Explaining Inter-Ethnic Coexistence and Harmony in Enugu city, Southeastern Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Ethnicity in Nigeria is more fervently exhibited within the context of the 'indigene – settler dichotomy' which encourages exclusionism and is one of the factors responsible for violent conflicts across the country. While many plural urban spaces in the country have witnessed such violent conflicts, a few, such as Enugu, have not. This study examines the inter-ethnic relations in Enugu city, to determine why and how the city sustained coexistence and harmony since the end of the civil war. Though ethnic attachment appeared to be strong and conflicts and occasional tensions occurred in the city, inter-ethnic relationships were found to have been relatively peaceful and symbiotic. Cogent factors responsible were identified and interrogated. Despite optimism in Enugu city's peaceful condition, however, potential complications could emanate, as the factors responsible for peace in the city are amenable to change. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources within a multi-disciplinary framework.

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Introduction

Relations between people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds are crucial issues in the world, as conflicts, which naturally emanate from such relations, are important issues impeding effective interactions and social harmony. Ethnicity is a very powerful force in the socio-economic politics of Nigeria, and is more fervently exhibited within the "indigene – settler dichotomy". This dichotomy results both from the awareness of indigenes (hosts) and settlers (strangers) that they are different, and from labelling of "settlers" by "indigenes" (Ibeanu and Onu, 2001). Indeed, the indigene – settler question in Nigeria remains a contentious issue in accessing land, education, employment, political prospects and other socio-economic opportunities, due to its exclusionary nature and has been the root of many conflicts in the country. Thus, ethnic identity in Nigeria has profound consequences for the bearer's physical safety, political status and economic prospects (Agbese, 2001; Albert, 1993a; International IDEA, 2000; Nnoli, 1978; Otite, 2000; Osaghae, 1994; Ukiwo 2005). This is especially so for the many millions of Nigerian citizens who have to live and work in inter-ethnic contexts. Obviously, a major social and political problem Nigeria faced in the preceding century and will continue to face in this twenty-first century is ethnicity (Agbese, 2001).

The indigene – settler dichotomy, which is a nationwide phenomenon, has largely acquired vast acceptability in Nigeria, and the concept of "indigeneship" also remains very strong and viable, as social spaces, even cities, are identified as "belonging to" particular ethnic groups. As Plotnicov (1972:1-2) notes, "*Owners of the land*" is a phrase widely employed in Nigeria to designate the indigenous peoples of an area, even when they are politically subordinate there; while "Strangers" [settlers], the paired contrasting term, covers people of alien origin who are permanently settled among these indigenous people. An attempt to clarify any of the two concepts, however, implies a simultaneous engagement with the other. Mamdani (1998:1) aptly captures this relationship: "The settler – native question is a political question. It is also a historical question. Settlers and natives belong together. You cannot have one without the other for it is the relationship between them that makes one a settler and the other a native".

The question concerning who "indigenes" or "settlers" are is within the ambit of identity. This is a domain of exclusion and permanent contestation. This is so because the distinction between these groups is used as a way of excluding people: "Indigenes" seek the exclusion of those categorised as "settlers", while those being excluded on the ground of "settlership" seek equity and contest their exclusion on grounds of citizenship of the Nigerian State (Egwu, 2005:12). In other words, the "indigene" and "settler" syndrome in Nigeria is fast hardening into a theory of ethnic exclusiveness and exclusion. Nonetheless, apart from being a constitutive of inter-group politics, ethnicity also has transformative tendencies, which could produce conflict as well as

cooperative outcomes (Du Plessis, 2001). Despite the widespread of violence of varying degrees in Nigerian urban settings owing to tense conflictual relations between indigenes and settlers, a few urban social spaces have been uniquely marked by a history of productive inter-ethnic relations (cooperation and coexistence) between the diverse groups in the area.

This paper explores the historical sociology of inter-ethnic (indigene – settler) relations in Enugu city, Southeastern Nigeria since the end of the civil war up to 2003. The idea is to identify, interrogate and explain the factors responsible for harmony, cooperation and coexistence in inter-ethnic relations between the Igbo and their 'settler-visitors' in the city, and to underline the significances of their experiences in ethnic conflict management. This is even more significant in the post-civil war period, due to the negative effects of that conflict on ethnic relations in the country, especially between the Igbo and the settler-visitors.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out in Enugu, the city-capital of Enugu State, Southeastern Nigeria. Enugu city has been a major and well-known urban, coal-mining and commercial centre since its foundation in 1915. "Enugu", which means "Hill Top" (or "top of the hill") indicates the topography of the city – about 763 feet above sea level (MIHA, 1972; Udo, 1981). It is also euphemistically referred to as the "Coal City" due to the significance of Coal for the city's foundation and development. Enugu was the administrative headquarters of the Southern Provinces in 1929, and that of the short-lived and defunct secessionist state of the Republic of Biafra (1967-1970). Located within about six driving hours from Abuja and seven driving hours from Lagos, the city's economy is largely dominated by trading, commerce, and small-scale industry. Enugu had an estimated total population of about 465,000 in 1991 and a projected estimate of 557,584 in 1996 (NPC, 1991). Greater research attention was focused on the areas of the city where there existed some 'ethnic enclaves' reasonably populated by "non-indigenes" or "settlers".

The time scope of the study is from 1970 to 2003. The Nigerian civil war ended in 1970. That conflict sharpened and reinforced ethnic divisions and mistrust and was, indeed, a significant watershed in the socio-political and conflict history of Nigeria. Its end marked a 'new dawn' in the country's ethnic relations, especially between the Igbo and other ethnic groups. Thus, how the ethnic Igbo of Enugu were able to achieve peaceful coexistence with their visitors, after the 30-month vituperative civil war between them is of significance. On the other hand, 2003 marked the successful end of Nigeria's second civil rule period since the end of the civil war in 1970. It is important to the study because of the significance of the civilian dispensation on ethnic relations after fifteen consecutive years of divisive military dictatorship, which highly polarised Nigerians along ethnic lines.

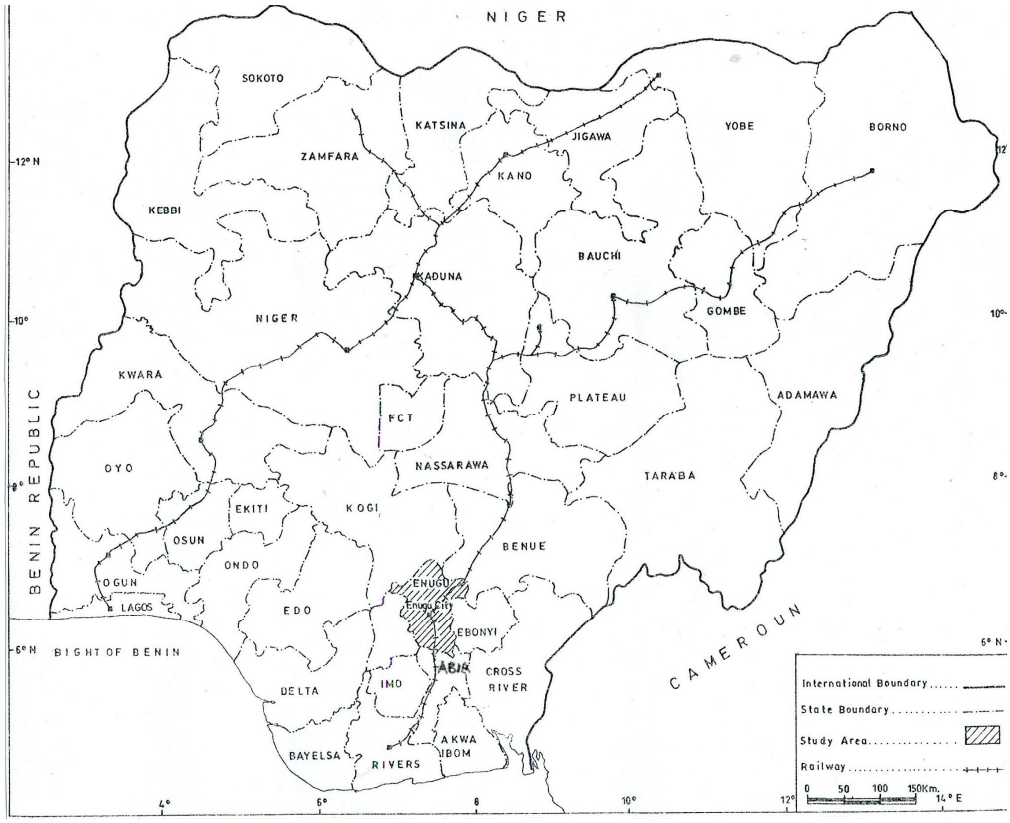

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Enugu state

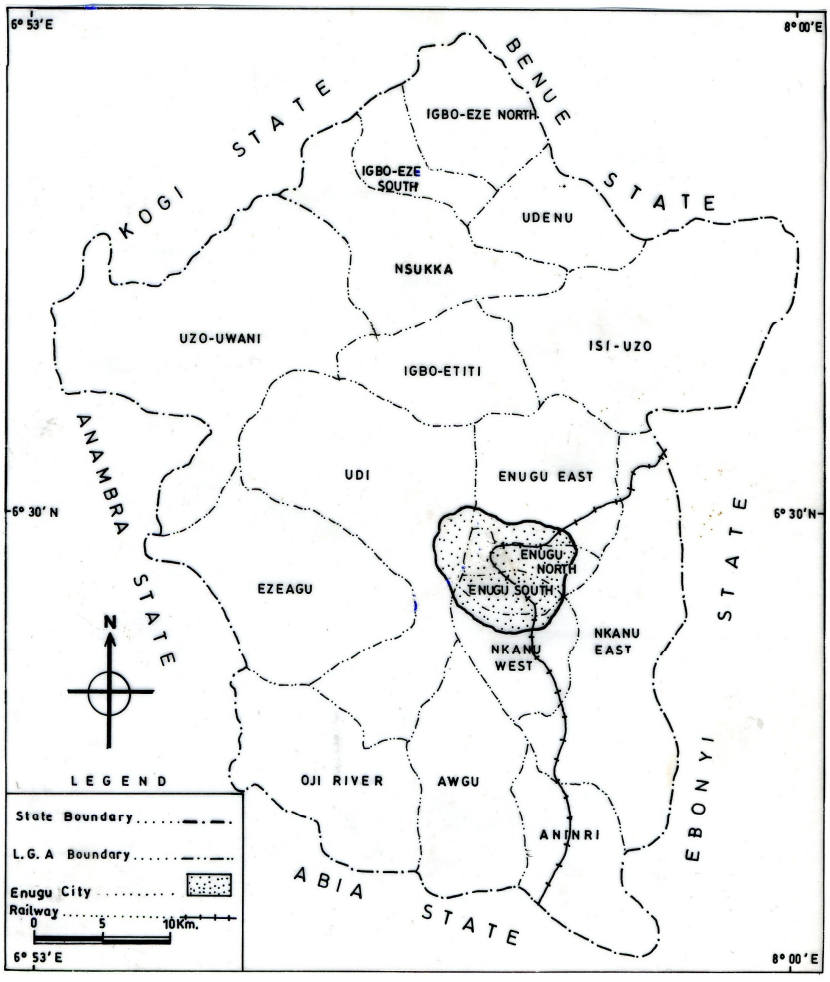

Figure 2: Map of Enugu state showing Enugu city.

Due to the trans-disciplinary nature of this study, an eclectic framework was employed in achieving the set objectives of the study. The adoption of this approach was to eliminate possible shortcomings of a mono-disciplinary method and elicit enough data for the study. Research data were essentially obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included oral interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and archival materials. The study population for the oral interviews and focused group discussions comprised of adults of franchise age in the city. These were held with knowledgeable key-informants and the often marginalised 'ordinary man on the street', whose authentic contributions to history has hitherto been neglected and suppressed. In all, 86 oral interviews and ten FGDs sessions were held. Archival documents on issues related to the concern of this study were collected from the National Archives in Enugu. Some of these materials had more precise, detailed and relevant information on issues which some other sources neglected or did not adequately substantiate. Secondary sources, which included relevant literature (published and unpublished) related to the subject of research, were consulted for this study. These included: books, monographs, journal articles, long essays, dissertations, theses and manuscripts. Furthermore, the Internet was greatly consulted for the purposes of this study.

Data collected via the various methods stated above were collated, interpreted and analysed to meet the objectives of the study. All information given in languages other than English (for example, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, etc) were carefully translated before transcription into English language. The transcriptions were reviewed by a competent third person to avoid biases and alterations in content, context and meaning. This study employed a descriptive model in qualitative manual content analysis. The personal and group interviews were synthesised into the study and served as mutual validation instruments. Significant statements were quoted verbatim to corroborate or refute important findings. This approach, using this *repertoire* of methods, was geared towards adequately recording the nature as well as the context and contents of ethnic relations, thus ensuring that the three basic purposes of this study – exploration, description and explanation (of ethnic cooperation and harmony in Enugu city) – were properly articulated.

The Foundation and Peopling of Enugu

Without a doubt, Africa has a long history of voluntary demographic mobility, both regionally and internationally, even long before this type of human traffic became a part of the historical record. Linked with factors as diverse as long-distance trade, the search for pasture, urbanisation and the growth of administrative centres, the demands of mining, industrial production and plantation agriculture, land degradation, drought and rural poverty, and so on, migration has played a major part in shaping settlement patterns around the globe. As Shack (1979:39) notes, "Africa is replete with examples of individuals and groups … of occupational

specialist in societies other than their own." These "strangers" came one day and were gone the next. Some, however, remained. The pre-colonial Igboland region was not an exception to this situation.

Hair (1954:3) reports of the pre-colonial presence of such settled communities of aliens in the area of study:

> *Before the coming of the white man, major trade in the city was in the hands of two groups of 'foreigners'. The Aros, a branch of the Ibo tribe* [sic] *from Arochukwu in the south, and the Hausa from Northern Nigeria. While the Aros dealt mainly and controlled the trade in slaves, the Hausa however dealt mainly in horses, which were in demand in Iboland* [sic] *for ritual sacrifices.*

However, no attention was paid to these migrations and their significances to societal development and human relations, probably because the population of the migrants was insignificant and the area was of no locational importance at the time.

The rise of Enugu as a modern city began with the active penetration of the area that later became Nigeria by the British colonialists in the first quarter of the twentieth century. A "Mineral Survey" was instituted in 1903, under the auspices and direction of the Imperial Institute, London, to explore the mineral resources of southern Nigeria (*Imperial Institute*, 1941:36; Akpala, 1965:241). This was the first geological enterprise in this area (Akpala, 1965) and particularly explored for silver and other valued mineral (MIHA, 1972; Hair, 1954). In 1909, an "accidental discovery" of real sub-bituminous coal was made in Udi and Okoga areas, and when the survey ended in 1913, it was definitely confirmed that extensive deposits, in commercial quantities, of reach seam of coal were in existence in the Udi Ridge axis, east of Ngwo village (*The Mining Magazine*, 1917:45). Indeed, Enugu owes its origins to this 1909 "discovery" by a geological exploration team led by Mr. Albert Ernest Kitson, a British mining engineer and scientist (PPV, 1966; Hair, 1954).

Prior to the time of 'discovery', Hair (1954:284) suggests that no real human life and/or activities existed or were noticed in this area:

> *If a person had been standing on top of Milliken Hill ... in the year 1900, he would have had good reason to doubt that a township of about 140,000 could ever find a home below. Before him to the east and south lay a plain, 500 feet below the ridge top, intersected by small streams. The smoke rising from the tiny village of Ogui-Nike, an off-shoot of the Nike Community, was the only visible sign that human life existed.*

This claim is, however, contestable. Indeed, it is as doubtful as it is entirely Eurocentric. It resonates such claims of the Whiteman being the "founder" and/or "discoverer" of almost all things in Africa, even when the indigenous populations had had contact and usage of such things

centuries before the coming of the Whiteman. Thus, that people lived away from their farmlands does not strictly translate to the land having "no real human life or activities" as Hair (1954) declares. The African saying that "the village is our city" underlines the fact that parameters for judging standards for social spaces are not the same the world over. Ogbuagu's (1961:241) account buttresses this point and reports that human life and activities did, indeed, exist in the area and further refutes the finding of coal in the area as both "accidental" and a "discovery":

> *Hitherto, very little was known of this piece of land. The people of the little town of Ngwo on the edge of the escarpment of the Udi ridge went down the slope of the hill to fetch drinking-water. The bed of the streams instead of white sand and smooth gravels, carried a mass of hard black rock – rock that was of no value to the people themselves.*

In other words, the European would have defined the social space and its physical endowments differently based on his standards and what he, probably wanted people to believe.

The coal deposits Mr. Kitson and his team 'met' in the area in 1909 was later to stimulate development there and transform it into the only significant coal mining district in West Africa (PPV, 1966). About five years after Mr. Kitson communicated what he 'met' in the area to his superiors in England (probably, sometime in late 1914 or early 1915), Mr. W.J. Leck, in the company of a few other whites and some indigenous peoples, came to stay. The indigenous peoples came from Onitsha as labourers and were led by a certain Alfred Inoma. In early 1915, the colonial government began talks with the indigenes (owners of the lands which later became Enugu) on the acquisition of lands. These were for the colliery, the railways and the development of a large part of what has become the Enugu Township (Akpala, 1965:336).

With the conclusion of land acquisitions, at least to the colonial government's satisfaction, Mr. Leck and his white assistants (a few White colleagues) made their first home in temporary "bush-housing" – European/colonial synonyms for Igbo traditional mud-houses – on the top of the Milliken Hill ridge. Alfred Inoma and the indigenous labourers, on the other hand, established their own settlement of a range of mud-houses on a spur 200 feet up the ridge. Perched like a castle on the steep hillside, this famous little settlement was known as "Alfred's Camp", after the group's leader (Hair, 1954:1). Another source, Ikejiofor (2004), however, has the name of the later settlement as "*Ugwu* Alfred" (which means 'Alfred's Hill'), evidently in reference to its location on the hill. Nonetheless, as at the time of fieldwork, this settlement was known as "Alfred's Camp", while the hill on which it sits was called "*Ugwu* Alfred". Both settlements were the very first set of houses to be set up in what is today known as Enugu city. Thus, to Mr. Leck, Under-manager and subsequently, Manager of Enugu Colliery – who lived uninterruptedly in the town from 1914 to 1942 (except for periods of his leave) (Hair, 1954) – and Mr. Alfred Inoma, and their teams of both Europeans and indigenous peoples, must go the honour of being the first permanent

inhabitants and, indeed, ‘founders’ of the new labour settlement, which eventually metamorphosed into the present-day Enugu city.

Coal mining started in the area by mid 1915 and the need for a transportation outlet for the evacuation of the mined coal was felt as soon as work began in earnest in the colliery. Thus, by mid-1915, a railway line linking Enugu with the coast at what later became Port Harcourt was begun from the latter’s end, and was completed by late 1915. A significant point to note about the development of Enugu’s coal and railway industries is that they were colonial projects. Again, they were being developed immediately after the period when the northern and southern protectorates were being amalgamated into one entity called Nigeria. Thus, the colonialists necessarily employed Nigerians from a diversity of ethnic groups for work in these industries. In other words, though, as a new colonial station, Enugu was intended primarily for white officials, and if need be, a few indigenous labourers (Hair, 1954), the pressing need for labour and services in both the colliery and the railway made the new town to witness an unprecedented migration of peoples from diverse ethnic origins and occupational backgrounds. Over time, Enugu town widened in scope and became more accommodating to people from far and near (ESDIC, 1993) due to its alluring pull factors. This dramatic upsurge in the town’s population meant the gradual development of a permanent cosmopolitan and multi-cultural society from the city’s founding in 1915 to the mid 1960s.

From 1966, the town’s astronomical population growth was drastically halted. This was due to some serious political crises the country started witnessing and which forced people to ‘move’ in a manner never known in the history of the country. As the crises crystallised into a warfare which pitched mainly ethnic Igbo against the Nigerian State, non-Igbo settlers in Enugu city, nay other towns of the then Eastern Region, fled to safer abodes, usually to towns and cities in their home regions. Similarly, Igbo immigrants to northern and western cities and towns in the country trouped back to Igboland. In this case, Enugu town was, naturally, the preferred choice destination. The civil war which followed the crises also meant unsteady and unregulated migrations into and out of Enugu – a situation which continued until the end of the war in 1970.

From 1970, Enugu town witnessed yet another round of dramatic migration. This was mainly by dislodged peoples wanting to gain back a life after the dislocating civil war. Though this movement naturally involved Nigerians from diverse ethnic groups, this trend was noted as being largely an Igbo affair (Udo, 1981). The reasons for this are not farfetched: the exigencies of the civil war had poisoned ethnic relations between the Igbo and ‘the others’, who were thus reluctant to venture into the post-civil war Igbo homeland. Again, the two industries on which the town thrived – the colliery and the railway – literarily died out, while other industrial outfits introduced in the city failed. These made migration into Enugu town very unattractive for many non-Igbo

migrants. Consequently, over time Enugu became largely a 'civil servant city', especially from the 1970s upwards.

Ethnic Provenance of Enugu's Migrants

Right from its inception, Enugu city tended to be communally heterogeneous, but the bulk of its population all through time has necessarily been drawn from Igboland. The Igbo naturally responded enthusiastically to the new economic opportunities and alluring fascinations offered by the new city more than any other group (Wolpe, 1974:25-26). They, more than any other group, found it easier, more accommodating and expedient to migrate to Enugu city for obvious reasons: same language and traditions, similar climatic conditions, thus better prospects. Apart from the Igbo, the next significant group in Enugu has always been the Hausa, together with their close associates, the Fulani (Okwudiba Nnoli, 2005:PC). The Yoruba were also quite significant. Members of other ethnic minorities, especially from Nigeria's Middle belt and Niger Delta regions, were equally represented in the city, though not in any substantial numbers.

In 1929, ethnic groups (according to regions) in Enugu town were represented in the following proportions:

> From Northern Nigeria – 2%
>
> From Western Nigeria – 10%
>
> From Eastern Nigeria – 87% (Coastal tribes, such as Calabar, etc. – 2%; Igbo – 85%) (Hair, 1954:3).

Hair (1954:5) also reports that though a 1945 one-man count (the "Dewhurst Census") in Enugu did not inquire into ethnic provenances, such figures (according to regions) were calculated by the Local Authority from tax returns. The results were as follows:

> From Northern Nigeria – 3%
>
> From Western Nigeria – 5%
>
> Form Eastern Nigeria – 91% (coastal tribes – Calabar etc. – 4% Igbo tribes – 63% south Iboland [sic] – Owerri, etc – 24% (Hair, 1954:5).

The next census in Enugu (the 1953 general census) agreed fairly with the 1945 count in finding that 87% of the inhabitants were of Igbo stock, while other regions were represented in the same distributions (Hair, 1954:5).

Ethnic provenance of the city's population in the early post-independence era (up to the later part of 1966) still had the distribution trends stated above as there were no major or radical alterations in this regard. However, this distribution was altered in the crisis and post-war periods, allowing for the settlement of more Igbo people in the city, in a proportion hitherto unknown (Okwudiba Nnoli, 2005:PC). This was largely due to the exigencies of the war. Though the official

figures for each group in the city was not known, as subsequent census exercises in the country de-emphasised the issue of ethnicity, most opinion and community leaders in the city attested to this remarkable shift in ethnic provenances.

Indigene – Settler Relations in Enugu city, 1970-2003

With the end of the civil war, one would have expected that the relations between the Igbo in Enugu city and the other groups who were on the "Federal side" during the war would be anything but good. To the contrary, the reverse was the case: the city has witnessed a history of enduring inter-ethnic relations among the many diverse ethno-cultural groups in the city. This does not mean that issues of conflict and resentment did not occur among the groups' members. But these were carefully managed and handled to have productive ends for the overall benefit of the city and its inhabitants, be they indigenes or settlers. This achievement has, however, not been without enormous challenges for the people.

In the social life of Enugu, ethnic origins were often of great importance in everyday life, though these were, sometimes, not taken into deep consideration. In ordinary conversation, one was often apostrophised as 'Yoruba', 'Bini', 'Igbo', 'Hausa', 'Fulani' and so on, and ethnic origin was frequently cited in describing personality in the city. Similarly, a large proportion of the quips so numerous in conversation between and/or among Enugu residents turned on the qualities and defects attributed to each person by reason of his/her ethnic origin. Though there were no violent conflicts or constant tensions among the ethnic groups in the city, this is not to suggest that there were no moments of upset and provocations among the groups in the city. Indeed, provocations were easily stirred up among the groups by derogatory stereotypes and mindsets about one another.

Responses from members of diverse ethnic groups in the city to questions relating to thoughts about one's group and 'the others' showed that ethnic stereotypes remained very strong. The responses from each group's members were closely similar because they reflected not varying individual experiences, but age-long stereotypes – sometimes disparaging stories, sayings and notions – which have been passed down over the years. Most of these stereotypes about 'the other' were found to be historically inaccurate, but have been kept 'alive' over the years and moved on to different generations like oral traditions. Similarly, each ethnic group member interviewed had a belief in the intrinsic superiority of his/her own group over others. This is not surprising. As Byaruhanga (1999) observes, it is assumed by the members of an ethnic group that their values, achievements, goals, organisation or even physical structures are better, while at the same time holding others' ethnic qualities to be inferior and not to be preferred. This sometimes informs the dislike (or hatred in some extreme cases) and contempt for the other group(s), and is the root of prejudices, and eventually, stereotypes.

Generally, it was also observed that the non-Igbo ethnic groups were somewhat less critical of one another, as though their aggressiveness was essentially crystalised around the Igbo. This could be as a result of the over-bearing Igbo dominance in almost all affairs in Enugu city, which could have made the other groups more critical of them, while being lenient to one another. Another point to note is the effect of religion on ethnic relations in the city. As has been observed elsewhere, "religious unity causes ethnic differences to disappear" (UNESCO, 1974: 99). In Enugu city, Islam, in particular, weakened the spate of ethnic antagonism among the Hausa, the Fulani and most of the Yoruba settlers. Similarly, marriages between people of these ethnic groups, unlike with the Igbo, were all the easier since Islam included them all.

In terms of ethnic violence, there had been very few instances of aggression, and one major case of overt violence in the city since 1970. That major case of violence occurred in 2003 at the "Artisan Market". Surprisingly, it was one in which a Hausa man (a settler) killed an Igbo man (an indigene). As one would ordinarily expect, violence by the Igbo against the Hausa was to ensue, but for the timely intervention of the state and the social networks of the ethnic associations, whose members were affected (Baba Ali; Haruna Sule; Okwudiba Nnoli, 2005:PC). Indeed, there were other intermittent, but not too frequent cases of deep and bitter conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and local farmers within the outskirts of the city. None of these, however, resulted in hostilities, as they were also readily settled amicably by the authorities and networks of the ethnic associations affected (Umar Sambo; Yesuf Sambo, 2005:PC).

In all, despite the challenges of interrelations that confronted indigenes and settlers in the city, they learnt to, and did coexist and cooperate in many spheres of endeavour. Almost all the respondents, including settlers in the city, attested to the positive inter-ethnic relations between the two segments. These candid expressions by one of the groups' leaders are revealing, illuminating and representative of the general opinion of the city's diverse residents:

> *We do not have any problems with the people* [hosts] *except minor issues…We all work together; whether Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani or Hausa... We attend each other's festivals and occasions when invited. We also intermarry… We monitor situations closely and manage conflicts that arise. They* [indigenes] *have their leaders who are committed to peace, so we work hand-in-hand with them to ensure peace in the town…If there is any kind of problem* [with one of us]*, they* [the indigenes] *come to us to report the problem and we call our people to order, and vice-versa. Since I came back here in 1970 till date, there has never been any case of violence between us* [settlers] *and the hosts, or any other group. We are very happy with the situation here in Enugu* (Baba Ali, 2005:PC).

In summary, this is not to say that inter-ethnic conflicts did not exist in Enugu city within the period of study. However, the point to note here is that the residents went out of their ways in order to maintain peaceful coexistence among themselves, despite all conflicts, tensions and

provocations. In essence, the settlers lived, worked, shared, celebrated, mourned and progressed in common with their Igbo hosts. This could be better understood against the backdrop of the Igbo traditional liking for social exclusiveness, which is based on their village-oriented political institutions, but which, uncharacteristically, did not adversely affect the indigene – settler relations in Enugu city. More significant, though, is the achievement of this feat of ethnic harmony and peaceful coexistence in the city's post-civil war periods, due to the negative effects of such ethnic-based violent strives on social relations.

Ethnic Harmony in Enugu city: Some Explanations

The question, thus, is: What are the factors responsible for Enugu's remarkable history of enduring peace since the end of the civil war? Some factors were identified and explained. They are here discussed.

Insignificant number of immigrants/settlers/non-indigenes

The number of non-Igbo immigrants in post-civil war Enugu city was very 'insignificant' to warrant the feeling of socio-economic threat or dominance of the Igbo hosts. This fact removes the desire by the host to discriminate against or victimise the settlers, since they (the settlers) do not really pose a problem due to their sheer number. This 'insignificant immigrants' situation in the city was particularly so because of two basic factors. The first was the 'dying out' of the colliery and the railways – the two most important establishments on which the city was founded and thrived – leading to the city's loss of locational importance. This sudden dwindling status of Enugu city made it seemingly 'unattractive' to immigrants (Okwudiba Nnoli, 2005:PC). The second factor was the aftermath of the civil war experiences, which had very negative effects on the city and its social relations. Non-Igbo immigrants were weary of further migrations to Enugu, not only because of the earlier noted factor, but also due to the strained relations between the Igbo (the hosts in the city) and other ethnic groups in the country (Haruna Sule, 2005:PC). Further buttressing this point, Abubarkar Sadiq (2005:PC) notes:

> *The relationship between us* [indigenes and settlers] *since after the civil war has not been the same. Not that it is not cordial, but it has not been as cordial as it used to be then* [before the civil war]. *The issue is that there have been lots of differences…simply because of the war. …This* [the war] *was the problem that brought about changes in our relationship with the indigenes. And this is very regrettable.*

Okwudiba Nnoli (2005:PC) also notes:

> *The* [Enugu city's] *borders are continually 'freezing up' since after the civil war. ...Before the war it used to be more flexible and open. ...when we were younger, there used to be more Hausa and many more Yoruba people* [in Enugu city]. *So it was really a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community we had here then. People were moving back and front at that time. ...But since after the war everything got polarised. People now migrate into the city in lesser numbers, and only do so when it is absolutely necessary…*

Basically, the argument here is that it is, most times, possible to disregard the relative influence and activities of a minority (or minorities) within a given spatial location, as its (or their) numerical strength would not pose a threat to the majority group, or undermine its dominative system. In other words, when the minority/minorities is/are too small and very easy to 'contain', threats of their possible socio-economic dominance of the majority are reduced, and coexistence thus enhanced. Thus, this lack of threats of socio-economic dominance – the key source of livelihood and wealth – by immigrants in Enugu has, thus, been a stabilising factor.

Groups' Trade Specialisations and 'Non-Exclusivist' Competition

The non-exclusivist nature of ethnic group competitions and the near lack of a zero-sum conflict situation among them were also identified as major factors of ethnic harmony in the Enugu polity. These have been made possible due to 'narrow specialisations' in distinct trades along ethnic lines, thus negating the need for destructive trade competitions and exclusivist conflicts. As trade and markets are meeting points for diverse ethnic and social groups, there is strong potential for a range of trade-related issues to lead to conflict. Struggles over trade control and market power, access and space also occur along commodity chains. These are particularly likely to contribute to the sparking or escalating of conflicts where underlying tensions related to structural factors were also present. However, despite the potential for trade to become a locus of conflict, trade specializations along ethnic lines, non-exclusivist market relations and trading relationships have facilitated coexistence and harmony among ethnic groups. These have also helped in the reconciliation of conflicting groups and facilitation of social networks among these groups, on another level. Noting the nature of this trend, Okwudiba Nnoli (2005:PC) asserts that:

> *They* [diverse groups] *seem to have carved out different economic niches for themselves. Each group don't seem to be competing with others in their areas of specialty. For instance, the Igbo and Yoruba don't seem to be competing with the Hausa in the cattle trade and all its smaller units, like the making of "Suya" and all that, you know. And the Hausa, on their part, don't seem to be going into any other businesses that are the area of specialty of the Igbo, and so on.*

Elaborating further on trade specialisations of his people, Haruna Sule (2005:PC) notes thus:

> *The Hausa strictly face their business. The only way we* [Hausa] *could have problems with them* [indigenes] *is by trying to drag things with them. All Hausa people in Enugu do not seek employment in any place. They are all self-employed. Seeking for job is another way whereby conflict will arise…All the products we sell come from the north. So there is no problem with the indigenes. The same goes for the Fulani here in Enugu. There is no competition between us and the indigenes. Not at all.*

Furthermore, without prejudice to other ethnic groups existing in the city, a close survey and examination of the main pre-occupations of the major ethnic groups' members in Enugu (see *Table 1*) lays credence to this fact of group specialisations. These groups' main pre-occupations were derived from the various diverse groups in Enugu city.

Hausa & Fulani	Dealers on live cattle, sheep and goats; meat sellers (including "*Suya*"); dealers on various perishable vegetables (from the north); itinerant traders of assorted items; leather works and sales; house guards and night watchmen; mobile shoemakers; money changers [*Bureau de Change*]; truck/trailer drivers; tailors (mainly of ethnic Hausa and other northern wears); fresh milk hawkers (by maidens); water fetchers (by males).
Igbo	State civil servants (including in parastatals); Federal civil servants (including in parastatals); primary, secondary and tertiary school teachers; workers in corporate establishments (Banks, Multi-nationals, Insurance, etc); general products and produce traders (in markets); motor spare parts dealers; dealers on assorted electronics; builders; taxi drivers; tailors (mainly of ethnic Igbo and general wears); hoteliers and restaurant operators; farmers.
Yoruba	Federal civil servants (including parastatals); workers in corporate establishments (Banks, Multi-nationals, Insurance, etc); 'ethnic Yoruba restaurant' operators; builders; tailors (mainly of ethnic Yoruba wears); computer accessories and allied materials dealers.

Table 1: Groups' pre-occupations and trade specialisations in Enugu city.

Going from *Table 1* above, one could decipher that apart from a few of these ethnic group members, especially the Yoruba that sought and got 'white collar jobs' in the government or corporate establishments, the majority of non-Igbo immigrants in Enugu were self employed. Additionally, those who took up these 'white collar jobs' were still in negligible minority, when compared to the Igbo in the same occupational area. Again, the different group members almost wholly took to businesses that were not often the regular pre-occupation of the Igbo in the city. Indeed, these conditions made for the non-existence of the often divisive and deadly exclusivist competition among the groups in the city. This position is further buttressed by Barth's (1968) observation, that plural societies are most stable and enduring when the ethnic groups existing in them occupy different ecological niches. That is to say, they make their living in different ways and do not compete. Jha's (2007) perspective on economic "complementarity" (gains from exchange) between indigenous and settler groups (or what she calls "locals" and "non-locals") further supports this argument. As Jha (2007) puts it, when ethnic groups provide complementary goods and/or services to one another (rather than competition between the groups), the incentive

for aggression diminishes and peace enhanced. Thus, the greater the inter-group "complementarity", the less incentives for ethnic violence.

In addition to this, the fact that most of Enugu's non-Igbo immigrants, especially the most dominant group [Hausa], did not possess an economic aggressiveness in the pursuit of their affairs in the city. Shack (1979:6) points out that "Economic aggressiveness of strangers … is often responsible for hostility to them by members of their host communities." This has been amply demonstrated by the cases of Igbo economic aggressiveness in Kano (Osaghae, 1994) and Jos (Plotnicov, 1971; 1972; Danfulani, ND). Thus, narrow trade specialisations, and the lack of both exclusiveness and aggressiveness in the pursuit of the economic affairs promoted peaceful inter-ethnic relations, cooperation and coexistence in the city.

Lack of Upward Socio-Economic Mobility among Dominant Settlers

Another factor of peaceful coexistence in Enugu was the visible lack of upward socio-economic mobility among most of the migrants/settlers. This is especially so for those of Hausa extraction. Upward socio-economic mobility among stranger elements (immigrants) in any defined society poses a great threat to the host population (indigenes) of the locality. The resulting wealth inequalities between locals (indigenes) and non-locals (settlers) lead to incentives by strong locals to target non-locals with violence to seize wealth and property (Jha, 2007:4). Again, this has often been the case in many Nigerian urban settings and has. In actual fact, the lack of upward socio-Economic mobility which is often exhibited by the ways of life of these settlers, was alluded to by most of the immigrant respondents for this study. The kind of pre-occupation of, or employment taken up by most immigrants in Enugu city (as could be seen in *Table 1* above) most times accrued meagre profits which does not permit for a show of affluence in the society. Accordingly, therefore, this trend was positively crucial to social stability of ethnic relations in Enugu city.

Roles of Ethnic Associations as elixir in Urban Violence

The roles of well-structured ethnic associations in the organisation and control of their group members in Enugu was also noted as one of the factors of enduring ethnic harmony in the city. Enugu has a plethora of ethnic associations, most of which are efficiently administered. Their contribution towards peace and stability was through their conflict management and peace-building efforts in the city. This is especially so since they are essentially "a response to a conflictual situation", as Eleazu (1977:99) puts it. As a platform used for ensuring the socio-economic and psychological wellbeing of their various members (Osaghae, 1994; Mabogunje, 1976), ethnic associations have a large measure of control and influence on their members. Complaints and petitions against persons of other ethnic groups were well channelled to their ethnic association(s) by aggrieved person/party through his/her (their) own leaders or constituted

authorities. Furthermore, the protagonist in any conflicts is cautioned or punished by his/her ethnic association's leaders, while compensations were collectively discussed, agreed on and duly paid to victims, where necessary. Most of the respondents pointed out that the invitation of the Police into inter-ethnic affairs seldom existed, as these associations were very competent to handle any kind of conflicts affecting them. Haruna Sule (2005:PC) takes important notice of this:

> *If the Fulani (in the bush) have problems where they are, they come to me or their leader* [to report] *and we will send some people to go and find out what the problem is. Or we will invite the people involved through letters. For example, the type of problem they usually have is with their cattle grazing. If the cattle destroy people's farms, they* [the indigenes] *will complain and protest about such things and what we do is to go and meet with the Igwe* [Traditional Ruler] *of the affected people to settle it there outrightly*.

Alhaji Ade Adeyelu (2005:PC) further buttresses this position:

> *Our form of peace committee is this: when we have little conflict, we come together as an association, to meet with the indigenes to settle our differences. That's what we do….Any person who causes a breach of the harmonious co-existence of the members of this city is made to make up for it, irrespective of his tribe* [sic] *or status through just reparation or restitution, depending on the offence committed. This is done here through his or her town union. Every tribal union* [sic] *here does this. And it works for us, as you can see.*

Varshney's (2002) thesis on the roles of civil society social networks in ethnic conflicts readily comes to mind here. According to Olaniyi (2003), ethnic associations and their networks fall into the category of organised civil networks. Hence, the political dynamics by which these ethnic associations mobilised, their social networks, the ends they sought to advance and the means by which they pursued these ends, contributed towards ensuring peaceful coexistence between/among diverse ethnic groups in Enugu city.

Non-Segregated Accommodation Structure

Research has shown that segregated ethnic accommodation, whether self-imposed or brought about by legislation, is a social and cultural context which involves some kind of discrimination in actions and/or practices, and is favourable to marked social distancing, qualification of "others" by means of negative determiners, and ethnic intolerance (Zaharijevski, 2006:37; Adeboye, 2003:304). These show the strongest social resentment, encourages the stressing of negative qualities and the cherishing of negative stereotypes of others. Undeniably, therefore, ethnic housing segregation is related to negative ethnicity and ethnic stereotypes. The system often brought about bad feelings, mutual mistrust, suspicion and resentment, unhealthy competitions, building of stereotypes and sometimes outright hatred of the immigrant or host populations. This residential arrangement has had diverse and deep-rooted implications for ethnic

relations in Nigeria; not only did it enhance conflicts, but also accentuated the differences among diverse groups in societies where they existed. Of course, the results have always been distasteful and undesirable (Bako, 1990; Albert, 1993a/b; Osaghae, 1994; Adeboye, 2003; Olaniyi, 2003).

In respect of Enugu city, immigrants largely lived 'ordinarily' among their hosts, while those who lived in what may be referred to as 'ethnic enclaves' (mainly the Hausa and some Fulani) did so in 'un-segregated neighbourhoods', strictly speaking. Furthermore, these enclaves were located amongst their hosts (the Igbo), and were not separate 'stranger quarters', as was the case elsewhere in the country. Thus, the ills associated with segregated neighbourhoods did not exist. This Enugu's arrangement allayed the palpable suspicion, (and fear) among hosts and strangers of what the other party was up to, or, indeed, planning for them. It also enhanced and encouraged interaction among the different groups and made for the gradual integration of strangers with the host populations, where possible. In other words, this un-segregated accommodation arrangement made for, and was a factor in the achievement of peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic groups in Enugu city.

Igbo Worldview on Strangers and the Influence of Christianity

Igbo worldview on the status and treatment of strangers and the shedding of their blood on Igbo soil is another factor of ethnic harmony in Enugu. This is also intrinsically tied to the fact of the influence of Christianity, the dominant religion in Enugu area, which reinforced this worldview. Of all the breaches of social and cosmic harmony in traditional Igbo society, interrupting human life, whether one's own or another's, is about the most serious. To the Igbo, *life is sacred* and comes only from God. Thus, God alone has the right to interrupt it at any stage. Consequently, the society promotes social harmony among its people and its visitors/settlers, as the spilling of human blood defiles not only the murderer, but also *Àlà*, (the land on which the act was committed) (Amaechi Ofodile, 2005:PC). Furthermore, the Igbo believe that all human beings are children of the same one big God, *Chi-Ukwu*. Thus, among the Igbo, the so-called "stranger", "settler" or "visitor" is sometimes regarded as an 'unknown relative' (Chimezie Ugbaja, 2005:PC). Again, given the Igbo traditional belief that divinities often take human forms to bring some important messages to humankind, the Igbo are generally careful not to harm strangers for fear of unknowingly harming a divinity, with all the consequences that would definitely come in its trail (Amaechi Ofodile, 2005:PC). Based on the foregoing, it seems, therefore, to be a widespread moral norm in Igboland, as elsewhere, that one had to be hospitable to strangers, especially when they came and stayed peacefully.

The Igbo philosophical worldview on strangers could be summarised in the following Igbo aphorisms: "*Ọ bịara nga m, ya abịagbule m*; *Ya lawa, Ọgwụ akpọla ya*" (He who comes to my place, may his coming not kill me; whenever he leaves, may he not encounter obstacles). Another

very popular one says: "*Egbe bere, Ugo bere; nke sị ibe-ya ebela, nku kwa ya*" (Let the Kite perch, let the Eagle perch; any that does not allow the other to perch, let its wings break). And yet in another: "*Ori anụ mmadụ tụọ onwe ya mbọ mara ka osi afụ*" (S/he who eats human flesh should pinch herself/himself and see how painful it is [to harm others]). These time-honoured Igbo philosophies of life, and indeed, largely part of the cherished black African traditional heritage of "Live and let live", essentially recognise the utmost importance of peace and tolerance in all human relations and as important ingredients for any stable political arrangement. They underscore the need for fair play, cooperation and harmony in human dealings, as there is accommodation for everyone. On the other hand, they constrain selfish and unsympathetic relations among diverse peoples (Ndiokwere, 1998:227).

The traditional Igbo worldview has also been further strengthened by the teachings of Christianity. In Christendom, the shedding of human blood, for whatever reason, is condemned. Revenge is also highly discouraged by the religion. Thus, the wilful killing of strangers by the Christian Igbo is totally abhorred by his/her religion, and their capacity to retaliate or revenge is also greatly hampered by the religion. Going against these biblical and Christian injunctions would mean 'departing from Gods presence and his favours,' a much unwanted and detestable condition for the average Christian. One could very much comfortably state that the southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria, the core of Igboland, has been the most peaceful in terms of inter-ethnic relations and the initiation of violence against the other since the end of the civil war. Indeed, cases of wilful initiation of violence against strangers in Igboland are rare, if they exist at all. This situation is rooted in, and reinforced by the worldview and belief on the status and treatment of strangers.

It would be necessary to draw attention here to the cases of reprisals against some northerners in some southeastern towns since 1999 and up to 2003. This act of revenge was due to acute provocation by the killing of the Igbo in the northern parts of the country. These violent reactions notably took place at Umuahia, Aba (Abia State), Owerri and Okigwe (Imo State and led to the killings of some hundreds of northern immigrants in these towns. It is noteworthy, however, that Enugu city, despite its overwhelming northern populations which surpassed by far those of these other towns mentioned, did not erupt in ethnic violence during these tense moments.

State Intervention in inter-ethnic conflicts and Military presence

Since the end of the civil war, inter-ethnic conflicts in Enugu city have been carefully managed by the state government, and those cases considered to be violent-prone outrightly contained. Indeed, any outbreak of open conflict, or seriously publicized discriminatory treatment of strangers on ethnic grounds was treated as a matter of state security (Festus Adedayo, 2005:PC). By the same token, in the only case of violence that occurred in the history of the city since the end of the civil war, the "Artisan Market" brawl of late 2003, the state government, along side the

ethnic associations affected, acted swiftly (Festus Adedayo; Okwudiba Nnoli; Musa Abubarkar Sadiq, 2005:PC). The quick intervention of these stakeholders in this matter saw the averting of imminent violence, which would have mainly targeted the Hausa and Fulani settlers in the city (Ade Adeyelu; Haruna Sule; Okwudiba Nnoli, 2005:PC). This view, one of the many such opinions given, vividly captures this general perception:

> *...our safety in this place* [Enugu city] *is partly because of the concern and intervention of the government in Enugu State. Since this governor came to power, he has always taken our safety as of paramount concern, you understand? His agents and assistants come regularly to make sure we are safe. You see? This is also the way it has been since I came here in 1971, that is, after the* [civil] *war... Any time we got into problems with the indigenes, they would come to settle the problem fast... I still remember the one at "Artisan market", when an Hausa man killed an Igbo man. Then the governor tried by all means to secure the Hausas* [sic] *and other tribes* [sic] *to avoid any killings from the people of the state* [the Igbo]. *This is unlike what our brothers in some other Igbo towns witness... Even when there is problem in the north, like in Kano or Bauchi, they always reassure us of our safety ...and protect us* (Nura Baba, 2005:PC).

Another factor of social stability in Enugu city, though not popularly alluded to, or corroborated by respondents, was the presence of the military in the town. Indeed, the present researcher finds it plausible to argue so. The military estate was established in Enugu town in 1933. As of the period between 1933 and 1967 when the civil war broke out, the population of ethnic Igbo members of this estate was appreciably high when compared with those of other major ethnic groups in the country. However, the fortunes of the Igbo in the military were negatively altered with their defeat in the civil war, as the post-civil war government policies ensured their systematic marginalisation in the military. This situation inadvertently led to the overwhelming dominance of the military by northerners, especially the Hausa and Fulani people. The resultant effect has been the over concentration of northerners in every military facility across the country, including the various army outposts in Enugu city. This imbalance has grave implications for conflictual ethnic relations in the city. The bias of this outfit in conflict situations cannot be in great doubt, taking into cognisance its configuration and ethnic provenances, especially so as the military has often been indicted for complicity in ethnic conflicts.

The argument here is: the realisation of the fact of such imbalances and the likelihood of bias by the army in conflict situations especially when the Hausa and Fulani were affected/attaked, might have been a source of caution to Igbo indigenes in Enugu city. Memories of such 'punitive expeditions' by the army in very recent times would only reinforce this caution. Such army campaigns in places like Odi (Bayelsa state) in November 1999 and Zakibiam and Gbagi (Benue state) in October 2001, were still very fresh and distasteful. Of course, no sane society would not want to be caught up in the imminent military debacle, should the situation arise. Thus, the mere

existence of the army estate in Enugu city, which was heavily dominated by northerners, was a notable factor of harmonious inter-ethnic relations in the city. This is not so much for what the army 'should stand for' in times of ethnic violence in the city, but because of their complicity, bias and pedigree in such situations, as seen elsewhere in the country.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is important that action is taken now to implant the lessons of historic coexistence in the emerging generations of Nigerian citizens. Focus in this direction should be on cooperation and peaceful ethnic relations among different groups in the country. This presupposes a re-direction of research interests by scholars on the country's ethnic relations. Rather than the present preoccupation of researchers which tends to study only violence between/among groups in the country, attention should also be refocused on the investigation of the few examples of productive cooperative relations between diverse groups in the country. Lessons from such relations could be the needed spark for new productive interrelations among diverse groups' future generations. Again, this will go a long way in unearthing most of the factors that had hitherto constituted 'missing links' in this field of research endeavour, and would very much advance the fortunes of this field, more especially in terms of contributing towards policy formulation.

Since the 'settler problem' in Nigeria is an issue that must be confronted head-on, it is imperative that government, and indeed the non-governmental sector, pay adequate attention to issues of ethnicity and ethnic studies in the country. Not only are these growing areas of research interests the world over, but they must be seen as 'unavoidable site maps' for the proper understanding of the problems of ethnic conflicts, and the fight to end ethnic violence in the country. The lack of interest in these areas have always shown itself in various disturbing ways, the most significant being the absence of reliable and adequate information on the number of ethnic groups and the numerical strength of each group in the country. This is, in reality, representative of the poor nature of the management of ethnic relations in the country (Agbese's (2001).

Nigerian government (at all levels), and ethnic community leaders and associations should fashion out an integrated approach that would aim at fighting the scourge of ethnic violence in the country. This must begin with a proper reconstruction of the country's history and the fixing of its constitutional inadequacies, especially with regards to the "indigene – settler dichotomy". The constitution should not deny ethnic identity, but should combat ethnic discriminations and provide a variety of institutions to assist individuals in fighting this discrimination. Indeed, all citizens of Nigeria, irrespective of ethnic origin or place of domicile, must be granted full citizenship rights which must also be protected and enforceable by the law. The handling of ethnic violence with 'kid gloves' and levity over the years has been one major factor responsible for its intractability and continued prevalence in areas prone to such. Indeed, one cannot deny the complicity of the

State in most of such ethnic violence, which mortgages its conscience and will to tackle them. Reference should be made here of the ethnic wide fires that had almost become an annual ritual in parts of northern Nigeria since the end of the civil war. In all these, rioters were not brought to book nor was justice believed or seen to have been done. This shows the lack of will on the part of the State to deal with the issues and cross issues of ethnic violence in the country. In other words, the punishment of ethnic rioters by the State must be encouraged.

Enugu's case might not be a very perfect example of ethnic harmony and coexistence. It is, all the same, good enough for reference purposes. It proves that, though conflicts are ubiquitous in plural societies, their constructive management could be functional, rather than dysfunctional. This achievement of peaceful ethnic relations in the city has been, to say the list, remarkable and significant. This was not only due to its comparative dimensions, but also because of the nature of the reasons for the existence of such an atmosphere in that city. These have been diverse, simple and engagingly novel. In all these, however, one underlying factor had been the earnest will and desire of members of the diverse groups, sometimes broken down into two – "indigenes" and "settlers" – to coexist and cooperate, and contain their differences and conflicts without recourse to violence. Without the said 'will and desire', ethnic relations in the city, like those of most other Nigerian cities, would have been violent, despite the discussed diverse factors.

Enugu still faces some major challenges in terms of ethnic relations. Despite the optimism in productive ethnic relations, one should note that potential complications could emanate from different fronts. One main area of concern is the spate of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, which must be carefully stemmed. Already, some Igbo urban areas have started reacting violently to such riots up north, introducing another dangerous dimension – "reprisal killings" – to the already volatile inter-ethnic situation in the country. Though Enugu city has not so far reacted in such a manner, its patience should not be tried any further, especially as it is very strategic to both the Igbo and ethnic relations in Igboland. These intermittent violent conflicts in which their 'relations' get killed, if not stemmed, could compromise the city's tradition of ethnic tolerance and good will. These hard facts must have to be borne in mind constantly and consciously.

Finally, the indigene – settler relations is one of the commonest forms of ethnicity exhibited in Nigeria. That ethnicity is one of the country's most critical issues in national development is a truism which has also shown itself through historical times. Apart from being constitutive of inter-ethnic group politics, ethnicity also has a transformative power, which could produce conflict as well as cooperative outcomes, depending on utilisation. Although it manifests in various concrete and abstract forms, its true significance lies in the fact that it impacts on events and relations on a spectrum ranging between hostility and symbiosis (Du Plessis, 2001:19). This duality of negative and positive ethnicity is evident in different societies. Hence, if not properly

and constructively managed, it could lead to disastrous violent consequences. Its proper moderation and constructive channelling, on the other hand, can transform conflict into cooperation and peaceful coexistence. In the case of Enugu within the period of study, this was on the positive side – extensively rewarding and beneficial to both the indigenes and settlers.

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