title to that of Olu of Itsekiri, while the Itsekiris emphasised respect for court decisions, commitment to dialogue and renunciation of violence.

There is another suggested solution to the conflict by the Itsekiris, which is not reflected in the above survey report. In a document prepared by "The Committee of Concerned Itsekiri" (1998, 25-26), the suggestion was made for the conversion of Warri into a "Federal Protected Territory". Under the plan, Warri would have its own House of Assembly, with the responsibility of electing the Mayor and a Deputy Mayor. The Mayor shall be the Chief Executive of the territory and in his absence, the Deputy Mayor shall preside. In addition to the House of Assembly, the territory shall have a Traditional Council of 20 members (15 Itsekiris, 3 Ijaws and 2 Urhobos), to be presided over by the Olu of Warri. This suggestion denotes the extent to which the Itsekiris are concerned with their survival as a distinct ethnic group.

From the various respondents, it is clear that a systematic psychological transformation on all sides is needed to eliminate the deep-rooted mutual misconceptions and suspicions existing between the warring ethnic groups in Warri. However, for any such transformation to be meaningful, it must seek to change the existing belief system of the three ethnic groups that is predicated on the mutual expectation of threat from one another.

It is within this framework that AAPW's conflict transformation activities in Warri should be viewed. No doubt, significant progress has been made in a number of areas, especially, in re-establishing mutually rewarding contact and interaction between the three ethnic groups. As a result, it has been possible to put in place necessary structures and channels of communication to enable the parties to forge ahead with the peace process on their own. Besides, there is now relative freedom of movement of goods and services in both Warri urban and its environs (see chapter five).

Admittedly, the progress that has been recorded has not completely eliminated the deep-rooted suspicions and misconceptions existing on all sides. What needs to be done, is

to build upon the progress that has been made through confidence-building measures to sustain the peace process and ensure its irreversibility. In doing so, concrete measures need to be put in place to bring about the expected psychological reorientation on the part of the warring communities in Warri. Flowing from our analyses in chapters two and three, the problem needs to be handled at two levels. The first is at the micro-level, concerning the relations between the three major ethnic groups in Warri. Measures at this level should seek to address the fears, concerns and sensibilities of the three ethnic groups. The second is at the macro-national level. And measures taken here should seek to address the deficiencies in the Nigerian polity that tend to foster the excessive manifestation of ethnicism.

At the micro level, our analysis in chapter two has shown that the long history of association between the Ijaws, Itsekiris and Urhobos has failed to bring about an organic unity between the three main ethnic communities in Warri. Therefore, they have failed to cultivate a co-operative approach to the developmental needs of Warri. And because each group's response to the developmental needs of Warri has been based on ethnic exclusivity, it has been difficult to open up both Warri urban and its environs for meaningful development. In order to stem this drift towards ethnic exclusivity in Warri, the concept of "Warri our land" has been developed as a way of bringing all the inhabitants of Warri together towards a common purpose, which should be the development of the Oil City for their individual and collective benefit.

Given the confusion surrounding the migration of the different ethnic groups into Warri and the tendency by those affected to deliberately distort the record pertaining to these early migrations, the concept of "Warri our land" appears to be a reasonable formula for harmonising the disparate ethnic interests in Warri. It has been clearly noted in chapter two that although records of early visitors and several court judgements have established the fact of Itsekiri's prior settlement in Warri, there were also early waves of migration of Ijaw and Urhobo communities into some parts of Warri. Admittedly, there is evidence that some of these groups got Olu's permission to occupy

the portions of land where they settled. However, the longevity of their stay and their disconnection from their home-based communities earn them the right to be correctly regarded as indigenes of Warri. What the concept of "Warri our land" is trying to do is to offer all the ethnic groups in Warri an opportunity to regard Warri as their home.

By addressing the sensitivities of the various ethnic communities, this integrative formula will help to transform inter-ethnic relations in Warri from a mere mechanical association to an organic unity. For instance, it will remove the offensive settler/indigene dichotomy. All inhabitants of Warri will regard Warri as their common home and will be committed to its meaningful development.

It will also have a positive impact in the resolution of another sensitive issue. This relates to the title of the Olu. As soon as all the ethnic groups see Warri as their common heritage, it will be possible for them to put sentiments aside to appreciate the fact that there is no other ruler in Warri, of the status of the Olu, who rules over the entire Itsekiri ethnic nationality. None of the overall ruler, assuming there is a single ruler, of any of the other two ethnic nationalities (Ijaw and Urhobo) is based in Warri. Since the Olu is the only paramount ruler in Warri and by virtue of the fact that he is the sole ruler of the Itsekiri ethnic nationality, every inhabitant in Warri must acknowledge his status as the Olu of Warri. Any other claim to traditional rulership in Warri can only be at the level of clan or sectional head, which should be subordinate to the Olu. It is at these levels the chieftaincy needs of the heads of the Ijaw and Urhobo communities in Warri should be accommodated.

Another area to be impacted by the suggested integrative concept relates to the demand for the creation of separate local government for each of the three main ethnic groups in Warri. The implications for this suggestion have been discussed in chapter two. Adopting the suggested formula of "our land", would definitely provide a more conducive atmosphere for the creation of new local government areas which will meet the developmental needs of Warri and at the same time satisfy the demographic configuration of the Oil City without inviting the danger of ethnic exclusivity.

The danger of creating ethnic local governments is that once it is known that a particular local government is created for a specified ethnic group, it will be difficult to accommodate the interests and aspirations of other ethnic groups within the territorial space covered by the said local government area. If within the framework of our integrated concept, a new local government is created, for instance, in an area of Warri dominated by either the Ijaw, Urhobo or Itsekiri, such a local government would not be seen as being created exclusively for the Ijaws, Urhobos or Itsekiris, but for developmental reasons, i.e., to open up the area for the benefit of all the inhabitants within the location of the said local government.

There was a general recognition at the November 2000 AAPW conciliation workshop that the concept of "Warri our land", offered the best chance for peace in Warri. For the concept to have a salutary effect on the present peace process in Warri, it must be strengthened by measures at the macro national level of the Nigerian polity. It is in this sense that it is being suggested that Nigeria should do away with the anachronistic indigene — non-indigene dichotomy, to enable Nigerians to feel at home anywhere they choose to stay within the federation. In this regard, there should be a constitutional provision to enable Nigerians staying outside their states of origin or place of birth to automatically enjoy the privileges accruable to indigenes of the city or state they choose to live in, after a specified period of not more than five years.

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Appendix 1

Professor V. F. Peretomode
(Ijaw Scholar)

Warri Crisis Survey Report — *Ijaw Perspective*

Introduction

The data for this report was collected through interview and in some cases the completion of the interview guide (form) by the interviewees or respondents. Seven Research Assistants assisted in interviewing respondents randomly selected from clusters-identified streets or areas occupied by Ijaws in Warri. The seven Research Assistants comprised five young men and two women who are at least first degree holders in the arts, social sciences, education or the sciences. Data for this report was collected from 120 respondents consisting of 20 leaders, 30 adults, 50 youths and 20 women. Efforts were made to put responses from respondents in clusters or categories in the original report. This revised report based on the new guidelines involved the examination in some cases, of certain primary and secondary sources of data. What follows is a presentation of the analysis of data according to the specific headings for the preparation of the report:

- Causes of the Warri crisis
- Factors sustaining the violence
- Settlement profile
- Suggestions for lasting peace
- Major role players in the crisis.

Causes of the Warri Crisis

Inter-ethnic conflict in Warri metropolis dates back to the colonial era. However, the violent trend, which is a new and recent phenomenon in the history of the Warri crisis goes back to the early 1990s and the more recent and running bloody conflict, dates back to March 1997. The causes of the recent conflicts are political, social and economic.

The immediate cause of the bloody conflict between the Ijaws and Itsekiris however, is mainly political, the relocation of the Warri South West Local government Council Headquarters from Ogbe-Ijaw (an Ijaw Village) to Ogidigben (an Itsekiri Village) on March 17th 1997. All 120 respondents attested to this fact.

In October 1996, the Federal Government of Nigeria created several Local Government Councils including the Warri South-West with announced headquarters at Ogbe-Ijoh. The Ijaws rejoiced at this development because, at last, they felt the "Itsekiri Yoke" had been removed off them. The Ijaws raised funds to refurbish old structures, which they converted into the Local Government Headquarters. Elections were even held for council offices during the March 15, 1997, nation-wide local elections. This was a welcome development for the Ijaws who had since the 1930s sought not to be in the same Local Division with the Itsekiris. In a strongly worded joint petition, for example, Ijaw leaders in Warri Division wrote to Government on 20th December, 1975, to state among other things:

> That the Ijaws further reaffirm their previous representation and demand that they do not want to remain any longer in one division with the Itsekiris... we want a separate administrative division.

When the local government headquarters was relocated from Ogbe-Ijoh after about five months of its existence there and two days after the local government council elections at Ogidigben, it was clear to the Ijaws that the Olu and his other Itsekiri leaders have once again used their **power and influence** on the Federal government to deny and rob them what legitimately and originally belonged to them - the Warri South Local Government Council Headquarters. The Ijaws felt short-changed.

While the relocation of the LGC headquarters could be considered as the last "straw that broke the camel's back", the conflict took the new vicious dimension that it did because while the Ijaws were still using peaceful means to exert pressure on government to redress the issue, threatening to fight if that was not done, the Itsekiris struck. On 25/3/97, some Itsekiri youths under the cover of darkness launched a pre-planned and most dastardly attack on the Ijaws, destroying property belonging to

prominent Ijaws and, lives were lost. For example, the house of Chief E. K. Clark, a foremost Ijaw leader, located at No. 6 Mission Road was burnt and razed to the ground and his security man, Mr. Emeka Ndukwe, was killed and burnt. A Mitsubishi Bus and a Peugeot 504 station wagon parked in the compound were also burnt. Chief Clark was no doubt the target of the attack but he was not at home at the time of the onslaught. The home of another prominent Ijaw Leader, Chief Wellington Okrika of Gbaramatu Clan and another building owned by an Izon man were also razed. To this incident of extreme provocation, the Ijaws resolved to retaliate and the violence flared up in the reverine areas.

The Ijaws had complained of marginalisation, economic exploitation, political oppression, land deprivation, and developmental problems since their merger with the Itsekiris in the same division. In the 20th December 1975 joint petition signed by the Clan Chiefs of Ogbe-Ijoh, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma and two Leaders of Thought from each of the three Clans, they made their plight and intentions crystally clear:

> we want to make it crystally clear that we are opposed to any form of (continued) merger with the Itsekiris in Warri Division. This is in the best interest of peace, stability and justice in the Division... It is very clear under the present oppressive and humiliating situation of things in Warri Division, we loathe any further association of any type with the Itsekiris. The Ijaws in Warri Division are a distinct ethnic group from the Itsekiris, differing in cultural and social set-up, customs, traditions and language... The Ijaws also have different physical, educational and developmental problems. That an unpleasant, oppressive and provocative situation exists in Warri — Apartheid in Warri. The Ijaws are aggrieved people in the Division... That the Ijaws want to be free from economic exploitation, social and cultural extinction and from political oppression. We want a separate administrative division... any (continued) merger will only succeed on our dead bodies.

Specifically, those interviewed revealed the following acts or attempts by the Itsekiris to continually subjugate, oppress, degrade, marginalise and deny the Ijaws their rights:

1. Attempts by the Itsekiris to claim their territories in Warri and treat them as second class citizens and customary tenants.

2. The refusal of the Olu and his chiefs to recognise the four traditional Ijaw rulers in Warri Division, rulers who had always been recognised by the various Governments in Nigeria: colonial, civilian or military as the prescribed authorities of their own areas while the Olu is the prescribed authority of the Itsekiris.

3. The change of title of the Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri which made the Olu to begin to arrogate power and supremacy over the Ijaws and Urhobo aborigines of Warri and the tendency of the Itsekiris to equate Warri Local Government Councils to Itsekiri Kingdom before outsiders and therefore the Olu as the owner and ruler of Warri. This is despite the fact that the laws of the Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Law of 1959 Cap 19 and the Laws of Bendel State of Nigeria 1976 Cap 37 excluded the three Ijaw Clans/ Councils of Ogbe-Ijoh and Isaba, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma, from the overlordship or jurisdiction of the Olu.

4. The refusal of the Itsekiris to allow the Ijaws to remain where they traditionally belong or to have self determination i.e a separate Local Government Area created for them in Warri as the Ijaw lands are the major producers of the 'black gold' in the area. For example, through the influence of the Itsekiri leaders in 1991, the Ijaw Clans of Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma were transferred from Warri South Local Government Area to Warri North Local Government Area with Koko (an Itsekiri town) as the headquarters. This placed the Ijaws under difficulties, as they had to travel or pass through five local government areas in order to get to Koko. The people protested for many years to no avail even as many were disenfranchised. When the Federal Government at last directed that the Ijaw clans be returned to Warri South where they originally belonged in 1992, the Itsekiris went to stop it.

5. Furthermore, some respondents recalled that the Warri Traditional Council was set up on September 16th 1977 but has never functioned because of the disagreement between the Itsekiris and Ijaws as to the official language of the Council. The Olu and his Chiefs had insisted that the only official language of the Council must be Itsekiri but the Ijaws insisted that if it is not English Language then it must be both the Itsekiri and Ijaw languages. The Itsekiris and the Olu refused and the Ijaw traditional rulers were forced to withdraw from the Council.

6. All Itsekiri institutions including chieftaincy titles now identify with the name of Warri giving the false impression that "Itsekiri is synonymous with Warri and that the Itsekiris are the "Sole owners of Warri".

7. The attempt by the Itsekiris to use their influence to eliminate all traces of Ijaws (Ogbe-Ijoh) in Warri (e.g. replacing names of major streets in traditionally Ijaw owned and occupied areas in Warri with Itsekiri names and the pathetic destruction of the popular and traditional Ogbe-Ijoh market which is the nucleus of metropolitan Warri with a view to building an Itsekiri named Local Government structure in its place). In addition, there is the incredible fact that in Warri LGAs, the Ijaws have had no local government chairman, no Councillor, no Ijaw person from the old state province representing them either in the state House of Assembly or House of Representatives.

8. The Ijaw lands and those formerly taken over by government, (particularly in the GRA), are being systematically acquired by Itsekiris through purchases and building of structures. In some cases, the same Itsekiris have bought over government companies and properties on Ijaw lands in Warri thereby indirectly taking over such lands.

Factors Sustaining the Violence

An analysis of the interviewees' responses to the question: "if in the past, there has been problems between the Itsekiris, Urhobos, and Ijaws, why do you think it is escalating today rather than reducing, has been considered. It has revealed that the following factors have sustained the ethnic violence in the Warri Crisis.

- The relocation of the Warri South west Local government Council headquarters from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben and the failure of Government to return it to Ogbe-Ijoh as originally announced.
- Increased awareness of the oppressive and marginalising tendencies of the Olu and his Itsekiri people of the Izon people.
- The claim of the Itsekiris to the ownership of all lands in Warri including those owned by the Ijaws, and the frequent public statements by Itsekiris that the Ijaws are their "customary tenants" in Warri.
- Denial of opportunities and privileges by both Government and companies against the Ijaws leading to increased unemployment and hunger among the Izon youths.
- Itsekiris have deprived Ijaws in Warri the opportunity of enjoying employment, contracts from Chevron and other oil companies.
- The arrogance and domineering attitude of the Itsekiris.
- The non-development of areas inhibited by the Ijaws and Urhobos in Warri metropolis by the only Itsekiri dominated Local Government Council in Warri.

Conflict Settlement Profile

Besides the courts, there exists no reliable institution established either by government or non-government bodies for managing ethnic conflicts in Warri. Rather, a 'fire brigade' approach has often been adopted by government. Whenever conflicts flare up, government rushes to set up a Commission of Inquiry to look into the remote and immediate causes of the crisis, during which period security operatives are deployed to the area to maintain peace, law and order. The reports of such commissions or panels however are never released nor action taken on them.

What follows is a brief discussion of the two approaches — the courts and the 'fire brigade' approaches and why the Izons have no confidence in them as reliable machineries to conflict resolution. The courts have not been effective in the management or settlement of the Warri Crisis because of a lack of confidence in them. This lack of confidence is traceable to the colonial times.

The Itsekiris, no doubt, were the first ethnic group that was to have a cordial relationship with the European traders, including the Portuguese. For example, as early as the 1870s, an Itsekiri paramount chief sent his first son, Dom Domingos, to study in Portugal. Domingos was said to have read up to graduate level before he returned to the Itsekiri Kingdom and later became an Olu. His exposure in the Western World helped "in the development of the political sophistication of his kingdom, which in turn resulted in a flourishing trade between the Europeans and the Itsekiris".

When the British traders came, they dealt with Itsekiri middlemen who were trading with the hinterland. Itsekiri middlemen like Nana Olomu acquired political authority and predominance in the Warri province from the 1880s up to 1894. Chief Dogho too without question gained predominance in the area in the first quarter of the 20th century (Ikime, 1977). The Itsekiri also became deeply involved in the colonial administration at the expense of their Ijaw and Urhobo neighbours. This gave them political, educational and economic advantage and influence over the other two ethnic [original] settlers and co-owners of Warri. Chief Nana and Chief Dore who were the middlemen and political Agents of the British in those historic days, stated Chief Clark, terrorised the Ijaws and claimed all their territories, intimidated them into giving up their rights, and seized their agreements. For instance, Chief Nana seized the lease agreement of the Ogula people signed with the Royal Niger Company. This was reported to Her Majesty's Commissioner in the Niger and Oil River Protectorate, Major McDonalds, during his visit to Forcados in 1898.

Even among the Itsekiri people, the British preferred Dore Numa because of his support for them against Chief Nana of Koko who was once a paramount chief and Governor of the

Benin River but who opposed the Colonial Master's interference in the domestic affairs of the area. When Dore Numa was appointed a paramount chief in Warri, there was stiff opposition to the appointment by all ethnic groups including the Itsekiris. When the descendants of Olu Akengbuna I sued Dore Numa over his claims to land in Warri at the Onitsha Assizes in 1923, Mr. Justice A. F. C Webber ruled in favour of Dore Numa against the Royal House of the Itsekiris.

In Warri metropolis, in colonial times, Dore Numa was also in court several times with the Urhobos and Izons to defend his "titular claim to Warri lands" and he never lost any case throughout his reign as paramount chief in Warri. As Justice B. A. Omosun pointed out, Chief Dore Numa was not only a paramount chief but also the paramount president of the Warri Native Court of Appeal. Many Urhobos and Izons (less influential and less educated) had to take their cases to this court. The outcome of such cases were inevitable. Because Numa was a political agent of the British Colonial masters in the perpetration of colonial interest in Southern Nigeria, whatever he represented was accepted by the British colonial authorities because a contrary judgement would have created chaos.

Chief Clark, in a memorandum submitted to the then Head of State and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, dated May 28th, 1993, and titled, **THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO OWNS WARRI,** an Ijaw point of view articulated the role and use of the Courts by the Itsekiris vividly thus:

> It is dishonest and mischievous of the Itsekiris to want to claim Warri by sponsoring publications on the pages of Newspapers the so-called judgements which were fraudulently obtained by the influence of Dore Numa in collaboration with the colonial masters who got land grants from Dore. A contrary judgement would have created chaos with the colonial government losing lands.
>
> The so-called Supreme Court judgement in 1927 and which later went to the Privy Council was obtained by fraud. Subsequent judgements followed the precedent laid down in the Privy Council Judgement of 1927 because Chief Dore who was the defendant in that case had earlier confessed in a letter dated 28th February, 1923 to the Agbassa people through their lawyer, Mr. S. L. Bucknor that he, Dore, in his private capacity or as a representative of the Itsekiri people or Olu did not own Agbassa land, and that the land belonged to the Agbassa people... He wrote a similar letter in respect of Okere lands.
>
> It is clear from the above (analysis) that the Itsekiri leaders used their powers and influence to oppress and deprive the Ijaws and Urhobos in Warri of their rights (and lands). These poor and uninfluential Ijaws and Urhobos could not succeed in any of their cases against the Itsekiris at the time. **It was obvious that the Colonial powers who signed "fraudulent" treaties with Chief Dore and other Itsekiri Chiefs always gave judgement for the Itsekiris in order to protect their interests.** But the situation has changed and the Itsekiris have failed to recognise this, hence the frequent clashes and unwarranted riots. The descendants of the oppressed Ijaws and Urhobos of Warri are no longer ready to accept the Itsekiris as their leaders and overlords and they are ready and prepared to correct the situation.

From the above analysis of events during the colonial times, it is clear that the Ijaws would have no confidence in the courts in settling conflicts between the ethnic groups and consequently the courts could not be relied upon as an effective institution for managing conflicts between the three ethnic groups in Warri.

The 'fire-brigade' approach by the State and Federal Governments, to settle the conflict in Warri has also failed for lack of confidence of the people, particularly the failure of these governments to release and implement the findings of the Reports of the several Commissions of Inquiry into the Warri communal clashes.

Data Analysis

Table 1

How Warri is different from other metropolis

S/NO	CATEGORIES OF OPINIONS	fg	%
1.	Three ethnic groups claiming traditional ownership of Warri or Sections of Warri.	115	95.8

2.	Overlordship of one ethnic group (the Itsekiris) over the other two ethnic groups (aborgines) — the Ijaws and Urhobos/Expansionist tendencies of one ethnic group (the Itsekiri)/ Arrogance of overlordship and claim of superiority of the Itsekiris and their Olu over the Ijaws and Urhobos/the Itsekiris treating the other aborigines Ijaws and Urhobos as customary tenants	115	95.8
3.	Lack of unity among the three ethnic groups — Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw/mutual suspicion of one group to undo the others/hatred between the Itsekiri and the other two groups.	100	83.0
4.	Neglect by government (both state and federal) Government supporting one ethnic group (Itsekiris) against the others - Ijaws and Urhobos.	48	40.00

As can be seen from Table 1, three cluster of reasons have been attributed as to why Warri is different from other metropolitan cities in Nigeria. The first category of opinion by 95.8% of the respondents is that unlike most other cities, three ethnic groups, the Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris all claim ownership of sections or all lands in Warri. Equally opined by 95.8% of the respondents is the perception that WARRI, "owned" by three ethnic groups, is being hijacked by one group as its while viewing the other two as customary tenants. The Itsekiris therefore see themselves superior to the Ijaws and Urhobos whom they consider inferior and therefore must be discriminated against and marginalised. For example, some respondents recalled that the Warri Traditional Council was set up on September 16, 1977 but has never functioned because of the disagreement between the Itsekiris and Ijaws as to the official language of the Council. The Olu and his Itsekiri chiefs had insisted that the only official language of the Council must be Itsekiri but the Ijaws insisted that if it is not English language then it must be Itsekiri and Ijaw languages. The Itsekiris and the Olu refused and the Ijaw traditional rulers withdrew from the Council.

The third category of responses by 100 (83%) respondents point to the lack of unity, hatred and mutual suspicion among

the three ethnic groups. This state of affairs can be attributed to the "struggle over the ownership of Warri.

One thing that is evident from the above analysis is that there is a high degree of consensus of opinion among the respondents that Warri is different from other metropolitan cities inhabited by people of different ethnic background in Nigeria.

Why the Problems Between the Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws are Escalating Rather Than Reducing

The cluster of responses to the question, "if in the past, there has been problems between the Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws, why do you think it is escalating rather than reducing today" have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Why the problem between the Itsekiris, Urhobos and Ijaws is escalating today

S/NO	CLUSTERS	Fg	%
1.	The relocation of Warri South West Local Government Council Headquarters from Ogbe-Ijoh (an Ijaw Village) to Ogidigben (an Itsekiri village) in March, 1997.	120	100
2.	Increased awareness of the oppressive and marginalising tendencies of the Olu and his Itsekiri people against the Ijaws and Urhobos (e.g the change of the Olu's title in 1952 from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri and the claim of the Itsekiris to the ownership of all lands in Warri).	120	100
3.	Perpetuation of injustice, denial of opportunities and privileges by both Government and Companies (against the Ijaws and Urhobos) in favour of Itsekiris.	77	64

A look at Table 2 reveals that there is a general consensus among the respondents in two areas as to why the problem between the Ijaws and Itsekiris (in this case) is escalating rather than reducing. The last straw that broke the camel's back, was the relocation of the Warri South West Local Government Area

Headquarters from Ogbe-Ijoh (an Ijaw village) to Ogidigben (an Itsekiri village). This singular act of the removal of the Local Government Council Headquarters from the Ijaws and giving it to their traditional rival, the Itsekiris, heightened awareness of the Ijaws that the Itsekiri people were hell bent on their continuous oppression, marginalisation, overlordship, show of superiority and seizure of Ijaw lands in Warri and its environs. They reasoned that if their peaceful nature with their neighbours have made the Olu and his subjects, the Itsekiris, to arrogate so much to themselves, they were no more prepared to tolerate the Itsekiris' false claims and arrogance, particularly to the detriment of themselves and Ijaw generations unborn.

When the Federal Government created Local Government areas in December 1996 including the Warri South Local Government Council with announced headquarters at Ogbe-Ijoh, the Ijaws rejoiced because, at last, they felt the "Itsekiris Yoke" had been removed", stated one of the Ogbe-Ijoh community leaders. This is so because the Ijaws had since the late 1930s wanted not to be in the same Local Government Area with the Itsekiris.

When the Local Government Area headquarters was relocated from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben, it was clear to the Ijaws that the Olu and his Itsekiri leaders had once again used their **powers and influence** on the Federal Government to deny, and rob them of their headquarters. The Ijaws would not take this any more. They recalled the following long-standing attempts at oppressing and denying them of their rights.

1. Attempts by the Itsekiris to claim their territories in Warri and treat them as second class citizens and customary tenants.

2. The refusal of the Olu and his chiefs to recognise the four traditional Ijaw rulers in Warri Division, rulers who had always been recognised by the various Governments in Nigeria. (Colonial, Civilian or Military as the prescribed authorities of their own areas while the Olu is the prescribed authority of the Itsekiris).

3. The change of the title of the Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri which made the Olu to begin to arrogate to himself power and supremacy over the Ijaws and Urhobo aborigines of Warri and the tendency of the Itsekiris to equate Warri Local Government Areas to Itsekiri Kingdom before outsiders and which has arrogated to the Olu the fake status of the owner and ruler of Warri.

4. The refusal of Itsekiris to allow the Ijaws to remain where they traditionally belong or to have a separate Local Government Area created for them in Warri. For example, through the influence of the Itsekiri leaders in 1991, the Ijaw clans of Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba, Gbaramotu, Egbeoma were transferred from Warri South Local Government Area to Warri North Local Government Area with Koko (an Itsekiri town) as the headquarters. This placed the Ijaws under difficulties as they had to pass through five Local Government Areas in order to get to Koko. The people protested for many years to no avail as many were disenfranchised. When the Federal Government at last directed that the Ijaw clans be returned to Warri South where they originally belonged in 1992, the Itsekiris went to court to stop it.

5. All Itsekiri institutions including chieftaincy titles now identify with the name of Warri giving the false impression that "Itsekiri is now synonymous with Warri and that the Itsekiris are the **Sole** owners of Warri.

6. The attempt by the Itsekiris to use their influence to eliminate all traces of Ijaws (Ogbe-Ijoh) in Warri (e.g replacing names of major streets in traditionally Ijaw-owned land areas in Warri with Itsekiri names and trying to destroy the popular Ogbe-Ijoh market and in its place build a Local Government Structure).

The above accumulated, bottled-up grievances of the Ijaws and other perceived injustices against the Ijaws were further awakened following the relocation of "their" Local Government headquarters to an Itsekiri village. This escalated the problems.

Structural Conditions

When the respondents were asked, "As an Ijaw, how do you relate to or see other ethnic communities (Urhobo or Itsekiri) in Warri", their responses have been presented in Table 3.

Table 3

How the Ijaws see the Urhobos and Itsekiris in Warri (N=120)

S/NO	Cluster	Fg	%
1.	As rivals	26	21.7
2.	Potential enemies/killers	15	12.5
3.	Friends and neighbours	79	65.8

Table 3 shows that in spite of the hostilities between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, majority of the respondents, 79 representing 65.8%, still consider both the Itsekiris and Urbohos as friends and neighbours. Twenty six of the respondents representing 21.7% considered the other ethnic communities as rivals. Only 15 (12.5%) of the respondents considered them, the Itsekiris, as enemies/killers. On the whole, the respondents say they have no problems with the Urhobos in Warri.

As to whether or not they were "being denied their legitimate rights by other ethnic communities, all 120 respondents replied in the affirmative (yes). When asked to indicate these rights being denied them the following picture emerged (see Table 4).

Table 4

Rights being denied the Ijaws

S/NO	Rights	Fg	%
1.	Land	42	35.5
2.	Royalties from mineral resources/employment	81	67.5
3.	Political positions	90	75.00
4.	Traditional instruments	26	21.7
5.	Administrative Headquarters	120	100

An examination of Table 4 reveals that all the 120 respondents stated that the relocation of the Warri South West

Local Government Council from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben is the most important right denied the Ijaws in Warri. This is followed by political positions. One of the respondents from Ogbe-Ijoh drew the attention to the fact that in Warri Local Government Councils, Itsekiris have 13 Wards and the Ijaws 12, yet the Ijaws have had no Local Government Chairman, no Counsellor in any of the Warri Local Government Councils and no Ijaw person from this area represents them either in the State House of Assembly or House of Representatives. Eight-one (67.5%) respondents indicated that the Ijaw people's right to employment and "royalties" from mineral resources from this area are being denied them. One of the respondents put it this way:

> The prospect of an Ijaw person getting a good job with the Oil Companies in Warri is slim. The Ijaws are denied work because the Olu has a company responsible for recruiting staff for the oil companies especially Chevron. The Olu will *never* employ an Ijaw man. He will prefer a person from another tribe if he cannot find an Itsekiri.

As to the question, who owns Warri: only 5(4%) of the respondents stated that it is the Ijaws. The others, 115 representing approximately 96% stated that the three ethnic groups. (Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris) own Warri. One respondent put it this way:

> Ijaws were the first settlers. Urhobos were the second settlers, and Itsekiris were the third settlers. Each ethnic group knows its portion or original settlement in Warri, except the people are troublemakers.

Another put it thus:

> The nucleus of metropolitan Warri is owned by the Ijaws — the Ogbe-Ijohs. But other sections owned by the other tribes have expanded to join the original town. As such Warri can be safely and better said to be owned by the three ethnic groups —Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris.

As a follow up, when the respondents were asked to state what they would want to see happen to other ethnic communities other than theirs in terms of control of Warri, the response was unanimous:

> "they want every ethnic community to be treated fairly to make each group "feel ownership", each group should be given its due right and position and equally represented in the Warri (metropolis) Local Government Council. No group should encroach on the rights, cultural heritage and claim or attempt to claim the traditional territories of the other ethnic groups.

Psycho-Cultural Dispositions

When the respondents were asked to describe an Urhobo and Itsekiri, all 120 persons gave their negative images or impression of the Itsekiris and only very few, 21 (17.5%) described the Urhobos. The reason for this was that in Warri, the Ijaws have no quarrels with the Urhobos but the Itsekiris. The respondents generally described the Itsekiris as rivals, dubious, proud, very arrogant and domineering in nature; greedy and selfish too, vain, self conceited, aggressive, very oppressive and marginalising. The Urhobos were described by the few as having the tendency to outwit their neighbours, pretentious, cunning, complacent and queer and that the Urhobo man is a coward.

In spite of the above negative images, one of the respondents still had this to say about the Urhobos and Itsekiris:

> We have been friends and this remains in spite of the hostilities. We are brothers and neighbours, we share the same or some affinity.

The Ijaws (respondents) described themselves as truthful, straight forward, peace loving, honest, accommodating and tolerant but very strict if they have taken a decision to fight back. When provoked beyond tolerable limits, they retaliate.

On whether they will marry an Urhobo or Itsekiri, 111 (92.5%) said yes. Of this number, six (6) representing 5% added, "with caution". Of this six, three stated that they would marry an Urhobo (not an Itsekiri). It is interesting to note that the twenty (20) women interviewed stated that they would marry any man of their choice, either an Urhobo or Itsekiri. In all, they see inter-marriage between the ethnic groups as an instrument for forging peaceful union among the groups.

Of the nine (9) who said they will not marry an Urhobo or Itsekiri, one attributed his position to "the general feeling to marry from your own ethnic group", while the other eight (8) attributed their stance to the perceived laziness of the Itsekiri woman, her possessiveness, her tendency to marginalise the husband in the home and run away with children. Other reasons given include the distrust between members of the different ethnic groups and the ever-increasing resentment against one another.

On how their prospects in life have been affected by other ethnic groups, the respondents are of the view that it has been "very competitive for the Ijaw man. Other ethnic groups, especially the Itsekiris, have played everything to their own advantage. Such feelings were expressed by respondents thus:

- Itsekiris have deprived Ijaws in Warri from enjoying employment, contracts and "royalties" from Chevron in particular and other oil servicing companies.
- An Urhobo Head of Department preferred to promote my Itsekiri and Igbo counterparts even when I was more qualified and more industrious in serving him.
- The good positions are occupied by the other ethnic groups.
- The Ijaw lands and those taken over by Government, particularly in the GRA, have been purchased by Itsekiris who have built their houses on them. In some cases, the Itsekiris have bought over government and company properties in Ijaw territories in Warri thereby indirectly taking over the lands from the Ijaws.

As to whether they have been helped by people of other ethnic origin, an overwhelming majority, 105 representing 87.5% said yes. Only 15(12.5% said no.

When asked if violence was the only means of settling scores among the different ethnic groups in Warri?. All (120) the respondents said No but 10 of the interviewees were to add that "since dialogue fails, violence is the answer". One of them even referred to what he called *the frustration = aggression hypothesis* to explain the recourse to violence in Warri.

The respondents were further asked to explain what must be responsible for the continuation of the bloody confrontation among the ethnic factors in WARRI despite the realisation that violence is not the only means of settling scores among the different ethnic groups in WARRI. The analysis of the responses has been presented in Table 5 under six clusters.

Table 5
Reasons for the continuation of bloody confrontation among ethnic groups in Warri

S/N0	REASONS	fg	%
1.	Failure to return the Warri South Local Government Area headquarters to Ogbe-Ijoh.	113	94
2.	Continued domination, oppression, arrogance of the Olu and Itsekiris and their claim to superiority, overlordship and ownership of Warri; while they view Ijaws and Urhobos as customary tenants.	111	92.5
3.	Failure of Government to come out with the truth and take decisive decision over the Warri crisis; e.g failure of Federal Government to release and implement reports of Panels set up to look into the Warri crisis-reports whose recommendations are perceived to favour the Ijaws and Urhobos	97	80.1
4.	Long years of unsettled rivalries	64	53
5.	The attitude of multi-national companies and lack of development in Warri and the Niger Delta.	59	49
6.	Refusal to shift ground on long held positions/communication gap between the groups/failure of dialogue to yield positive results.	51	42.5

Conflict Settlement

The respondents know about the various efforts by the State and Federal Governments to settle the conflict in Warri. The following efforts were specifically mentioned:

Setting up of Judicial Panels/Commissions of Enquiry:

1. The *Justice Nnaemeka Agu* 1993 Commissions Report which recommended that 3 Local Government Councils be created in Warri for the Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiris;
2. The 1997 Commission of Enquiry headed by Justice Alhassan Idoko, Chief Judge of Kano State, which also recommended the creation of separate Local Government Councils for the three (3) ethnic groups in Warri; and
3. The General Magashi's Panel of Enquiry into the Warri Crisis in 1999.

All Panels submitted reports, which were favourable to the Ijaws and Urhobos in Warri but the Federal Government, did not release them.

4. Deployment of security forces to Warri and its environs and imposition of curfew.
5. Calling and holding of meetings of leaders of the various ethnic groups for dialogue.

These efforts, the respondents say, are not working and they do not feel safe going about their businesses or going into neighbourhoods (particularly Itsekiri neighbourhoods) they consider hostile. As one respondent vividly put it:

> The fear is everywhere. Even childhood friends no longer feel safe among themselves even in neutral grounds, let alone in hostile neighbourhood.

As to whether there are other ways of ensuring peace in Warri, all 120 respondents stated yes. The other ways they suggested are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Ways of ensuring peace in Warri

S/NO	WAYS	fg	%
1.	Restore or return the Warri South-West Local Government headquarters to its original place, Ogbe-Ijoh.	120	100
2.	Create separate Local Government Areas in Warri for the 3 ethnic groups	117	95
3.	Change the title of Olu of Warri to what it was traditionally prior to 1952, the Olu of Itsekiri.	114	97.5
4.	Release and implement all Commission Reports on the Warri Crisis.	110	91.7
5.	Provide jobs to the youths and develop Warri	99	82.5

On what the Warri people themselves can do to ensure peace knowing that violence only destroys and peace builds, the responses have been presented in Table 7.

Table 7

What Warri people themselves can do to ensure peace N-120

S/NO	WHAT TO BE DONE	fg	%
1.	To forgive and forget the bitter past and emphazise those things that can unite the groups (e.g neglect, poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment, ecological degradation) genuine dialogue of give and take among the ethnic groups brokered by Government, the opinion leaders and youth leaders.	102	93
2.	Avoid encroaching on the rights and heritage of others; accepting collective ownership of Warri as a reality; avoid referring to others as customary tenants.	88	73
3.	Appeal to youths to shun war as a means of settling conflict; maintain peace and law and order always.	72	60
4.	Dialogue — Bi-monthly or quarterly meetings between the ethnic groups, inviting other ethnic groups to participate in each others annual festivals etc.	63	52.5

On how the negative images the different ethnic communities have for each other can be changed to reduce the generational problem of mistrust and disharmony in Warri, the following suggestions were made:

- Create separate Local Government Areas for the three (3) ethnic groups.
- Create respect for each other through removal of superior/inferior, lords/slaves, owners/customary tenant syndrome and create equal access to the socio-political and economic resources in the city.

- Government and oil companies' recognition of and fair treatment of the various ethnic groups.
- Free-mix living, cultural exchange and having the same political forum.
- Increase inter-ethnic marriages.

In response to the question, "if some members of your community are preparing to attack other communities, would you run to the police to stop them? Majority of the respondents, 97 (81%) said yes but quickly added if others have not already attacked and if they are not in serious conflict with the other ethnic communities. Of the 23(19%) who said no, 20 said because they may be called traitors, fear of retaliation against their family and conviction that their vigilante groups must be protected at all cost. The other 2 specifically attributed their response to the fear of the police who might detain them, reveal their identity to their community vigilante groups and thus put their families in danger of retaliation from such groups.

On whether community leaders are representing the interest of their communities or their personal material interests, 99(82.5%) said they are representing community interests, five said they are in-between and 16(13%) believe they are representing their personal material interests in most cases.

Finally, all the respondents (120) agree that they would encourage frequent/occasional meetings of the various community leaders, non-governmental organisations (e.g churches, associations, unions), youth leaders etc to exchange views as an effective means of checking outbreak of violence in Warri.

Major Role Players in the Crisis

The major role players in the crisis can be divided into two broad groups:

1. The Youths, and
2. The Leaders of the *Izons* in Warri.

The Youths are the fighters when it is necessary to retaliate in the event of any provocation. Most of them are unemployed, jobless and hungry, and so find solace in the crisis situation as they consider such a situation an opportunity to be engaged, to

be useful to themselves and their ethnic group, to remove the yoke of the perceived oppression and degradation of the Ijaws.

For the purposes of the Warri Crisis and involvement in it, four Youth Groups are identifiable. They are: The *MEMBUTU* Group, The *AWAR* Group, The *MILLER* or old NPA Group and The *OLABRA KO* Pre Group.

To outsiders, these are amorphous groups, but a close examination of these groups shows that each has an established organisational structure headed by an *Amayenabo* who is highly revered by members of the group. His words are considered as law. In times of crisis, the Amayenabo co-ordinates the activities of his group. In his youth group, there is an *Olotu*, Commandeer-in-Chief, under whom are the *Lions* - the fighters. Each group has its own *Liaison* officers and so on. The *Amayenabos* of the various youth groups also meet together to plan strategies of self-defence and retaliation, when necessary.

It should be noted that during crisis situation, the youth leaders, in most cases, if not in all cases, do not inform the prominent leaders of the ethnic group of their plans before carrying out their reprisals. The reason is based on their loss of confidence in the elders for their inability to provide them with jobs. They are also seen as compromising too much with government and oil exploring companies coupled with their inability to influence Government to return the headquarters of Warri South West Local Government Council (taken from them by the Itsekiris) to its original Ijaw village, Ogbe-Ijoh.

The second group of players are the elders, the leaders of the Izon ethnic group in Warri. This is a very moderate group. These persons have by accident and by virtue of their prominence, come to be major players in the Warri Crisis. They include highly respected personalities such as:

Chief E. K. Clark
Barrister Broderick Bozimo
Chief Wellington Okrika
Chief Bare Etotor
Barrister Zinimuagha
Barrister Orubebe
Barrister Shyngle Oki
Chief Oromoni Jr. etc

They are the *Izon* prominent figures whom Government often calls upon to help appeal to their youths to remain calm and maintain the peace while the solution to the crisis is being worked out. They also are the persons who articulate the position of the *Izons* and make it known to Government. They act as liaison officers between their people, the *Izons*, including the *Izon* youths and the Federal or State Government in time of crisis, and in times of peace.

NB This appendix represents the views of the author, Professor V.F. Peretomode and his ethnic group; and not those of AAPW

Appendix 2

Dr. A.S. Akpotor (Urhobo scholar)

Warri Crisis Survey Report — *Urhobo Perspective*

Background — Causes of Conflict

The Itsekiri/Urhobo conflict over the Warri metropolis and over the three Itsekiri riverine areas, namely, Ode-Itsekiri, Obodo and Ubeji which together constitute part of the present Warri South Local Government Area, predate the colonial setting. Archival research, including government intelligence reports, oral evidence and general observers, confirms that the Warri crisis has both remote and immediate causes.

While the immediate causes are anchored in the inability of both the Federal and State Governments to follow the path of truth, fairness, justice and equity in taking concrete decisions, consequent upon the powerful lobbying influence and position of the Olu and his Itsekiri brethren [which British colonialism bequeathed to them], it gave room to the persistence of the conflict.

We however note that the inability of the Nigerian Governments to finally resolve the crisis is anchored in the phobia of not wanting to displease one ethnic minority - the Itsekiri (but still predominant) whose history has shown as always belligerent, due to their desire to hold unjustifiably onto claims [Land] that had been decided judicially as well as by various Government Commissions' findings in favour of the ethnic groups within the disputed area.

The remote causes can partly be traced to British colonialism and the Action Group Government of 1952.
The problems revolve around:

a. Ownership of land and control of wealth;
b. Change of title from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri and his overlordship status.
c. Political marginalisation of the Urhobos and Ijaws in the political affairs of the local government area.

While the British could be exonerated from the problem associated with item (b) above because they did not succumb to Itsekiri pressure to institute the Olu ship on the multi-ethnic configuration of Warri, the British can be held responsible for problems (a) and (c). This is consequent upon the British "Divide and Rule Policy", which inadvertently placed the Itsekiri in a position of superiority vis-a-vis other indigenous ethnic groups in Warri.

From a historical viewpoint, it is possible to periodise the Warri conflict into five phases:

i. British Colonial Administration, 1884 - 1949.
ii. Period of Self-government, 1950 - 1960s.
iii. Chieftaincy crisis. 1970-1992
iv. Persistent violent period 1993-1998
v. Reformation period 1999 and beyond

Methodology

The data analysed here were taken from interviews conducted among Urhobos living in Warri (the two indigenous Urhobo kingdoms of Okere and Agbarha). In the fieldwork, I was assisted by eight youths (graduates and undergraduates) and the areas covered were Okumagba layout, Edjeba, Okere-Urhobo, Ekurede-Urhobo, Airport Road, Obahor, Igbudu, Ugborikoko, Deco Road, Ojabugbe, Eboh Road, Ekpan, Effurun and Sapele Road. 500 respondents were our target and this was sampled from every 5th or 10th house, depending on the population density of the area.

For the equitable distribution of the respondents, we employed both the quota and stratified sampling techniques. Thus, we allocated 280 to the youths (aged 40 or under) and 220 to the adults (40+). This is deliberate because adults can tell us the remote causes with some historical discussion and vivid descriptions of past happenings.

The statistical tool employed is basically the simple percentage. Most findings from the survey were supported by archival reports.

Table 1.1

Perceived causes of Warri crisis:

Q: What do you think are the causes of the Warri crisis?

S/NO	RESPONSES	No.	%
a.	Change of title from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri	500	100
b.	Overlordship of Olu of Warri over all lands/land ownership	400	80
c.	Overlordship of Olu of Warri over Traditional Institutions in Warri	400	80
d.	Political Marginalisation of the Urhobos in old Warri Local Government Area/Structural problems.	430	86
e.	Underdevelopment and unemployment	350	70

Causes of conflict/crisis between the Itsekiris and Urhobos:

a. Change in the title of the Olu

All our respondents, 500 (100%) traced the cause of the Warri Crisis to the change in the title of the Olu. While those of 50 years of age and above could still vividly describe the situation with historical facts, those between 30 and 50 years said they were convinced from all available literature that this was the most germane cause of the conflict.

A respondent, of about 62 years even likened the incidence to the 1914 Amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorate by Lord Lugard, implying that the change in the title of the Olu was orchestrated by Chief Awolowo: that Awolowo did that because the Urhobos and Ijaws voted for NCNC against the Action Group. He added that, it is for this ostensible reason that the Urhobo majority had distanced itself from any political party of Yoruba extraction, e.g the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) in 1979 to 1983.

This political mistake for expediency by the Awolowo Government is confirmed by the Honourable Justice Philip Nnaemeka Agu J.S.C. (rtd.) Judicial Commission of Inquiry into

the May 1993 crisis in Warri which emphasizes the British resistance of Itsekiri pressure for the change in title. The report inter-alia states:

> As we have observed, the British colonial Administration resisted the pressure of the Itsekiris that the Olu be called the Olu of Warri rather than what he had been, the Olu of Itsekiri. They - the British - based their refusal on the principal reason, namely, lack of historical support and the unlikelihood of other ethnic groups accepting the designation. *(Justice Nnaemeka Agu's Commission report, 1997)*

It was for this reason that the British crowned Prince Emiko Kegbuwa Ginuwa II as Olu of Itsekiri on February 7, 1936. The lack of historical support from the Itsekiri was hinged on the fact that the period before 1848 to 1936 (88 years of interregnum), where there was no Olu at all, they had the Olu of Itsekiri at Ode-Itsekiri.

Some 350 (70%) of our respondents attest to this when they said that for over 80 years, there was no Olu at all, because of the paramountcy of Chief Dore Numa who was positioned by the British to control Warri affairs. Some of the respondents argued that they wondered how the Itsekiri came about the idea. To quote one of them who stated:

> "Where did the Itsekiri manufacture this idea from?"

Some of the respondents argued that a petition by Edema Arubi (an Itsekiri man) to the British in 1946 for the change to Olu of Warri was equally jettisoned; that the title of Olu of Warri was not the correct designation and so the British were not prepared to intervene. They also argued that since all the Olus are usually crowned at Ode-Itsekiri, the title should be reversed back to Olu of Itsekiri for peace to reign.

b. Land Ownership:

Claims and counter claims from both sides regarding the ownership of Warri and its land abound and these had led to a series of court litigations and judgments from the 1920s through the 1930s and 1960s to 1976. And the continuous counter-claims,

particularly by the Itsekiris despite court judgment in favour of the Okere-Urhobo, seem to input that losers do not believe in court judgments, throwing off the theory that the judiciary is the last hope of the common man.

It is informative to note that apart from the 1920s land cases, which deepened the conflictual relationship between the Itsekiris and the Urhobos, other precipitant events occurred in 1936, 1959, 1965, 1968- 73, 1974 - 76 and 1977. The 1977 precipitant event surrounding land ownership in Warri was the August 15, 1977 Ekpan/Ubeji (Urhobo and Itsekiri villages) bloody clash. The battle was over the true owner of the land close to the Ekpan-Warri Refinery of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

The data from our survey confirm the centrality of land ownership as a fundamental cause of the Warri crisis, for it is a major hangover of the overlordship question. Four hundred (80%) of our respondents believe land ownership tussle gave credence to the conflictual relationship between the Urhobo and Itsekiri. They argued that Chief Numa was the architect of this by virtue of his appointment as the British Political Agent in 1895 for the Itsekiris (Eyube for the Urhobos)[6] and as a paramount Chief in 1917, leased land to his mentors.

A reasonable proportion of our respondents 200(40%) of the age group 50 years and above, displayed their annoyance over the overlordship of their land, for to them, the Itsekiris have no historical proof of claims to the land. This group of respondents further argued that nearly all their litigations in the courts during the colonial period (1920s-1940s cases, the Sapele land case was actually won by the Urhobos-Okpe) were lost because of the Itsekiri influence on the "mercenary" British Judges. The constant reference to the British Judges as "mercenary" by some of the respondents shows their level of anger and frustration then. Twelve (2.4%) of the respondents exposed the fact that the present Olu palace land was bought in his private capacity from the Oforudu family of Ekurede, Warri in June 1971 and that aborigines don't buy land.

Another 10 (2%) respondents within the age range of 70 - 74, now in the vanguard of Urhobo nationalism and members

of the Urhobo National Forum, argued that the true ownership of Warri land should be traced to who first settled in Warri. According to them, the Urhobo first settled in Warri and that the Itsekiri came later. They later intermarried and regarded most Itsekiri as their in-laws, but unfortunately, the Itsekiri, with their close relationship with the Europeans through early trade and education, came to command the affairs of Warri to the detriment of other groups.

The 1936 event evolved as a result of the re-institution of the Olu of Itsekiri title. The Itsekiri had wanted the Olu title to be changed to Olu of Warri claiming that the Olu himself was even quoted to have said that "he recognised no boundaries except that with the Oba of Benin" (Ikime, 1969:216) which tended to undermine the existence of the Urhobo and the Ijaw. It was partly for this, in addition to lack of historical evidence by the Itsekiri over the title, that made the British to install Prince Emiko as Olu of Itsekiri. 80(16%) of our respondents within the age bracket of 50 years and above contend that this claim by the Itsekiri angered them to a point where they were ready to spill blood. This re-enforces the theory that frustration can lead to violence. But they were happy that the British officials were reasonable. According to some of these respondents, to quote one profusely: "the oyibo men (meaning the British officers) knew we were going to fight".

This same 80 (16%) of our respondents argued in addition that the Warri conflict would have ended if the Itsekiris, who believe in going to court, had swallowed their pride with the 1965 consent judgment. Rather they re-opened the case in 1968 at the Warri High Court. That they also lost the appeal case in the Supreme Court is a testimony to the fact that they do not own Warri.

To ascertain the veracity of our respondents' responses with archival reports, we wish to quote some specific findings over the suits in the Warri High Court (W/48/68) and as affirmed by the Supreme court, (Sc. 309/74, (see Appendix II & II) - test of cases).

i. On the issue as to whether Okere is part of the Olu kingdom, the learned trial judge argued:

> I do not believe that any kingdom founded by Ginuwa I extended to Okere. Plaintiffs' evidence and also evidence in the whole case do not prove such extent of any kingdom founded by Ginuwa II.

(Refer to page 24, paragraph 3 of the certified true copy of the judgment of the Warri High Court in case No. W/48/68 decided on 17th July, 1973). From this, the trial judge held:

> I am satisfied and I find as a fact on the evidence before me that Okere was never part of the Kingdom founded by Ginuwa I. I am also satisfied that Ginuwa I never exercised overlordship rights over Okere, And that the overlordship rights of the subsequent Olus did not extend to Okere.

It is informative to note that, Ginuwa I was the first Olu (Olu of Itsekiri) who founded an Itsekiri Kingdom, which the Itsekiris prefer to describe without any scruples as Warri kingdom. As far as the Okere-Urhobo clan is concerned, there has never been a Warri Kingdom in existence that embraces the Okere Urhobo Clan.

ii On the question as to who founded Okere land, the trial judge found that Okere was founded by three Urhobos when he held:

> I accept and believe the evidence of the defendants that three persons, namely, Idama, Owhotemu and Sowhoruvwe, first came to Okere and founded various tracts of land as they said.

(Refer to page 53, last paragraph of the certified true copy of the judgment of the Warri High Court as cited above).

iii. On the question as to whether the Olu of Itsekiri has overlordship right over the Urhobos of Okere, the learned trial judge said, "a point which plaintiffs and their counsel here tried to urge on this court is that because the land in dispute is in Warri and so in Warri division, the Olu of Warri has rights of overlordship over it because as Olu of Warri, he has rights of overlordship over all lands in Warri Division. The whole argument or view is erroneous.". "The Olu by title is Olu of Warri, but his rights of overlordship relate only to lands of Itsekiri people and even then there is ground for saying that it does not relate to the lands of all Itsekiri people".

(Refer to Page 51, Paragraphs 4 and 5, Ibid.)

Thereafter, the trial judge cautioned the Itsekiri and advised them as follows: "the plaintiffs have not tendered any document or judgment which supports or establishes the view that they urged about the position of the Olu of Warri vis-à-vis all land in Warri Division. "The sooner the correct position on their point is appreciated the better, as that will go to save persons from fruitless litigation which, far from benefiting the Olu of Warri or Itsekiri people, will always lead to feelings of dissatisfaction being whipped up in sections of the Olu's subjects against him and also even amongst Urhobos". (*Refer to page 52, paragraph 3 Ibid.*)

Perhaps it is from this judgment, in addition to the consistency of the Okere-Urhobo defence, that made the Nnaemeka-Agu Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the May 1993 communal disturbances in Warri metropolis to admonish the Olu and his Itsekiri brethren to shun the belief that the title makes him the owner of the whole of Warri including areas they lost in litigation. It further stated that there is nowhere in Nigeria where such belief holds, that like the Oba of Benin before the land use Act in 1978, he was not the ultimate owner of every inch of land in the territory.

It was for this reason that the commission chastised the Action Group Government through the Warri Division (Itsekiri-communal land) trust (1959) which gave the Itsekiris title to certain Agbassa and Ijaw lands including those acquired without compensation such as the subject of lease B_2 B_5 and B_7 as unfair and incompatible with peace. The commission therefore advised that the Olu should be persuaded to see the situation realistically like several other Obas, Igwes, Obong, and Ezes in Southern

Nigeria: that no traditional ruler claims suzerainty over the whole of Lagos, Onitsha, Enugu, Port Harcourt or Calabar, but that the Olu be accorded the respect, honour and dignity due to him as one who by office, is one of the oldest paramount rulers in Southern Nigeria. (*Justice Nnaemeka Agu Judicial Commission of Inquiry Report, and Government White Paper, 1998*).

Thus, the conflict arising from the issue of land such as the one between the ethnic groups in Warri has been traced to the fact that as an economic value and as a factor of production, land itself has become a source of status symbol and of social and political influence. Hence, land is said to have become a major source of conflict amongst economic and social groups in the community. (The Zango-Kataf, Jukun-Tiv, Umuleri - Aguleri etc). Such is the background which led to the enactment of the now famous General Olusegun Obasanjo administration's Land Use Decree of 1978 whose ultimate aim is to regulate and democratize the use of land; to discourage exploitation and imperialism; and conflict between communities and Government in urban areas. This has hardly been obeyed, and Obasanjo has equally been accused of causing the Niger-Delta crisis on this.

c. Overlordship of the Olu of Warri Over Traditional Institutions in Warri

Four hundred (80%) of our respondents contend that a perennial cause of the Itsekiri/Urhobo conflict, and in general, the Warri crisis has been the seeming belief of the overlordship of the Olu of Warri over other clan heads. This is consequent upon the Itsekiri claim that the Olu's domain encompasses the whole of the old Warri division. Some of the respondents specifically contend that this was due to the abuse of the change in the title. For example, the Jakpa of Jakpa became changed to Ologbosere of Warri, the Ugbague of Jakpa became Ugbague of Warri, the Itsekiri traditional Council became the Warri Traditional Council with all its members being Itsekiri; and they established an Itsekiri communal land trust to develop the kingdom.

They contend further that while the Olu refused to accord recognition to the four clan heads of the Ijaw areas, the Peres of Egbeoma, Gbaramatu, Isaba and Ogbe-Ijoh; and that of Agbarha, the *Okere-Urhobo* clan had been prevented from

appointing its traditional ruler, the *Oro-suen (Ovie)* of Okere and exercise autonomy in traditional matters.

In a vivid confirmation of this, as a source of the conflict, all the 400 respondents said the unprovoked bloody attack by the Itsekiri on June 4, 1999 on the *Udu-Urhobo* area of *Okere-Urhobo* Warri was directed at the recently inaugurated *Oro-suen* of Okere (April 17, 1999). Hence the *Oro-suen* palace was burnt down while the *Oro-suen* fled. This was after the Olu had unsuccessfully gone to court to stop the installation.

Some of the respondents believe that the action of the Itsekiri is an extension of the belief that no traditional ruler should exist side-by-side with the Olu, that if they exist, they will share the oil royalties with the Olu. Moreover, there will be confusion as to whom to pay courtesy call when outside and state dignitaries visit.

In the course of the interview, a significant proportion of the respondents, two hundred (40%) who value their traditional institutions, some of them Chiefs, cautioned this investigator that he should not believe the Itsekiri propaganda that the Urhobos never had chiefs from time immemorial, that it was with these Chiefs that the British masters signed treaties of protection in 1893. Their mode of governance had been gerontocratic. Even in the Dore-Numa period (1895-1932) when he frowned at any other traditional authorities including the *Olu* of Itsekiri, the *Oro-suen* of Okere existed with respect from his people. Some of them claimed that Idama was the last Oro-suen of Okere, but that his younger brother Owhotemu who succeeded him died after a brief reign. The period of succession, which was characterised by confusion, internal squabbles and quarrels was the period Numa came on board and disregarded everything.

The same group of 200 respondents (40%) of 50 years of age and above drew the investigator's attention to the 1957 and 1959 Chiefs Law, Cap. 19, of the then Western Region, in which only the Olu of Warri was recognised as the prescribing authority in respect of chieftaincies in the whole of the present Warri Local Government Area. This they protested to no avail. According to the respondents, this conflict continued till 1977 when the Bendel State Government recognized the two clan heads of

Agbassa and Okere-Urhobo. The conflict could however not end because both the Secretary to the State Government and the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs Messrs. J.T.L. Boyo and J.O.S. Ayomike (both Itsekiri) frustrated the effort by refusing to Gazette them in the Bendel State Government Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict No. 16 of 1979.

The respondents also queried the permanent presidency of the Warri Traditional Council. In its protest letter (28th July, 1972) to the then Military Governor of the State, the Urhobo community of Okere, Warri, represented by Chief B. O. Okumagba (J.P), and the Otota of *Okere-Urhobo*, Warri, informed the Governor that they have no traditional connection with the Olu of Warri, and that the Itsekiri kingdom in Warri Council area over whom the Olu of Warri reigns does not extend to Okere-Urhobo. It therefore requested that the presidency of the council should rotate among the traditional rulers of the council area as is the case in some 14 other traditional councils in the state.

d. Political Marginalisation of the Urhobos in Old Warri Local Government Area

The political marginalisation of the Urhobos evolved from manipulated structural defects from gerrymandering, and inequity in the distribution of wards in the Local Government Area. This also affected state and federal constitution in the Local Government Area. It is these structural defects that allowed the Itsekiri to manipulate census figures and Electoral Register to their advantage.

Four hundred and thirty (86%) of our respondents frowned at the wards delineation exercise and accused all electoral officers of colluding with the Itsekiri to defraud the Urhobos and Ijaws in the 1976 and 1997 Local Government elections. For the 1976 election, they queried the allocation of more wards to the riverine Itsekiri Area, with less population and 6 wards to Warri Urban with more population. One respondent described the situation vividly. He said that in the chairmanship election, the Urhobo candidate Chief D. E. Okumagba, won 5 wards in Warri Urban, the Ijaw candidate, Mr. Oseme won two in the riverine, while the Itsekiri candidate, Chief Elliot Begho, won 5 riverine wards

and one in the Urban. Because it was a collegiate system with the Ijaw candidate teaming up with Okumagba, [the Urhobo candidate], to win the election, the Itsekiri through their son, then Secretary to the State Government J.T.L. Boyo, stopped the election. Egbeoma ward, which Mr. Oseme won was latter excluded and transferred to Ondo State. It therefore remains 6 seats apiece for the Urhobo and Itsekiri candidates. Because both candidates now had 6 seats each, they were told that they could not recontest and that they were going to appoint an independent candidate. Eventually, it was an Itsekiri man, Mr. Sunny Skin (the respondent called this "Cabinet magic"). While the Federal Government endorsed the subsequent protest letter from the Urhobos with promise of reversal, the Itsekiri influence dashed their hopes.

For the 1997 local government elections, the respondents frowned at the three wards (Ode-Itsekiri, Obodo and Ubeji) with relatively small populations (11,000-1991 projection), compared to the entire urban area with seven wards, namely: Bowen, Pessu, Avenue, Esisi, Ekurede, Igbudu and Okere which is more populous (268,000 - 1991 projection). Most of the respondents complained that Edjeba village was included in Esisi ward instead of with Ekurede and Ogunu (gerrymandering) so that they could not register. Thus, most Urhobos could not register. Chief B. O. Okumagba, Dr. Emmanuel Urhobo and Dr. D. D. Mowoe, among other prominent Urhobos, could not get cards to register throughout the period. In fact, most respondents complained that they were usually denied registration and electoral materials. Out of the 85 polling agents employed by NECON, 65 were Itsekiri with the remaining 20 being Igbos and Ishans. Most of them were usually influenced with money got from Itsekiri communal land trust and oil money got from intimidated oil companies. The Olu usually plants people in all the political parties from chairmen to secretaries.

In Itsekiri wards, election do not usually take place, rather voting cards are taken to designated areas and thumbprinted. Whenever the Urhobos send their candidates' agents to Itsekiri riverine areas, they are usually driven back at gunpoint etc. Even in some of the wards which ought to bear Urhobo popular names, for example Okumagba Avenue, is just named Avenue

Ward. Apart from denying them electoral materials, which usually come late, excess materials are sent to Itsekiri controlled wards making them to declare higher votes. One Mrs. Bolokor, an Itsekiri woman who was transferred away previously for her ignoble role in previous elections was sent back in the March 15, 1997 Local Government elections to rig the election. Despite all these, Mr. Emmanuel Okumagba, the Urhobo Chairmanship candidate still won the election, but they manipulated the result and declared Dr. Otumara, the Itsekiri candidate as elected. This was what led to the spontaneous 17 March 1997 demonstration by Urhobos, Ishans and Igbos. In the process, a 15-year-old girl, Brume Eboh, was killed by law enforcement agents. This scenario also characterised the re-scheduled Warri South Local Government election (December 5, 1998) in which Dr. Otumara (Itsekiri) who was charged with arms-running in the PDP primaries but later decamped to the MDJ, party was declared the winner.

One respondent also attested that in December 1996, consequent upon the creation of Warri Central local government, among others, with headquarters at the G.R.A., an Agbarha Urhobo man, Mr. Vincent Edema, was appointed Sole Administrator. Eight hours before his swearing-in, he was transferred to another Local Government because the Olu of Warri said an Urhobo man will never be Chairman of that council.

Another respondent drew our attention to the Awolowo era when this political marginalisation started. According to him, one Dr. F. O Esiri, (an Urhobo) who was the chairman of Warri Urban District Council was removed because of his political affiliation with the N.C.N.C. He also informed me that Chief Awolowo appointed two Itsekiris, O. M. Rewane and E. N. Begho as chairmen of the Itsekiri Socio-cultural Corporation, in which Chiefs A. Rewane, Ogbemo Rewane, Begho, Rita Edukugho etc. were members.

Two hundred and sixty (60%) out of the 430 respondents referred to the 1964 Midwest Constitution as apartheid because of the clause, "Warri Special Minority Area" (1995 Constitution Conference also created 'Specially designated and protected Area" which was expunged on Chiefs B. O. Okumagba and E. K. Clark's protests) because it gave franchise over Federal and State Legislative Houses to the Itsekiris, but disenfranchised the Urhobos and Ijaws. When Chief D. E. Okumagba attempted to challenge it, Justice Atake, a Judge of the High Court (as he then was) ordered him to be locked up until after the election.

These respondents also contended that whenever Government appointed Caretaker Committee or Sole Administrator in the council, Itsekiris were usually the beneficiaries. This is why all 500 respondents called for the creation of three separate Local Government Areas for the three ethnic groups and that of the Urhobos should be addressed as Warri East or Okere-Agbarha Local Government Area.

e. Under-Development and Unemployment:

From the reactions of most of our respondents, it is clear that the slow developmental pace of Warri and the whole oil producing areas of Delta State vis-à-vis other areas has built a grievance culture in the people. All hope that this would be rectified by successive governments through OMPADEC (Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission) and PTF (Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund) had been dashed due to poor project handling and abandonment. Consequently, this has led to mass unemployment of not just the youths, but other able adults who of course engaged in spontaneous demonstrations and riots. This satisfies our relative deprivation, rising expectations and frustration-aggression hypothesis. This had partly demystified the thinking in Government quarters that unemployed youths easily fall prey into the hands of people who would want to foment trouble either on ethnic grounds or on the basis of perceived grievances against oil companies operations in the area. As some of the youths pointed out: "We feel the pinch, nobody needs to tell us where our destiny lies".

A substantial 350 (70%) of our respondents including the youths and adults partly traced the enduring crisis in Warri to the utter neglect of Warri and its environs. They complained of lack of good roads in view of the crowded nature of Warri, the reason why they always use the motorbike for transportation, which makes life expensive. Some respondents from Okumagba Layout complained that the old Warri Local Government

Council dominated by the Itsekiris refused to develop their area in terms of road construction, provision of light and water, yet they collect so much in tenement rate from them. It was the Col. Ogbemudia administration through its Bendel Property Development Authority that took over the area, and that is the much we still see today. The complaints also include the unwillingness of the Federal Government to bridge the major rivers for general easy movement and for business outside Warri, in comparison to Lagos where fly-overs are in abundance, yet without the black gold. In addition there is the complaint about lack of continuous potable water in an environment where water is plenty. They chastised the government for its inability to complete the World Bank/ADB assisted water project for Warri which was started during Chief Felix Ibru's civilian administration. The complaint also extended to lack of general industrial development, such as the abandonment of the Delta Steel Company Aladja, Oghara Salt Factory and the Benin-Warri double carriage express way in comparison to completed roads in Northern Nigeria. They also chastised the Olu of Warri for influencing Chevron Oil Company, because of its operational base in Escravos (Itsekiri village), not to employ Urhobo and Ijaw youths. Also most scholarship awards from Chevron go to Itsekiri youths.

Table1 - 1a
Perception of Co-existence

Q: In other urban areas, (Benin, Port Harcourt, Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna etc) people of different ethnic backgrounds have coexisted (lived side by side), why in your opinion do you think it is different in Warri?

RESPONSES	NO	%
It is different (cannot co-exist)	460	92
It is not different (can co-exist)	40	8
Total	**500**	**100**

On the question of whether Urhobos can co-exist with other ethnic groups in Warri, 460 (92%) of the respondents said they cannot co-exist with the Itsekiris because they are the ones that have been denying them their legitimate rights. They look at them with suspicion, naturally as anarchistic and cunning,

claiming too much of superiority. "How can we co-exist with the Itsekiris when they had opposed all our self-identity struggles?". They opposed the creation of Mid-Western region, and Delta State. In the alternative, they called for a Coast State which should exclude the Urhobos; or Warri "Autonomous province" or "Warri State" or be merged with the Binis. It was this Itsekiri opposition that led to the siting of Delta State Capital in Asaba instead of Warri. For this they believe the true Delta State is yet to be created.

Some of them argued that while majorities in other metropolises have a common language of communication, the differences in the three main languages in Warri had further distanced them from each other. In the Warri Traditional Council they made Itsekiri the official language, and when Government tried to allow other languages, the Olu refused, hence the Ijaws withdrew. So where is the basis of co-existence, some of them asked?

Forty (8%) respondents on the other hand, contended that they can co-exist with other ethnic groups, because they have long lived together. Conflict is part of human life. There is nowhere in the world where big cities have uniform ethnic compositions. According to the respondents, they have married from the Itsekiris, Ijaws and Urhobos as well as Igbos, Edos etc. who are migrants in Warri. They also have commercial, religious and political affiliations. People should think of how to co-exist, not how to live separately.

Factors Sustaining the Violence

As to the question of why the Warri crisis is escalating rather than reducing, the different responses from our respondents are grouped and recorded in Table 1 - 1b below.

Table 1 - 1b
Perception on crisis escalation (violence sustenance)

Q: If in the past, there has been problems between the Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ijaws, why do you think this problem is escalating today rather than reducing?

RESPONSES	No	%
Inadequate and biased government approach to the crisis	400	80
Inflammatory statements, speeches, utterances and write-ups in newspapers in form of paid advertisements.	250	50
Clash of superiority between the Itsekiris and Urhobos	100	20

1. Inadequate Government approach to the Warri Problem:
Most respondents (400) (80%) posit that the unending nature of the Warri Crisis should really be traced to Government unwillingness to follow the path of truth, justice and fair play. In the first place, they accused the Government of falling into the tempting hands of the Olu for the change of the Warri South West Local Government Headquarters from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben, two days after the local government election of March 1997.

The respondents also accused the Government of its refusal to publish and implement the various Commissions of Inquiry Reports, which to them have the antidote to the crisis. Although they acknowledge some injunctions which the Olu got from the courts as part of the problems Government faced over these Commissions, they believe Government should have been able to do otherwise. This is premised on the passage of Decree 14, 1997 which legitimised Col. D. Dung's power to inaugurate the commission.

2. Inflammatory statements, speeches, utterances and write-ups in newspapers in the form of paid advertisement
Inflammatory statements have contributed to the continued crisis in Warri. Two hundred and fifty (50%) of our respondents who bemoaned the level of destruction accused some leaders of thought and the media for publishing everything said about the conflict in Warri. Some of them had their properties destroyed, but they would not engage in violence. They blamed the various ethnic leaders of sponsoring these youths, while they keep their children out of Warri.

That these inflammatory statements have a way of influencing the mind of the youth is attested to by Mr. Alfred Rewane's publications captioned "The Title of Olu of Warri- the Historic Awolowo Compromise" in the *The Guardian* of Thursday 20th May, 1993, and another titled "Warri - Legal and Historical Facts", *The Guardian* of 5th, 6th and 7th of August, 1993 respectively, in which he stated that his aim of making the publications was in fulfilment of his urge to educate the younger generation of Nigerians especially Itsekiri sons and daughters on the truth about the Warri issue vis-à-vis his Itsekiri ambition to create an Itsekiri empire in an imaginary Warri Kingdom. Our knowledge of psychology has thought us the impact of indoctrinated idea on the clear mind frame of the young "tabula-rasa" and its possible effect.

3. Clash of Superiority between the Itsekiris and Urhobos:
Some 100 (20%) of our respondents believed that the persistent conflict between the Itsekiris and Urhobos has something to do with the superiority question. This is well evidenced in the 1993 crisis. We quote a few of our respondents' reactions:

An Agbarha-Urhobo man from Ukpokiti who witnessed the crisis said this:

> Clash of superiority between the Itsekiris and Urhobos. The Itsekiris have the feeling that they are the landlords of the land, that is, they gave land to the Urhobos who migrated from Agbarha-Oto and thus they are addressed by the Itsekiri as customary tenants. On the other hand, the Urhobos are saying that they are more superior because they originated the Itsekiri Nation, that their sister (Obahor's daughter) gave birth to Prince Ginuwa I of Benin with the title Ogiame and he was set assail by the in-laws who are the Agbarha Urhobos. That the Itsekiri who the Urhobos called "*Irhobo*" meaning "floating on the water", have no claim to Warri land. So the Urhobos founded Warri while their nephew was still sailing on the ark (magic box). They admitted their nephew and his crew into Warri and its environs. This led to past riots.

Another respondent argued extensively thus:

> The 1993 crisis started when the Itsekiri people carried out a carnival procession in commemoration of Olu Atuwase II coronation anniversary and provocative songs were being sung by the Itsekiri celebrants, to the effect that the Olu is the owner of all the lands in Warri, that the Urhobos are their slaves and errand boys, that the Okumagba family of Okere are trouble makers.

Consequently, the Urhobos of Agbassa-Igbudu barricaded the major roads, leading to riots which engulfed the town for three days in which properties and lives were lost. The Okere market and the ancestral hall of *Okere-Urhobo* clan were burnt down with some of their youths killed. Another comment confirming the story came from another respondent.

> It started a long time ago, but the recent one between the Urhobo and the Itsekiris in 1993, started when they the Igbudu clan attacked them during their procession because of the provocative songs they were singing, knowing the Itsekiri for their proudness (arrogance). They sang loud to their hearing which made them angry and serious combat ensued.

We have argued earlier that this superiority complex evolved from the Itsekiri's early contact with the British. It is clear that the British also helped to nurture this by placing the Itsekiri above others (also nurtured by post independence Nigerian Governments). The attempt by the Urhobos to compete favourably with the Itsekiri had been seen as a sign of weakness on the side of the Itsekiris if allowed.

Another factor sustaining the violence is the increased awareness of the Urhobo people, of the continued effort of the Olu to marginalise them, oppress and deny them all available opportunities. According to Zolberg (1966;66) if groups or individuals lack the opportunity for legitimate political activity, that is exercising power to express their demands, they are tempted to use force to press these demands. The increased level of militarisation of our society due to a long period of military rule adds to the intensity of violence.

Table 2a
Structural Conditions

Q: As an Urhobo, how do you relate to or see other ethnic communities in Warri?

S/NO	RESPONSES	NO.	%
i	As rivals	400	80
ii	Potential enemies/killers	400	80
iii	Friends and Neighbours	100	20

Table 2a above summarises our respondents' perceptions about other ethnic communities in Warri. 400 (80%) of our respondents see the Itsekiris as rivals, enemies and killers. According to them, from the colonial era, the Itsekiris had cheated the Urhobos in all ramifications, especially in the palm oil trade. The Itsekiris took their lands with the collaboration of the British. They had always initiated the violence that characterized Warri. Some of the respondents enthused that whoever is in conflict and goes to burn people's houses/properties as well as kill innocent children is a rival, a killer and an enemy. This group of respondents are those who are very vehement on the change in title to Olu of Warri and his overlordship status. They also don't believe in peaceful co-existence with the Itsekiri ethnic groups.

An interesting finding is that all of the 400 respondents look at the Ijaws as friends, brothers and neighbours. There are another 100 (20%) respondents who do not believe in the acrimony between the Urhobos and Itsekiris. They believe that the crisis in Warri is a battle of supremacy between the leaders; for this they look at the Itsekiris and Ijaws as friends, brothers and neighbours.

Table 2b
Perception of Discrimination/Denials

Q: As an Urhobo, are other ethnic communities denying you your legitimate rights? If yes, what are these rights?

RESPONSES	NO	%
YES	500	100
NO	-	-

Table 2b (x)

Q: If yes, forms of denials

S/NO	RESPONSES	NO	%
i	Land	420	84
ii	Royalties	380	76
iii	Political positions	370	74
iv	Traditional Institutions	220	44
v	Administrative headquarters	150	30

On the question of whether the Urhobos are being denied their legitimate rights by other ethnic communities, all of the 500 respondents answered in the affirmative but linked this only to the Itsekiris. However, respondents varied in their delineation of these denials. This, of course, shows the degree to which such denials affected them in addition to their level of awareness.

The 420 (84%) respondents who claimed they were being denied of their land argued that all the lands, which the Itsekiris are claiming, belong to them. They maintained that they were taken from them since the *Dore Numa* period through to the Awolowo Government. These lands which they fraudulently acquired were later sold to their Itsekiri brethren. Despite court judgments in favour of the Urhobos, the Itsekiris still arrogantly claim them. A respondent argued that when Group Captain Ibrahim Kefas was the Military Administrator, he allocated 6 plots of land to the Olu in the G.R.A., as against the usual one plot agreed upon. This prevented other prominent Urhobos from securing land by allocation.

With regard to royalties from mineral resources, 380 (76%) of the respondents attested that by virtue of the seeming paramountcy of the *Olu* of Warri, he had cornered all perceived oil royalties for himself and his brethren. He alone receives the state and local stipends meant for Traditional Rulers in Warri.

One respondent revealed that the fear of Ijaws winning some electoral seats in the riverine area instigated the Itsekiri to cause a gerrymandering that transferred Egbeoma and Tsekelewu to Ondo State. It is the transfer of Tsekelewu to Ondo State that has now made the state an oil producing state, making Warri to lose those attendant oil royalties accruable. Three

hundred and seventy (74%) of our respondents argued that they had lost political positions for a very long time.

Regarding administrative headquarters, 150 (30%) of our respondents lamented the 1969 Local Government creation exercise in which Warri Central Local Government headquarters was built in the G.R.A. It was lamentable because there was confusion whether it was to share the same headquarters with Warri South. An Urhobo man, Mr. Vincent Edema who was appointed as the sole Administrator was transferred to another Local Government eight hours before swearing-in and replaced with an Itsekiri. This gave support for the call for Warri East Local Government.

The same respondent also lamented the loss of Delta State capital to Asaba and argued that the Itsekiri denied Warri the capital, for fear that the Urbobos would dominate them politically and economically.

Table 2c
Perception on Ownership of Warri

Q: Who owns Warri and what do you want to see happen to other ethnic communities other than yours in terms of control of Warri?

RESPONSES	NO	%
IJAW (Part Ownership)		
ITSEKIRI	100	20
URHOBO	400	80
TOTAL	**500**	**100**

Ownership of Warri:

Of the 500 respondents, 400 (80) claim that Warri belongs to the Urhobos. This tallies with our earlier question on ownership of land. They argued that the Urhobo clans of Agbarha and Okere control 85 percent of the land in Warri with over 300 streets. The Itsekiri only occupy 281.1 acres of land in Warri. Out of the 1996 census figures of 268,734, Urhobos constitute 250,000. The other 100 (20%) respondents claimed that Warri is jointly owned by the three ethnic groups, and that each ethnic group should keep to its own boundaries and not claim others' land. However

some believe that the Urhobo and Ijaw jointly own Warri, and that the Itsekiri do not have any claim to ownership of Warri.

4. Psycho-Cultural Dispositions - Negative Images:
Not every respondent was able to answer this question in spite of our explanation. Such respondents wanted to discuss images as conterminous with dressing mode. To those who understood us very well, their view was as follows: That the Urhobos are too open, too welcoming, too tolerant, even to their own detriment and that is why a minority tribe (Itsekiri) has been able to dominate them for so long. Some pointed out that the Urhobo man is very diplomatic and no matter the level of provocation will never strike first as the Itsekiri has long been doing. Some others however argued that once an Urhobo has a strong belief about anything, he is ready to fight to the last.

According to them, the Itsekiris are arrogant, crafty, self-centred, and troublesome. The Ijaw man is quiet, dangerous and unforgiving and can go to extremes when provoked. Some respondents however believe that it is the present crisis that makes people to have different negative images of others; after all, they have all lived together for long. Some said the three ethnic groups are all self-centred and greedy, that they are all equally wicked and good, depending on the circumstance.

Table 2d
Perception on Marriage

Q: Would you marry an Ijaw/Itsekiri?

RESPONSES		NO	%
YES		400	80
NO		100	20
TOTAL		**500**	**100**

Perception on Marriages:

Four hundred (80%) of our respondents particularly the female claim that they can marry from both Ijaw and Itsekiri. To the males, they can marry from both tribes as long as he loves the girl. To those already married, if the situation arises, they can still marry from both ethnic groups. Some of them claimed that they already have Itsekiri women as wives and that they are very loving. They further revealed that nearly all Urhobo men and women love marriage and parenthood relationships with the Itsekiris. One respondent summarised it all when he said, "that ethnic barrier is rubbish, that if God says so, even inter-marriage may help to solve the problems".

Nevertheless, a female respondent argued that so far inter-marriage has not done anything to eliminate the conflictual relationship in Warri and that it has put some people in awkward positions.

One hundred (20%) respondents who were most vehemently anti-Itsekiri, because of recent happenings considered the Itsekiri as the belligerent group. Some had lost properties and their relatives. Some others did not want to give reasons, because they were so depressed by the effect of the crisis on them.

Table 2e
Life Prospects Perception

Q: How do other ethnic groups affect your prospects in life (Job, material well-being, accommodation)?

RESPONSES	NO	%
Badly affected	200	40
Partly affected, but would want to still live with other ethnic groups	50	10

Life Prospects:

Our respondents argued that their job prospects in the lucrative oil industry were dim because the Itsekiris through the Olu used different tactics in filling the important key positions. It would take the grace of God for any Urhobo person to be recruited in a company where an Itsekiri holds a key position because of prejudices, they said.

Two hundred (40%) respondents claimed that because their houses, offices and personal caravans were burnt, they had become refugees in their ancestral home. The female traders had to suspend their trading in the market for fear of looting by

"thieves" or rioters. Even some of the leaders of thought now sojourn between the villages and their Warri residences. Some of these leaders had to be accommodated by their friends in far away villages.

Some respondents claimed that some of their relations had left the city finally since they had no other thing to rely on. This investigator also hosted a man who was Itsekiri-Koko paternally and Urhobo maternally but who fled Warri, leaving his wife and child on a search journey to Kano for his mother. I harboured him at Ekpoma for one night and gave him transport fare to Kano.

However, some fifty (10%) of our respondents felt that as bad as the situation was, their life prospects would blossom again and that they would want to live with other ethnic groups continuously.

TABLE 2f

Q: Have people of other ethnic origin ever helped you?

RESPONSES	NO	%
YES	130	26
NO	50	10
DON'T KNOW	42	8.4

With regard to assistance from people of other ethnic origin, 130 (26%) of our respondents answered in the affirmative. Only one claimed she had only been helped by an Ijaw person. But the whole 130 did not indicate from which ethnic group the assistance was secured. Only 50 (10%) said they had not really been assisted by other ethnic groups. Forty-two (8.4%) respondents however said they could not remember whether they had been assisted by other ethnic groups. We are sure that these responses reflected their level of socio-economic interaction.

Beliefs and Traditions of Violence:

On the question of whether violence is the only means of settling scores among the different ethnic groups in Warri, all 500 respondents said no. Therefore, for the discontinuation of violence among the ethnic factions in Warri, they adduced many reasons.

Conflict Settlement

In conflict situations, various measures are usually employed by Government to nip the crisis in the bud either as a short-term solution or a lasting solution to prevent re-occurrence. For the Warri Crisis this had ranged from deploying security forces with an attending imposition of curfew to ensure safety of lives and property, to setting up of various commissions of enquiry; and a joint-problem solving approach of involving community opinion leaders and youth leaders in peace dialogue and missions.

Capacity Building for Lasting Peace:

Although previous measures for peace seemed to have failed because of land-mines created by those likely to lose substantially, the respondents acknowledged recent government efforts towards peace. They were in full praise for Delta State Governor, Chief James Ibori, who had had agreement with the three ethnic groups leaders/traditional rulers to return the headquarters of Warri South Local Government Area from Ogidigben to Ogbe-Ijoh. (The previous change from Ogbe-Ijoh to Ogidigben had caused the recent most violent crisis that came to affect the Urhobos). They equally praised the State House of Assembly that later passed the bill and subsequent signing by the Governor to give it legal status.

The respondents, while waiting to see the functionality of the "Warri Urban Development Authority Bill", were happy about the good development. They were also happy with the Federal Government proposed Niger Delta Development Commission bill, but suggested some amendments, including that the headquarters be at Warri, Delta State.

Following from the above, all the 500 respondents agreed that there were other ways in which peace could be ensured in Warri. Their suggested remedies are stated in Table 2g below.

Table 2g
Q: Requirements for peace in Warri:

S/NO	REQUIREMENTS	NO	%
1.	Change the title of Olu of Warri to its original title, Olu of Itsekiri.	500	100
2.	The Okere-Urhobo and Agbarha-Urhobo clan-heads already recognised should be given equal status to that of the Olu	350	74
3.	Create separate Local Government Areas for the 3 ethnic groups in Warri with properly delineated wards and constituencies.	500	100
4.	Each of the 3 local government areas should have its traditional chairman.	350	70
5	Release and implement all Commissions' Reports concerning the Warri Crisis	370	74
6	Massive Agro-Industrial Scheme for jobs creation	360	72

*The Urhobos want Warri East Local Government Area (Okere-Urhobo and Agbarha Urhobo).

From their suggestions above, we further asked them what they, the Warri people themselves can do to ensure peace knowing that violence only destroys and peace builds. They responded as follows:

Table 2h

Q: What Warri people themselves can do to ensure peace knowing that violence destroys and peace builds:

RESPONSES	NO	%
Constant dialogue between community leaders, Traditional rulers, youth leaders, NGOs, Christian bodies to exchange views, define what they want; Peace propaganda*	390	78
Unity of purpose, believing in joint ownership of Warri without supremacy/Overlordship of any, and stop derogating others	250	50
Constant appeals to Government and oil companies to create jobs in Warri.	300	60
The people of Warri can come to compromise, declare a truce, so that an independent study can be carried out, since the dispute is over land; every ethnic group confine themselves to their area without encroaching on others.	200	40
Appeal to ethnic leaders to stop funding violence and provocative utterances. Youths should forget about violence and ask their leaders to provide them with jobs*	320	64
Appeal to Government to implement Commissions of Enquiry Reports and create the 3 local governments for the 3 ethnic groups	400	80

On the proposal on how negative images of other ethnic groups built-up can be changed to reduce the generational problem of mistrust and disharmony in Warri, scanty responses were recorded:

1. They need a re-orientation, for God created them as neighbours and not enemies. Every family, tribe must inculcate the spirit of tolerance and harmonise their differences.

2. Each ethnic group could change by according respect to each other, maintain high sense of moral behaviour.

3. If the State Government can give each ethnic group their Local Government as demanded and recommended by the various Commissions of Enquiry.

4. The Olu of Warri should stop his oppressive tendencies, for all the Olus before never behaved the way he has been behaving.

Having stated this, their response to the question of whether they would run to the police to stop their community from attacking others was quite disturbing, but it reveals human nature where we concur to evil because of lack of resources.

Some said they would not because the Police themselves were wolves in sheeps' clothing who had been known to take sides in the crisis. Majority of respondents however said they would not because of the stigma of being called a traitor and fear of retaliation against their families. A few others responded that they would stop them and enlighten them, but if they were convinced that their action was justified they would not.

As to whether community leaders were representing the interests of their communities or their personal interests, three hundred (60%) respondents agreed they represented the communities. A handful of fifty (10%) respondents believed the leaders partly put their personal interest in most of the community requests.

Major Stakeholders for the Workshop on the Warri Crisis

The major stakeholders identified within the Urhobo ethnic group who would be useful in moulding the mindset of the people could be divided into three main groups. These groups had in the past, along with government, tried to work out modalities for peace creation. At their own individual level, they had also made their opinion known on the causes of the Warri crisis with attendant solutions. They were:

A. Urhobo Elders and Leaders of thought

1. Chief Benjamin O. Okumagba (J.P) - the Otota of Okere, Warri.
2. Chief M. E Agbogidi.
3. Chief B. O. Niemogha - Agbarha - Urhobo Clan
4. Major General David Ejoor (rtd.), President - General, Urhobo Progress Union.
5. Chief D. A. Obiomah - Agbarha-Urhobo Clan.
6. Mr. Samuel Clifford Orere - Agbarha - Urhobo.
7. Dr. Emmanuel Urhobo - Agbarha - Urhobo.
8. Dr. D. D. Mowoe (SAN)
9. Mr. V. E. Otomiewo - Uvwie
10. Mr. Gamaliel Onosode.

B. Youth Organisations:

Urhobo-Okere, Warri Youths.
Agbarha, Warri Youths
National Union of Urhobo Students.

C. Urhobo Unions

Urhobo Progress Union
Urhobo National Assembly
Urhobo Social Club, Lagos
Urhobo National Forum, New York, U.S.A.

Concluding Remarks:

In our theoretical discourse, we identified three main hypotheses. In their application to the Warri crisis, we found that none of them could singularly explain the causes of the crisis as well as possible solutions. They are at best mutually complimentary with regard to their analytic utility in comprehending the nature and problems of violence in Warri. Thus, our working model is for government to understand the crisis from the ethnic group level, the individual perspective and the level of systemic structural inadequacies.

These could be discussed jointly with the three identified groups of stakeholders in the crisis. This will re-orientate the mindset of peace generation and nurturing for the future.

NB: This appendix represents the views of the author, Dr A. S. Akpotor, and his Urhobo people, and not those of AAPW.

Appendix 3

Dr D. A. Tonwe (Itsekiri scholar)

Warri Crisis Survey Report — *Itsekiri Perspective*

The Age-Long Problem in Warri

The conflict between the Itsekiris, Ijaws and Urhobos is an age-long one. Since the 1920s especially, there have been series of court cases and some violent assaults at other instances.

The remote causes of the conflict are as follows:

The Persistent Failure by the Ijaws and Urhobos to Recognise that Warri is Itsekiri Homeland

The geographical area, which was Warri Division, and which became Warri Local Government Area, but now divided into Warri North, Warri South and Warri South West Local Government Areas, is the **Land of the Itsekiri People**, sometimes referred to by historians as Itsekiri country or Itsekiri Territory, thus making Warri synonymous or interchangeable with the Itsekiri.

Struggle by Other Ethnic Groups to Change the Title of the Olu of Warri

Right from the 15th century (1480), there has always been an Itsekiri Kingdom of Warri, with an Olu of Warri, yet the Ijaws and Urhobos continue to argue that the Olu of Warri is a phenomenon that emerged only in 1952.

Non-recognition of Court Decisions by Ijaws and Urhobos

Failure of the Ijaws and Urhobos to recognise and accept court decisions regarding the Itsekiri ownership of the land in which the Ijaws and Urhobos are settling.

Non-acceptance of Settler Status by Ijaws and Urhobos

The Itsekiris are settlers in Burutu Local Government Area (Ijaw Homeland); Okpe, Sapele, Ethiope, and Uvwie Local

Government Council Areas (Urhobos Homeland); Ologbo (Edo State). Urhobos are settlers in Ijaw home land, and Ijaws are settlers in Urhobo homeland, so indeed are the Ijaws settlers in the Itsekiri homeland of Warri. It is strange that the Ijaws and the Urhobos don't want to accept settler status elsewhere, yet they insist others are settlers in their own land.

The Desire of the Ijaws and Urhobos to have Ethnic Local Government Councils in the Itsekiri Homeland

The inordinate and unprecedented ambition or desire of the Ijaws and Urhobos to have ethnic Local Government Councils in the Itsekiri homeland, rather than being satisfied with living with the Itsekiris as part and parcel of the said land, just as the Itsekiris are satisfied with living with the Ijaws and Urhobos in their homeland of Burutu, Sapele and Uvwie Local Government Areas is another case in point.

The Desire of the Ijaws and the Urhobos in Warri to take Undue Advantage of the Minority Status of the Itsekiris

The desire of the Ijaws and the Urhobos in Warri to take undue advantage of the minority stature of the Itsekiris in the Nigerian context and to go into alliance with, and use the overwhelming size and resources of the Ijaw and Urhobo ethnic groups in Nigeria to suppress the Itsekiris until they are prepared to surrender their inalienable and God-given right to exist as a separate and distinct ethnic group with a homeland of their own within the Nigerian polity.

The Contention by the Urhobos and the Ijaws that Itsekiris Won the Cases in the Past by Fraud

The Itsekiris in the past won and lost cases against other ethnic groups. Some of the cases won gave other ethnic groups some respite to reduce their discomfort. The big question is, if the cases the Itsekiris won were by fraudulent means, what of those won by other ethnic groups?

Critically speaking, the major problem in Warri is the dispute over ownership of land and the title of the Olu of Warri as the overlord of Warri. Attempt will now be made to provide historical data in these major problem areas.

(i) Historical Context

Warri Division: The Itsekiri Homeland

The Itsekiri country (Warri Kingdom), now Warri South and Warri South-West Local Government Areas, was an independent and sovereign State prior to the Benin River Expedition (Nanna War) of 1894. The Itsekiri people occupied these areas since time immemorial. Towards the close of the 15th Century, a Prince from Benin called Ginuwa and the Chiefs that accompanied him set out to establish a kingdom there.

The landmass of the Itsekiri Kingdom is not in doubt at all. Professor Obaro Ikime, an Isoko, in his book *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta* describes the Itsekiri country (Warri Kingdom) as follows:

> ...The Itsekiri inhabit the North-Western extremity of the Niger Delta in an area bounded approximately by latitudes 5°20 East. Their neighbours are the Bini to the North, the Ijo to the South; the Urhobo to the East and the Yoruba of Ondo province to the Northwest...[1]

Professor P. C. Lloyd, the British anthropologist, in the book *The Benin Kingdom*, with a section on the Itsekiri co-authored with R. E. Bradbury states thus:

> The Itsekiri call themselves Itsekiri or Iwere, and the Yoruba and Edo use the same names: the Urhobo call them Irhobo, a term sometimes said to mean 'those who float on the water.' The Ijaw call them Selemo. In the English literature they are known as Warri or Jekri, though in the 19th century, they were often referred to as Benin, since contact with them was first made on the banks of the Benin River. Warri and Itsekiri have been spelt in many different though recognisable ways by European writers e.g. Oere, Ouere, Awerri, Jekri, Jakri[2]

Warre, Wari, Awyri were other ways the name was spelt until Warri as spelt by Vice Consul Gallwey stuck.

About the mid-nineteenth century, resulting from the growing influence of the princes and nobles from Ogbe quarters in Ode-Itsekiri who maintained trading posts in present-day Warri, the latter as well became known as Ogbe. In fact, Ogbe remains the popular name of Warri till today, and hence, understandably,

the peripheral Urhobo town of Aladja across the Warri River took on the name of Ogbe-Sobo and an Ijaw settlement also across the river became known as Ogbe-Ijaw. From here in the closing decades of the last century, fishermen from Ogbe-Ijaw came to sell their fish along the Warri waterside (fish market) that took its name after Ogbe-Ijaw. Today, there are Hausa quarters, Meciver market, Igbo market and Isoko (garri) market as is the custom in Warri to name sections of the town in this manner.

The main Ogbe, that is Warri, was also called Itsekiri (Ogbe-Itsekiri) to distinguish it from Ogbe-Sobo and Ogbe-Ijaw. (See agreement between Colonial Government and Agho Obaseki in 1904 in P. A. Igbafe's ***Obaseki of Benin***, page 17).

For centuries, the Itsekiri have developed and operated an Olushiip (Monarchy) – a highly centralised system of government. Their politics is free from clans and differences in customs and traditions. As a coastal people, they controlled trade in their part of the Niger Delta. In the second half of the 19th century, the government and administration of the area were in the hands of Itsekiri governors (Diare, Chanomi, Olomu and Nanna). Prior to the fall of Nanna in 1894 (two) Vice Consulates had been established in Itsekiri homeland i.e. Warri and Benin River. In this regard Ikime stated:

> The consul-general (Sir Claude Mac Donald) visited Warri on August 19th 1881. He reported that the chiefs of Warri were Itsekiri who were under Nana – the great middleman chief of Benin River...[3]

After the British Benin River Expedition of 1894, the Itsekiri Paramount leader, Chief Dore Numa became the undisputed political and administrative head of the area with his chiefs. When the British Indirect Rule was introduced, the whole area known as Warri (later Delta) Province comprising the territories of the Ijaw, Ndokwa, Isoko, Urhobo and Itsekiri, was administered from Warri as one judicial, administrative and political unit. The other ethnic groups, quite understandably, strongly opposed being grouped in the same political, judicial and administrative unit with the Itsekiri for fear of Itsekiri domination. The Itsekiri did not raise any objection to the other ethnic groups being granted political and administrative autonomy.

Following research into ethnicities and clan system by administrative officers — (Intelligence Reports and court decisions) the unified structure was dismantled, and separate Native Administrations were established in the 1930s based on the homeland concept. A Warri Division (later Warri Local Government Area) was established in the Itsekiri homeland which, for historical reasons, also contained some settler enclaves, inhabited mainly by Urhobo and Ijaw. The homeland concept led to the emergence of Divisional Councils in 1952.[4]

Historical Facts in Support of the Existence of the Itsekiri Kingdom of Warri and the Olu of Warri from Time Immemorial

The Ijaws and the Urhobos do not dispute that a Benin Prince came to this part of the Delta State in 1489 to found the Itsekiri Kingdom. Their argument is that there has never been a Warri Kingdom nor an Olu of Warri. Happily for the Itsekiris, however, historical facts and records, put it beyond doubt that there has always been an Itsekiri Kingdom of Warri with an Olu or King of Warri, from time immemorial. Here are some of the facts and records:

1. In the book, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485 – 1897* by Professor Alan Ryder, the following references are made to the Olu of Warri:

   (i). In 1689, Father Monteleone was able to begin his missionary work with a visit to Warri. From there he tried to reach Benin. Giving an account of what happened, he said: "They took me by river to the border of Benin where there is a powerful chief who is in rebellion against Warri, and he was to take me on to Benin. But he was afraid that the King of Warri might have his head cut off as he had done to his father, so he would not let us disembark" (p.112).

   (ii). Again, at p 112 – 113 of the book, the following is recorded: "That he had made no progress towards obtaining that word did not in the least dampen the prefect's enthusiasm, and he returned to Sao Tome determined to organise missions to Benin and Warri. He first intended that two priests should go to each kingdom, but the plan miscarried owing to the refusal of the vice-prefect, Giuseppe-Maria da Busseto, to undertake the Benin Mission on the grounds that the Oba had not been baptised. As vice-prefect he preferred, and claimed the right, to go to Warri where he could be certain of a friendly reception from a baptised ruler".

   (iii). On p. 146 of the same book, it is recorded that: "in a letter written to Father Monteleone in 1692, the Olu of Warri complained 'matters here are in such a state that everyone is suffering to some extent' ".

   (iv). On p. 230 of the same book, it is recorded: "The King of Oere is not at all pacific, and the position of his port gives him every assurance of success".

   (v). On p. 237 of the same book, the following is recorded, "The European trade of Benin was still in worse plight than that of the Itsekiris in the years following the official abolition of the slave trade. An occasional ship reached Ughoton where elephant teeth, palm oil, hides and skins, cloth of native manufacture, and utensils of various kinds were bartered for European and Indian commodities. Customs were paid to the Oba in an assortment of goods which, according to Bold, resembled those given to the Olu of Warri".

2. On p. 88 in Professor Michael Crowder's book, *The Story of Nigeria*, the following is recorded:

   The King of Ouwere is the ally and in some manner the vassal of the King of Benin, but in other respects he is absolute in his dominions, Dapper wrote. There appears to have been considerably more contact between the

Portuguese and the Itsekiri of Warri than with Benin, for he records that "Antonio Domingo, Olu of Warri in 1644, was a mulatto, his father having been educated in Portugal where he married a Portuguese lady." In 1682 Father Jerom Merolla da Sorento recorded that the reigning Olu of Warri was married to a Portuguese woman of Sao Thome. He had married her according to Catholic rite, and many of his subjects had apparently followed his example in adopting the Catholic Faith.

3. In 1607 the King of Portugal made a decree in which reference was made to the "King of Warri" and to "Prince Domingo" son of the Olu of Warri.

4. In 1682 Father Jerome Merolla da Sorento wrote: "Two Capuchin Missionaries together with Father Bonaventura da Firanze having just set foot in the Kingdom of Owerri (Warri), they were very courteously received by the King".

5. P. A. Talbot wrote on p. 330 of his *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*: "According to Urbanus Cerri, the King of Warri wrote to Pope Innocent X asking him to send him missionaries for his own good and that of his subjects..."

6. A Frenchman known as Captain Landolphe writing in the 18th century made references to the "Olu of Warri" and said that in recognition of the trade potentials of both Benin and Warri Kingdoms, the King of France, Louis XVI by an "Arret du Conseil D'Etat" of the 27th of May 1756 granted a charter to a company known as the "Compagnie d' Owhere et de Benin" (company of Warri and Benin). This was before and similar to the Royal Niger Company which had its charter from the King of Britain.

7. On p. 1 of his article on the Itsekiri in the Nineteenth century: "An outline of Social History", published in

the *Journal of African history* (1963), Professor P. C. Lloyd wrote as follows:

> In 1800 the Itsekiri Kingdom of Warri in the North-Western corner of the Niger Delta had a highly centralised government.

On p. 209 in the same article, Professor Lloyd continued:

> The Kingdom of Warri lay in an area of mangrove swamp between the land-mass and the sea in the North-West of the Niger Delta: it was transacted by three famous rivers – The Rio Fromos, or Benin River, the Escravos and Forcados Rivers.

Not withstanding these facts, the Ijaws are forever arguing that the Itsekiris are the strangers within the three Warri Local Government Areas, and that they, the Ijaws, are the original owners.

The Ijaws argue that because a market in Warri is called Ogbe-Ijo market or a portion of the town around the market is called Ogbe-Ijoh, [and so is it referred to in crown leases to individuals and other documents], the title or ownership of the land vests in them. When one realises that in today's Warri, there are Hausa Quarters, Igbo Market, Igbudu Market, Isoko Market and so on, it does not vest ownership of the land involved in the Igbos, or the Hausas or Isokos or indeed the Igbudu people. The title to all these lands, including the area called Ogbe-Ijoh and Ogbe-Ijo market, vests in the Itsekiri people, under the overlordship of the Olu of Warri, by virtue of the decision in the case of Ometan vs Dore reported in 9NLR at p. 46-50 & 50- 52. It is most strange that when the lands, Ogbe-Ijo and Ogbe-Ijo market which the Ijaws still say are theirs, were being litigated upon between the Agbassa (Urhobos) as plaintiffs and Dore (representing the Itsekiris) the Ijaws closed their eyes and folded their arms, whilst the litigation raged and lingered on between 1926 and 1933. At this juncture, we refer to pp. 28 and 49 of the judgement to show that Ogbe-Ijoh was part of the land litigated upon. Having acquiesced as the claim over Ogbe-Ijoh raged, the Ogbe-Ijoh people cannot now be heard to say that the place called Ogbe-Ijoh is theirs. They are stopped completely from doing so.

(ii) The Ijaws, By Court Verdict, Have No Right To Contest Any Land In Warri

Quite apart from the above situation, the Ijaws of Ogbe-Ijoh have been specifically barred from bringing any action against the Itsekiris in respect of any land in Warri. In Suit N. W/148/1956, Chief Izuokumo Oliki and 5 others (for themselves and on behalf of the people of Ogbe-Ijoh) vs. Itsekiri communal Land Trustees (the Itsekiris) the Ijaws claimed a declaration of title to virtually all of Warri Division including Warri Township itself. When the case came up for hearing in July 1964, the Ijaws applied to court for leave to discontinue the action. Rhodes Vivour J. granted the leave, and struck out the action. He however made an order precluding the Ijaws from ever bringing any further actions against the Itsekiris in respect of their claim as set in their Writ of Summons, Statement of Claim and Amended Statement of Claim. The Ijaws felt aggrieved by the order and appealed to the Supreme Court.

On the 27th of April 1976, the Supreme Court presided over by Sir Lionel Brett Ag. Chief Justice of Nigeria dismissed the Appeal. With the above decision, the Ijaws of Ogbe-Ijoh can never again institute any claim against the Itsekiri in respect of any inch of land in Warri. Consequently, it is completely preposterous for them to raise any out of court argument whatsoever, more so, before a judicial commission, purporting to show that any land in Warri called Ogbe-Ijoh or Ogbe-Ijoh market is their own. Doing so would contravene the decision of the commission. See the case of Arubo V. Aiyeleru (1993) Supreme Court of Nigeria Judgement (1993 2 SCN) Pages 90 –109, especially at page 106, lines 28 – 37.

Indeed, whatever argument, together with documents the Ijaws had, should have been used by the Ogbe-Ijoh people to prosecute their claim which lingered in the Warri High Court unprosecuted, between 1956 and 1964 when it was struck out with an order barring the Ogbe-Ijoh people from ever bringing an action against the Itsekiris in respect of Warri land. The Ogbe-Ijoh people should therefore not be allowed under any pretext whatsoever, to bring a fresh land claim before the commission, because they have been barred from doing so in a court of competent jurisdiction. Accordingly, any argument or document purporting to show ownership of Warri land by the Ogbe-Ijoh people should not be countenanced by the commission.

We are also aware that the Ijaws of Isaba, near Ogbe-Ijoh argue that the land they are occupying is theirs as of right, by relying on a treaty they, Isaba people entered into with the British in 1893. On the issue of treaty and the general attitude of the Ijaws of Isaba in denying the overlordship of the Olu of Warri over Isaba land, we would offer the following comments:

When about the 1890s the British Government sought through its Consuls to establish formal rule, especially, in the area then known as the Oil Rivers protectorate, the Royal Niger Company became suspicious and hostile to the Government. This state of affairs led to a scramble for markets by the company. Chief *Nanna* was appointed by the Itsekiris as governor of the Itsekiri country in 1884 and was given a staff of office by Queen Victoria. In the same year on the (16th of July, 1884), the Chiefs of Itsekiri land led by Nanna signed a treaty of protection with the British over Itsekiri Country covering the whole of the present Warri Division. By 1891, Chief Nanna had fallen out of favour with the authorities who, between 1891 and 1894, planned intrigues to destroy this great Chief. The Royal Niger Company exploited the uncertainties arising from this state of affairs between Chief Nanna and the British Government to extend their trade in the Itsekiri country. This it did by signing purported treaties on behalf of the British Government with nearly every village and hamlet in the said Itsekiri country in defiance of the authority of the British. The treaties enclosed by the Ijaws as Annexure 4 in their memorandum are among these purported treaties.

The Acting Consul-General, Ralph Moor, found the action of the Royal Niger Company intolerable and so sent several dispatches to the Foreign Office in 1894 castigating the Royal Niger Company for impersonating the Representatives of her Majesty's Government while executing treaties of protection. A typical example of such dispatches is dispatch No. 178 of October 10,1894, received in London on 15th November, 1894 which

read:

> I must respectfully submit that the Royal Niger Company have adopted a most indecent course in thus attempting to annex territories formerly under the sway of Chief Nanna, and make Treaties in and about a provisional boundary at a time when the adjoining Government, in conjunction with the forces of Her Majesty's navy, was employed breaking the power of the Chief whose territories the Company were trying to annex... It is not, I submit, a right course for either of the Governments meeting at a provisional boundary to make Treaties with a view of forcing the course and direction of trade in one way or the other...
> Considering the difficulties and trouble which were engaging the attention of the Government of the Protectorate at the time, I must further submit that the course of the Royal Niger Company has been a most improper one in bringing an armed force through the country with which those difficulties were immediately and directly connected, and one that might and may now considerably increase those difficulties.

Prior to the above dispatch, Ralph Moor on 2nd October, 1894, sent the following cablegram to London:

> Niger Company, taking advantage of troubles in Benin, have sent armed party under Flint and McTaggart representing themselves as Queen's Officers, into Sobo Country, at Bight of Benin and Warri, making Treaties...

Consequent upon the above action by Ralph Moor, the so-called treaties including those exhibited by the Ijaws in their memorandum as Annexure 4, had not the assent of her majesty Queen Victoria. These purported treaties are therefore null and void and of no legal effect. (Source of the dispatches: Certified true copies of consular dispatches to London from Public Record Office, London, No. XIJ 8094).

One wonders why the Ijaws of Saba and Otrubo did not produce this treaty as their root of title to Ogbe-Ijoh lands when in Suit No. B/10/34, Aya on behalf of himself and the Ogbe-Sobo people of Saba in 1934 made a declaration of title to lands and creeks in Ogbe-Ijoh in Warri District. The answer is that they know that the land belongs to the Itsekiris and that they are mere settlers.

In this case, the Urhobos of Ogbe-Sobo in Western Urhobo division in 1934 sued the Saba Ijaws in Warri Division, claiming for a declaration of title to a parcel of land lying within Warri Division. In his evidence, the first witness for the defence, Donikoromor from an Ijaw enclave in Warri Division known as Saba, stated on oath that his ancestors migrated from a place in Western Ijaw and further stated that:

> When they came to the area the lands were unoccupied. I said my people saw no one on the land where we are now. They saw the Olu of Jekri.
> What I mean was that there were no Sobos here when we came but Jekris were there but not actually on the land we are on now. They were at Big Warri. The Olu of Jekri gave us the land we are now, but he made no restrictions. He just gave the land we are now, and we have been there ever since.

The Ijaws of Isaba, through their witness said:

> The Olu will know to whom he gave the land. I know the German Factory. It is on the Warri River. The Olu gave that land there to the Ogbe-Sobo people. Defendants' 4th witness, Omisikuta – an Ijaw from Saba (Ijaw enclave in Warri Division) in his evidence stated "When my ancestors got to Saba there was no one living there. When they arrived the Olu of Jekri owned the country and they went to give themselves to him.
>
> When I say they gave themselves to the Olu, I mean that they went to him as he was the Big man of the area and people gave themselves up to him as this was the custom in those days for protection.

In his judgement delivered on 5/2/35 in favour of the Saba Ijaws in Warri Division, M.T.D.M. Bartley (Assistant Judge) observed as follows: "The defendants depended on the following evidence in support of their traditional history:

> "The production of a lease of land to a German Company (Ex "B") at a village which land though not part of the area in dispute is yet on the land shown in Ex. "A" as constituting Ogbe-Sobo land. The lease is not only signed by the Ogbe-Sobo Chiefs but also by Chief Dore who was head of the

Jekris. This tends to establish defendant's claim that the Jekris (Itsekiris) were the original owners of the land.

From the evidence, it appears that by native law and custom, people allowed to settle on land have no right to lease a portion of it without the permission of the original owner.

It is true that the lease tends to corroborate their allegation that the Olu of Jekri has an interest in Ogbe-Sobo land. It is quite possible that neither party wished to put forward Jekri Chiefs or Headmen as witnesses.

Case No. 93/1937 between Chief Apo, Okotie for Irigho Family vs. Donikoromor, Pere (m) of Saba further establishes the Itsekiri ownership of Sabaland...

This was a case between the plaintiffs representing an Itsekiri family known as Irigho family against the *Pere of Saba* representing the Saba Ijaw enclave in Ogbe-Ijoh enclave in Warri Division. It was a case in the Native Court , a certified true copy of which appears at p. 244 of the certified true copy of the proceeding in Suit No. W/116/56 which went to the Supreme Court and was listed as S. C. 134/71 decided in favour of the Olu of Warri and the said Irigho family and reported in Nigeria Supreme Court Cases (N.S.C.C.) p.378.

(iii) Judgement

Judgement was for the plaintiff to take control of the rivers and lands; defendant to take permission from plaintiff at any time he wishes to fish in the rivers and the fishing products divided between them as usual. Costs of 5/- awarded to the plaintiffs.

One wonders why the Ijaws of Saba and Otrubo did not produce this treaty as proof of their title to Ogbe-Ijoh lands when six Ijaws of Ogbe-Ijoh in Suit W/148/56, for themselves and on behalf of Ogbe-Ijoh people, unsuccessfully sought a declaration of title against Itsekiri Communal Land Trust, to virtually the whole of Warri division.

One wonders why Ijaws of Ogbe-Ijoh did not produce their Treaty in 1928, and then in 1938 when they lost in a court case involving title to the rivers and lands described as Ofulu, Utonileme, Utongboro, Krokoto, etc, in Ogbe-Ijoh to the Itsekiri who sued for ownership under the Olu of Warri.

In fact, while not disputing the claim of the Itsekiris, the Pere maintained that as Pere he was entitled to fish on the rivers without paying tributes. The Court found inter alia:

> ...The Court will not make an order to eject the defendant from using the rivers and lands but an order will be made restraining the defendant from using the river unless with the special and unanimous permission of the plaintiffs to whom the Olu has vested occupancy rights...
> Defendants used to fish over the areas with plaintiffs' permission. This system must continue. A certified true copy of the above appears at page 227 of the above records.

(iv) One cannot comprehend why the Ijaws of Otrubo and Saba did not produce their Treaty when Justice Obaseki, in Suit No. W/116/56: Eyin Pessu, Akowe Apoh (Itsekiris) and the Olu of Warri Vs. Brigbo and others (Ijaws) seeking a declaration of title over Aruteghan together with all the surrounding lands, held as follows:

> it is clear from the evidence before me that the friendly intercourse between the Itsekiris and Ijaws extends backwards over very many generations. With regard to the case put up by 8th and 9th defendants, I find that I cannot accept the traditional evidence given by the 8th defendant and his witness as true. I think it is a deliberate fabrication to deny plaintiffs' title (1) to the land and (2) right to put tenants on the land and creek in dispute ... it is a matter of regret that the title which 8th defendant's grandfather, Numa, never disputed is now being disputed by 8th defendant, Torowei Numa. It is only the title which a father has that he passes on to his son. It is clear from the past cases that Numa was only averse to the idea of money rent payment. He acknowledged that the title of ownership resident in the Olu and then he gave part of his catch of fishes to the Olu's son, Egbegbe.

The Ijaws appealed to the Supreme Court in Suit No. SC.N. 134/71 and lost. This case is reported in (974-75) 9 Nigerian Supreme Court Cases (N.S.C.C.) pg. 368-378.

Escalation of Warri crisis

In spite of the series of court decisions on Warri land and the

title of the Olu of Warri, the problem continues to rage. The reason for the escalating problem can be attributed to the following:

1. **Introduction of Violent and Brutal Dimension to Resolution of the Conflict by the Ijaws**
The violent and brutal dimension the Ijaws have introduced as a means of resolving the problem whereas before now peaceful and legal means were used in the resolution of the conflict.

2. **Overwhelming Force of Two Major Ethnic Groups in Delta State Against the Itsekiris**
Two major ethnic groups (Urhobo and Ijaw) are working together to destroy the Itsekiris, a small ethnic group in the State. This is evident from the massive destruction of Itsekiri towns/villages and forceful occupation and change of names of these villages from Itsekiri to Ijaw.

3. **Influence of the National Size of the Ijaw Ethnic Group on the Warri Conflict as a Remote Cause of the Conflict.**
One of the reasons for the escalating crisis is the sense of security, protection and the "Big Brother" cover which the Ijaw ethnic group, as the fourth largest in the country, gives to the Ijaws wherever they may be, whatever they are doing, and however they are doing it.

This "Big Brother" syndrome was clearly manifested and articulated by the Ijaw National Congress (INC) in their press statement published in *The Guardian* Newspaper of the 3rd of May, 1997. From the said publication, the following emerged:

(i) The Ijaws claim that, not only do they occupy, they are also indigenous to over 80 percent of the Niger Delta, and 70 percent of the country's coast line. What this means is that wherever there are Ijaws along the coast line, they must be the owners of the land, and anybody or group such as the Itsekiris who claim to have its own land along the coast-line, must be prepared for the wrath of the INC, and that is what the Itsekiris have suffered, being completely on their own as an ethnic group in Nigeria. They do not have a big brother.

(ii) Although the INC claims it is not involved in the crisis, it is quick in coming to the firm conclusion that it was Itsekiri youths who burnt down Chief E. K. Clark's house.

(iii) Even as the INC continues to claim non-involvement, the president remains in regular contact with its zonal leaders like Chief E. K. Clark and Chief B. C. Bozimo, none of whom comes from Warri, by birth. It is no wonder that E. K. Clark is the generalissimo in this crisis, as the "foremost Ijaw leader".

(iv) Having regard to the size of the Itsekiris as an ethnic group, it is understandable that INC sees itself as a big brother to the Itsekiris. The truth of the matter is that the INC, as the name implies, is an organisation set up for the purpose of protecting the Ijaw interests nationwide. When, therefore, there is a conflict between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri interests, the choice is obvious, blood being thicker than water. With the assured backing of the INC, the Ijaws were able to occupy flow stations with sophisticated arms and ammunition, and held workers as hostages, for days.

Confident that they have a big brother, in the INC, the Ijaws in Warri are dictating the terms such as:

(a) Give us an Ijaw ethnic Local Government Council with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh or there will be no peace.

(b) Until the title of the Olu of Warri is changed to Olu of Itsekiri, there would be no peace.

(c) Declare us the owner of the land we occupy since 80 percent of the coastline is ours, or else there will be no peace.

(d) Declare as null and void, all judgements of competent courts of jurisdiction, by the High Court or the Old West African Court of Appeal (WACA), or privy council which say that the Itsekiris, and not the Ijaws, own the land, because the Ijaws maintain that all such decisions have been fraudulently procured. Unless that is done, there would be no peace.

Peace cannot thrive under this atmosphere of God-fatherism. It is for this reason that we see the tie between the Warri Ijaws and INC as one of the remote causes of the conflict.

4. Dung's Unflinching Support for the Ijaws and the Urhobos in Itsekiri Homeland

The administration of Col. Jonah Dung's plan to create a Local Government for the Ijaws in Itsekiri Homeland and his unflinching support for the Ijaw violence against the Itsekiris are well known.

The then Military Administrator of Delta State, Col, J. D. Dung, was a major contributor to the escalating crisis in Warri, because he took a definite stand on the matter, as evidenced in his pronouncements in the various news media.

In November 1996, Col. J.D. Dung visited Ogbe-Ijoh, an Ijaw enclave in the then Warri North Local Government Council. Dung knew that he had no competence to create a new Local Government Area, being a Federal subject. However, on that visit he promised the Ijaws a Local Government Council. Consequently, on the 13th of December, 1996, while announcing the six Local Government Councils created in Delta State, as it affected Warri, he clearly said as follows:

> I want to correct the injustice in Warri and so I have decided to move the headquarters of Warri South Local Government Area to Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri South Local Government consists of Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba and Gbaramatu and so what is left of the former Warri South is now Warri Central.

From that moment on, Col. J. D. Dung took several steps and made numerous pronouncements, which showed him as clearly biased and prejudiced against the Itsekiri interest.

Col. Dung's creation of Warri South Local Government with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, and Warri Central Local Government, with headquarters in Warri was of his own making and unmindful of the fact that he had no jurisdiction on the matter. This is because Decree No. 36 of 1996 issued on the 30th of December, 1996, and Decree No. 7 of 1997 issued on the 3rd of March, 1997, show that the only Local Government Council created in Warri by the Federal Government, in addition to Warri South and Warri North was **Warri Southwest with headquarters in Ogidigben.**

It beats one's imagination where Col. J. D. Dung saw the Warri Southwest with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh or Warri Central with headquarters in Warri which he announced in order to correct his perceived injustice in Warri. It is clearly obvious, therefore, that Col. J. D. Dung's role aggravated the conflict. Besides, by his utterance during the interview he granted *This Day* newspaper on the 4th of May, 1997. (See pages 12-13 thereof) and *Tell Magazine* No. 19 of 12th of May, 1997, (pages 17 –20), Col. J. D. Dung made it abundantly clear that he had reached a conclusion as to the cause of the conflict and what the solutions should be.

The Itsekiris at different levels, spontaneously, made it clear that they did not have confidence in Col. J. D. Dung, so as not to rely on him as the final arbiter at the end of the commission's assignment. In this regard, we refer to the letter of the 11th of April 1997, written to General Sani Abacha and copied to Col. J. D. Dung by the Committee of Itsekiri Leaders of Thought; and Advertisement by the Itsekiris Leaders of Thought in *The Vanguard* newspaper of 2nd May, 1997, captioned: "Warri Crisis — The Creation of Col. J. D. Dung; an advertisement by Committee of Concerned Itsekiris in *The Vanguard* newspaper of 13th May, 1997 captioned: "Understanding the issues in the Conflict"; a press statement by Concerned Itsekiris "in The *Vanguard* of 17th May, 1997, captioned: "Warri Crisis — Product of *Mala fide* of Col. J. D. Dung", and publication in the *Nigerian*

Tribune of 19th of May 1997, under the caption: "Itsekiris send SOS to Abacha".

It is an open secret that all past conflicts between the Ijaws and Itsekiris have been limited to jawing and using legal means rather than warring. Even when the Ijaws of Gbaramatu and Ogbe-Ijoh were placed in Warri North Local Government, they strongly expressed displeasure, they did not fight the Itsekiris.

It has become obvious that one of the reasons for the escalating crisis is that the Ijaws have been lured, encouraged and given an assured sense of security and protection by some highly placed allies and Godfathers. Col. J. D. Dung, though not Urhobo or Ijaw, has come to Delta State with a sense of mission as the Chief Priest and agent for the purpose of executing and putting the protectionism scheme in position.

Col. J. D. Dung, The Military Administrator of Delta State, clearly betrayed himself and let the cat out of the bag, when in the course of his interview by *ThisDay* newspaper, as published on the 4th of May, 1997, on pages 12 & 13, he said as follows:

> God had a purpose for sending me to the state, probably, to be able to resolve the age-long problems that had been existing between the various tribes in the State.

The truth is that Col. J. D. Dung was sent by his mentors and principals for the definite purpose of protecting the Ijaws and Urhobos in Warri, at the expense of the Itsekiris, under the pretext of resolving the age-long problems that had existed between the various tribes of the State. It is on the basis of this sense of special purpose that Col. J. D. Dung promised to give the Ijaws a Local Government Council during his visit to Ogbe-Ijoh in November, 1996, when he knew or ought to have known that because the creation of Local Government was a matter for the Federal Military Government, he had no competence to fulfil his vain promise, more especially, when all requests for the creation of local government Councils had long closed, before he assumed duty as the Military Administrator of Delta State.

The principal immediate cause of the conflict between the Ijaws and Itsekiris in the months of March to May, 1997, was thus the promise given to the Ijaws in November, 1996 and the

administrator's attempt to fulfil it. Col. J. D. Dung set the ball rolling when on the 13th of December, 1996, he proceeded to announce the creation of six Local Government Councils from the Delta State.

The first problem which arose from this announcement was the confusion and ambiguity which it created, confusion being a major source of conflict. With the creation of Warri North and Warri South, Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba and Gbaramutu were part of Warri North. The announcement gave the false impression that they were being removed from Warri South, as no mention, whatsoever, was made of Warri North in the said announcement. Besides, the Local Government exercise, as intended by the Federal Government, was for the creation of new councils as Col. Dung did by the above announcement. The second issue which arose from Col. J.D. Dung's announcement, and which forms the principal or tap root of the conflict is that, neither the Warri South Local Government made up of Ogbe-Ijoh, Isaba and Gbaramatu with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, nor the Warri Central Local Government Council was created by the Federal Government. This fact is clearly shown in the states (Creation Transitional Provisions Decree of 1996 Decree No.36 of 1996) and published in the Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette (Extra-ordinary), dated 30th of December, 1996, (see item 10 at page A 486-487).

The above position is further reinforced by the Local Government (Basic Constitutional and Transitional provisions) Decree, 1997 (Decree No. 7 of 1997), published on the 3rd of March, 1997 in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazettes (Extra-ordinary) (see page A 214). Where did the Military Administrator, Col. J.D. Dung, find a Warri Central Local Government Council or in particular, the Warri South Local Government Council with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh which he announced?

After announcing the illegally created Warri South Local Government Council with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, Col. J. D. Dung proceeded to aggravate the problem by posting an Administrator to Ogbe-Ijoh to manage the affairs of the non-existent Local Government Council. Worse still, on the 15th of

March 1997, in spite of Decree No. 7 of 1997 published on the 3rd of March, 1997 with the full knowledge and approval of Col. Dung, NECON conducted Chairmanship and Councillorship elections in the same non-existent Warri South Local Government Council, with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh. At the end of the election, Col. J. D. Dung, further compounded the problem by swearing in the Chairman purportedly, but illegally elected, in respect of a non-existent Local Government Council. He, thereafter, directed the so-called Chairman to resume duty at Ogbe-Ijoh the headquarters.

By his conduct as described above, Col. J.D. Dung was determined to convince the Ijaws that he was perfecting a pre-arranged instruction to give them an ethnic Local Government Council, in accordance with the promise he had earlier made to them. He successfully misled the Ijaws into believing that the Federal Government had created an ethnic Local Government for them with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh. It is because the Itsekiris believed that what Col. J. D. Dung was doing was wrong and inconsistent with the intention of the Federal Government that they peacefully protested to the Federal Government. Col. J. D. Dung, subsequently retraced his steps with a view to implementing the only new Local Government Council , created in Warri by the Federal Government, as enacted in Decree No. 36 of 1996 and published on the 30th of December, 1996, and Decree No. 7 of 1997 published on the 3rd of March 1997. Col. J. D. Dung, accordingly, announced the authentic Local Government Council of Warri South-West with headquarters in Ogidigben.

In making the announcement, Col. J. D. Dung did not tell the public in general, and the Ijaws in particular, that the council he was then announcing had been in statute books since 30th December 1996 (Decree No. 36 of 1996) and 3rd of March, 1997 (Decree No. 7 of 1997), a situation which he knew very well or ought to have known. By so doing Col. J. D. Dung deliberately created the false impression that the Federal Government was withdrawing its decision to create a "new" Warri South Local Government Council with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, (an Ijaw Town) and replacing it with the creation of Warri South-West

Local Government Council with headquarters in Ogidigben, of which his own creation of Warri South with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, is only a small part. He suspended the illegally elected Chairman of the existent Warri South Local Government with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, one Mr. Oromoni, an Ijaw man. Dr. J. Otumara, who had been validly elected for Warri-South Local Government and duly recognised by Decree No. 36 of 1996, and Decree No. 7 of 1997, took his place. Col. Dung's behaviour in this regard is his characteristic way of demonstrating bias against the Itsekiris. As far as he is concerned, if an Ijaw man cannot function in Warri South West for valid reasons, an Itsekiri man must also be prevented from functioning in Warri South for no just cause, in order to please the Ijaws and the Urhobos of Warri, who are Col. J. D. Dung's favourites.

By the totality of his conduct, starting with his incompetent promise to give a special council to the Ijaws, followed by his illegal creation of Warri South Local Council with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, and his subsequent announcement of the authentic and lawful Local Government Council of Warri South West with headquarters at Ogidigben, without disclosing that he was announcing what had been published since December, 1996, he misled the Ijaws into believing that the Federal Government was withdrawing a Local Government Council which it had created for them. "The God sent" Col. J. D. Dung, the Military Administrator of Delta State, had thus laid a solid foundation for the Ijaws to revolt. He ignited the fire of the Ijaws' armed revolt against the creation of Warri South Local Government. This, without any shadow of doubt, is the principal and immediate cause of the unprecedented armed aggression of Ijaws against the Itsekiris - an aggression which is now being wrongly referred to and described as a conflict, between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris.

The Ijaw aggression or revolt was further inflamed by the press conference addressed by the Ijaw Leaders, in the persons of Mr. Oboko Belo and Chief Abel Ugedi, on the 20th of March, 1997, and published on page 20 of the *Nigerian Tribune* of Monday the 24th of March, 1997 and also in the front page of *The Daily Times* of the same date. The said Ijaw Leaders threatened to defend the Ogbe-Ijoh based Warri South Local

Government at all cost, and they called on the Ijaws to defend the position with their blood, and thus the Ijaws were spurred and incited into action.

It was immediately after this incitement that the Ijaws blocked the waterways linking Warri to Escravos and Benin River. They occupied Shell and Chevron Flow Stations/ Installations, stopped oil production, held the oil company workers as hostages for several days, and kidnapped and/or killed some unsuspecting and innocent Itsekiris who were working in such places. During the blockade the Ijaws stopped and searched every boat for Itsekiris who were taken away and killed.

As we had pointed out, earlier on in this memorandum, the sense of protection and security which Col. J. D. Dung gave to the Ijaws – a protection which, in the immediate terms, contributed largely to the conflicts – was demonstrated in the following specific ways:

1. During the very brief and unfortunate life span of the Col. J. D. Dung's administration when he illegally created Warri South Local Government with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, the Ijaws made life impossible for the Itsekiris. They arrogantly and falsely claimed that the whole length of the southern and northern shores or fronts of the Warri River was Ogbe-Ijoh, the so-called headquarters of the Warri South Local Government .

   They forceably extracted all sorts of illegal taxes from Itsekiris plying or navigating the Warri River or berthing their canoes or river crafts. Any refusal to pay resulted in serious assault or seizure of their boats.

   The Itsekiris suffered in silence and in helplessness as the State Military Administrator showed complete indifference to what was happening. The above acts of commission or omission in not taking appropriate, effective and deterring steps to curtail the excesses of the Ijaws, created the impression that they were sacred cows, and thus making it obvious that the Ijaws were free to act as they absolutely deemed fit.

2. It seems very strange, surprising and unbelievable that the Delta State Government under a Military Administrator in the person of Col. D. Dung with all the law enforcement agents at his disposal, did not anticipate that the Ijaws, who had been misled by him, would feel disappointed and react violently on hearing that their new Warri South Local Government in Ogbe-Ijoh, purportedly created for them, had become a thing of the past. We strongly believe that Col. D. Dung ought, reasonably, to have anticipated that the Ijaws would resort to violence as a remedy for achieving their goal, and therefore, should have put some security measures in position to coincide with his announcement of the true, authentic, and lawful Local Government Council of Warri South West with headquarters in Ogidigben.

   With humility and due deference to Col. D. Dung, we dare say his failure to prepare for, and take appropriate steps to prevent or suppress the anticipated violence by the Ijaws, is yet another immediate cause of the conflict. It is also our view that Col. J. D. Dung did not show enough zeal to curtail or stop the Ijaw violence for two reason. (i) As a way of persuading the Federal Military Government of his arbitrary decision to announce the creation of Warri South Local Government with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh (ii) As a way of artificially creating a violent situation between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, so as to have an excuse for setting up an enquiry with a view to achieving his predetermined objective of resurrecting and implementing Justice Nnaemeka Agu's Commission recommendations, which Col. Dung says, with complete prejudice to the Itsekiris, is the solution to the Warri problem.

3 The lack of zeal on the part of Col. J. D. Dung was further manifested in the fact that until the Federal Government sent a contingent of soldiers to Warri, somewhat late, during the crisis, the Ijaws were given so much latitude to operate at will with sophisticated arms, as if there

was no legitimate authority in charge of Delta State. Movement between Warri and Ode-Itsekiri (Big Warri) and Orugbo (both Itsekiri towns near Warri) was not possible as the route was blockaded. Itsekiris who tried to move from Warri and vice versa were kidnapped or shot dead. Numerous Itsekiri villages and towns were burnt and looted at will by the Ijaws, as the Military Administrator did not show sufficient concern. He kept making half-hearted appeals to Itsekiris and Ijaws to maintain the peace, as he turned a blind eye to the truth, that the Itsekiris were at the receiving end, because they had not realised that they needed to acquire arms in defence of their lives and property against an internal aggression by a neighbouring people.

It is our firm view that Col. J. D. Dung, the principal security officer of the State, whose responsibility it is to protect lives and property of everyone in the State, especially when such lives are being threatened from within the State, did not live up to his responsibility in the protection of Itsekiri lives and property. He showed himself as working for the Ijaws and Urhobos of Warri, and not for the Itsekiris.

4 If Col. Dung did not condone the conduct of the Ijaws, then how could he explain the fact that the Ijaws came into Warri through the Warri River in open day light and burnt several Itsekiri peoples' houses at the water front, with no one stopping them? How does Col. J. D. Dung explain the fact that between the 22nd of March 1997 and about the middle of May, 1997, the Ijaws, at diverse dates, went into over 22 Itsekiri towns and villages, set them on fire, looted properties and killed a number of Itsekiris as the towns were left at the mercy of Ijaws? Is this not a clear case of connivance? How does Col. J. D. Dung explain the fact that the Ijaws are developing the lands they forcefully occupied during this crisis, and that they are building market stalls on parts of this land which is the property of the Warri South Local Government,

and which stalls are being hired to traders, who are paying rent to the Ijaws? How were the Ijaws allowed to do a thing like this, all between March and May 1997, if their conduct was not condoned by those in authority e.g the Military Administrator of Delta State, Col. J. D. Dung and his appointed agent and Sole Administrator of Warri South Local Government? How does one explain the fact that, up till this moment, the Ijaws are visiting Itsekiri houses in parts of Warri, threatening to burn the houses or to kidnap them if they do not pay a ransom? Is it not part of Col. Dung's responsibility to ensure that the Itsekiris are left unmolested by the Ijaws through these criminal acts? Is it not strange and unusual that, of the more than 22 Itsekiri towns and villages burnt and looted by the Ijaws, Col. Dung paid an inspection visit only to Koko which is accessible by road?

From all that have been said about the role of Col. J. D. Dung in the Warri affair, it is beyond doubt that in his actions or pronouncements or announcements, his protection of, and godfather attitude to the Ijaws, and more importantly, his pre-conceived prejudice against the Itsekiris, are, in total, far more than any other factor or person, leading to the immediate causes of the conflict between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, during the months of March and May, 1997.

The Itsekiris did no more than make a peaceful and constitutional representation to the Federal Government to the effect that: The Military Administrator's announcement of the creation of Warri Central Local Government with headquarters in the G.R.A Warri, and Warri South-west Local Government with headquarters in Ogbe-Ijoh, was wrong, because such requests were not made to the Mbanefo Commission on the creation of Local Government.

The Military Administrator Col. J. D. Dung's announcement was not consistent with the true intention of the Federal Military Government, as the Itsekiris perceived. The Federal Military Government should have done what was right and just in the circumstances.

It cannot, and should not, be suggested, that the Itsekiris' conduct in peacefully appealing to the Federal Government to correct the error which was being committed by Col. Dung as the Military Administrator of Delta State, was contributory in any way to the crisis. Rather, the Itsekiris approach to the situation, being in conformity with the norm in any civilised society, should be commended.

5. Greed for Oil Money
The idea that oil companies will settle any group that can violently disturb their operation whether by holding expatriates hostage or by forcibly locking up their production premises seem to have yielded bountiful fruits for the Ijaw youths.

6. Blatant refusal by the Ijaws and the Urhobos to use peaceful and Constitutional means in resolution of the conflict has contributed in aggravating and prolonging the crisis.

Factors Sustaining the Crisis

1. Creation of Delta State and the attendant majority status of the Urhobos who have supported the Ijaws vehemently in their extermination plan of the Itsekiris. This would not have happened in the larger Bendel State.
2. Government's intentional inaction – Dung's connivance
3. Unwillingness of the Ijaws to renounce violence
4. The inability of the Itsekiris to match the fire-power of the Ijaws (with the subtle support of the Urhobos) as at now.

Stakeholders in the Crisis in Warri

The Ordinary People

When there is violent crisis situation, it is the ordinary people who are already impoverished that suffer in terms of displacement, loss of means of livelihood. They are therefore major stakeholders.

The Youths

The youths have been in the forefront of the violence perpetuated in this crisis. They have lost their lives in some cases, they have also found a fortune from the oil companies through kidnapping of expatriates and disturbing the activities of these oil companies.

Opinion and Community Leaders

These people have played the critical role of crystallising the ideas and strategies for resolving the conflict. Many times, what they want the public to believe is different from their actions. They also want to be in the limelight and at whatever cost to get their share of the oil wealth even though their areas may not essentially be oil producing. There is no oil in Warri town for example, but the Agbassas and the Urhobos in Warri town think that they should get a fair share of the oil royalties. The Ijaw youths are being encouraged by community leaders to annex Itsekiri riverine villages so that they can get oil royalties.

Government (Urhobo and Ijaw led)

The role of Government has become a cause for concern in the crisis in recent years. Government must act as the custodian of all, not representing any particular group. Government in this case is not seen to be impartial.

Solution Profile

The present crisis requires an enduring solution. To effectively resolve the conflict, efforts should be made towards ensuring that:

1. **There must be respect for court decisions and use of constitutional means**
All ethnic groups should respect Court decisions and use of legal and constitutional means. Jungle justice must not be encouraged.

2. **Dialogue must remain the only way to solving the problem**
The fieldwork clearly shows that 100% of the respondents believe that violence is not a solution to the problem and 100% of the respondents also welcome dialogue. Both government and non-government efforts should be

encouraged in this regard.

3. Recognition of settler status by all groups in areas where they are settlers.

All three groups are settlers in each other's area. There are Itsekiris in Urhobo Local Government Areas and Ijaw Local Government Areas, but Itsekiris are not claiming those areas. The fact that the Ijaws and Urhobos have become wealthy and influential does not mean that they can annex the homeland of the Itsekiris.

Although the Itsekiris have settlements within Sapele Local Government (e.g. Oguanja – Ugbege, Aja-Emele, Ugboeyiyi), in Ethiope Local Government (In Ugarefe and Ugharegin) in Okpe Local Government, all in Urhobo homeland, and in Burutu town – Okorodudu settlement, in Forcados and Yokri (all in Ijaw homeland of Burutu Local Government Council), in Ologbo Aja – Oki, Kokokolo, Aja-Otikpere, in Siluko and Ekewan (all in Edo State), they have never sought or requested for an ethnic Local Government Council in other people's homeland. The Itsekiris have learnt to live in peace and harmony within the Local Government created in other people's homeland. Other ethnic groups must behave likewise.

Today, the Urhobo has 8 Local Government Areas, Isoko has two, Ijaw has three, Ukwuani has 3, and the Itsekiri homeland has 3 Local Government Councils. Although these Local Government Councils are on the basis of homeland, they are not ethnic based, since there are settlers in each of these homelands.

4. Violence should be renounced by all groups

The Urhobos have records of violence against the Itsekiris in the past, but the violence perpetuated by the Ijaws against the Itsekiris in recent years is unprecedented in the history of the area. The aggressors in this violent conflict must be identified and appropriate action taken. In 1952, some Urhobos launched a premeditated and unprovoked attack on the Itsekiris in Warri and the

Urhobo hinterland. The bloody riot which began in Warri township later spread to the Urhobo hinterland where Itsekiri settlements were sacked, a fact which explains the absence to this day of any resident Itsekiri community in the Urhobo hinterland. In 1977, some Urhobos carried out a murderous attack on the Itsekiri of Ubeji, with the aim of seizing by force of arms Ubeji land, site of the Warri refinery. The incident was investigated by the Justice Omosun Commission which found the Urhobos to be the aggressors.

In May 1993, some Ijaws and Urhobos attacked the Olu of Warri's yearly coronation anniversary procession in downtown Warri. The next day, some Urhobos in Okere, Warri attacked defenceless Itsekiris in the area. It was common knowledge that the Urhobo-dominated Delta State civilian government encouraged or at least acquiesced in the bloody riots.

5. Violence must not be rewarded

The Delta State House of Assembly recently passed a bill moving the headquarters of Warri South-West from Ogidigben to Ogbe-Ijoh. This is not constitutional and is not acceptable to the Itsekiris. This was a gang-up by the Urhobo and the Ijaw ethnic groups who had no problem buying over other ethnic groups in the House. This is a reward for violent means as a way of settling the conflict. It will never be accepted by the Itsekiris. It is unbelievable that the Ijaws are now saying the Itsekiris should accept the verdict of the House first before making any representation to Government.

6. Effort should be made towards genuine reconciliation

The Itsekiris have suffered so much pain from this crisis, so also other ethnic groups and those who are not party to the conflict have some measure of pain. The Itsekiris have suffered most from the Ijaw unexpected reign of terror and unprecedented brutality. To think that suppression of the Itsekiris either by gradual

extermination of the Itsekiris from the face of the earth or by beating the Itsekiris to submission to accept whatever the Ijaws and Urhobos dictate, would be living in a fool's paradise. The Itsekiris will resist such plan and we believe that God who is above and the whole world are watching. To make people who have suffered so much pain forget the past calls for genuine repentance. We cannot fake peace. The fieldwork clearly shows that inter-ethnic marriage which was a strong unifying force is now a taboo especially as it affects the Itsekiris and the Ijaws. Efforts should therefore be made to bring the ethnic groups together for reconciliation. Progress in this direction may be slow, but it is a sure way to peace in the area.

7. **Government must be impartial**
In a crisis situation such as this, it is difficult for those involved not to have their biases and prejudices. But to think that those at the helm of affairs in the state criminally and openly display such bias and prejudice is unthinkable. This is evident from what Ibori (Urhoho) is doing and Col. J. Dung (a man with mission to destroy the Itsekiris) did in the State. This report has details on Dung's criminal acts, which have brought this crisis to an unprecedented level. Governor Ibori (Urhobo) has already started in the same light. It cannot be ascertained now how much damage he plans to unleash on the Itsekiris. If government remains partisan, they will succeed in satisfying those they want to favour.

8. **Government policy that ensures that oil royalties and development get to oil producing communities**
One of the problems in Warri and its environs is the growing awareness that money can be made by people in the area from oil-producing and oil-servicing companies. Not all communities produce oil. Government policy should be to ensure that the communities that produce oil get maximum benefit. There is no oil in Agbassa nor in Okumagba Layout, yet Urhobos in that

area complain that they don't get their fair share of the oil wealth. With all the known and unforeseeable ecological problems that the oil-producing communities have to contend with, it is only proper and fair that they should get maximum benefit.

Data Analysis
The Itsekiris are found in the nooks and crannies of Warri. The Itsekiri-dominated areas of Warri are Okere, Daudu/Odion, Ugbori, Ekurude Itsekiri, Ubei, Egbokodo Ugbowange and Ifie.

Sampling Procedure
Probability sampling methods using cluster and multi-stage sampling techniques have been used in the course of this fieldwork.

Areas Selected for Survey
Based on the above procedures, the following three communities were selected:
Okere
Daudu/Odion
Ekurude Itsekiri
The choice of the communities was dictated by the fact that they are among the most highly populated Itsekiri communities in Warri metropolis.

Universal/Sample Size
Population
The population of Itsekiris in Warri is estimated at 300,000 The population of Itsekiris in Okere, Daudu/Odion and Ekurude is estimated at 150,000. A total of 300 respondents were interviewed. Of this number 120 was from Okere, 80 from Dauda/Odion and 100 from Ekurude Itsekiri.

Age of Respondents
Respondents were categorised as youths and elders. Youths for the purpose of this study are those in the ages of between 18-49 years while elders are those who are 50 years and above. A total of 205 youths (125 males and 80 females) were interviewed while 95 elders (55 males and 40 females) were also interviewed.

Q.1(a) **In other metropolis (Benin, Port Harcourt, Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna etc) people of different ethnic backgrounds have coexisted (lived side by side), why in your opinion do you think it is different here in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Struggle for ownership and control of Warri by other ethnic groups	52	17.33
Presence of Oil Wealth	170	56.67
Effort by Ijaws and the Urhobos to change the Title of Olu of Warri	48	16
Marginalisation of other ethnic groups who wrongly feel that they are being marginalised		
Awareness	30	10
Total	300	100

(b) **If in the past, there have been problems between the Itsekiri, Urbobo, Ijaws, why do you think this problem is escalating today rather than reducing?**

Response	Number	%
Intensification of efforts by Ijaws/ Urhobos to control Warri	115	38.33
Ijaws' belief in the use of violence	115	38.33
Struggle to share from Oil Money	13	4.33
Govt. inaction to violence by Ijaws	57	19
Total	300	100

Q.2 (a) **As an Ijaw, Urhobo or Itsekiri, how do you relate to or see other ethnic communities in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Rivals	82	27.33
Potential enemies/killers	218	72.66
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(b) **Are you being denied your legitimate rights by other ethnic communities?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	300	100
No	-	-
Total	300	100

(c) **Yes, what are these rights?**

Response	Number	%
Lands	95	31.66
Political Positions	75	25
All of the above i.e. land, traditional institutions and administrative headquarters	130	43.33
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(d)(i) **Who owns WARRI and (ii) what do you want to see happen to other ethnic communities other than yours in terms of control of Warri?**

(i) **Who owns Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Itsekiri	295	98.33
Ijaw	-	-
Urhobo	-	-
The Three ethnic groups	5	1.66
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(ii) **What do you want to see happen to the other ethnic groups?**

Response	Number	%
The Owners should control	275	91.66
The three ethnic groups should coexist	25	8.33
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

Q.3 (a) **Negative images: "How would you describe an Urhobo/Ijaw?**

Response (For Urhobo)	Number	%
Violent/Hostile People	70	23.33
Greedy People	195	65
Unreasonable	35	11.66
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

Response (For Ijaw)	Number	%
Violent/Hostile People	240	80
Greedy people	35	11.66
Unreasonable	25	8.33
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(b) **Would you marry an Ijaw/ Urhobo?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	-	-
No	270	90
May consider Urhobo	30	10
Total	300	100

(c) **If not why not?**

Response	Number	%
Pain from the conflict	146	48.6
Security reasons	34	11.33
Not convinced that marriage will work under present circumstances of violence and hatred	120	40
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(d) **How is your prospect in life affected by other ethnic groups?**

Response	Number	%
Job/Business	143	47.66
Material well-being	90	30
Accommodation	67	22.33
Others		
Total	300	100

(e) **Have you ever been helped by people of other ethnic origin?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	85	28.33
No	215	71.66
Total	300	100

(f) **Is violence the only means of settling scores among the different ethnic groups in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	300	100
No	300	100
Total		

(g) **If No, what must be responsible for the continuation of bloody confrontation among the ethnic factions in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Belief by the Ijaws in violence	205	68.33
There is ground design of the other ethnic groups to exterminate the Itsekiris	57	19
Inability of leaders of the ethnic groups to foster unity because they are profiting from the crisis	28	9.3
Total	290	96.63

(h) **What do you know about efforts of State and Federal Government to settle the conflict in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Providing Military Personnel to keep peace	110	36.67
Not much in term of ensuring peace	164	54.67
Aggravating the problem by considering relocation of the Local Government Headquarters.	26	8.66
Others		
Total	100	100

(i) **Is it working so far? Do you feel safe to go about your business or go to neighbourhoods you considered hostile?**

Response	Number	%
Yes (Uneasy calm)	25	8.33
No	275	91.66
Total	300	100

(j) **Are there other ways of ensuring peace in Warri other than violence?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	291	97
No	9	3
Total	300	100

(k) **What can the Warri people themselves do to ensure peace knowing that violence only destroys and peace builds?**

Response	Number	%
Dialogue	192	64
Concerned parties should renounce violence	73	24.33
Non-indigenes should step in	35	11.66
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(L) **Are community leaders representing the interests of the communities or their personal material interests?**

Response	Number	%
Personal Interest	104	34.66
Community Interest	196	65.33
Others	-	-
Total	300	100

(m) **Would you encourage frequent/occasional meetings of various community leaders, non-governmental organisations (e.g. Churches, Associations, Unions), Youth leaders etc to exchange views as an effective way of checking outbreak of violence in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	300	100
No	-	-
Total	300	100

(n) **One of the major problems in Warri is how the different ethnic communities see the other (enemies, Killers etc). How can these images be changed to reduce the generational problem of mistrust and disharmony in Warri?**

Response	Number	%
Exhibiting civilised behaviour	49	16.33
Using peaceful means/dialogue to settle the issues at stake instead of violence	234	78
Leaders of the ethnic groups must truly embrace.	17	5.66
Total	300	100

(o) **If some members of your community are preparing to attack other ethnic communities, would you run to the Police to stop them?**

Response	Number	%
Yes	25	8.33
No (Under present circumstances)	271	90.33
Others (It depends)	4	1.33
Total	300	100

(p) **If not why not?**

Response	Number	%
Fear of being called a traitor	55	30.56
Fear of retaliation against your family	20	11.11
Fear of the Police	30	16.66
Conviction that vigilante Groups in your community must be protected at all costs.		
Combination of all options	75	41.67
Others	-	-
Total	180	100

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