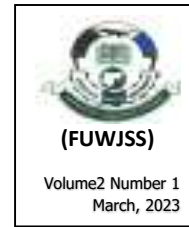


# INDIGENOUS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the impact of utilizing indigenous cultural diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution in Abia State, Nigeria. In recent times, there have been devastating conflicts in south-east Nigeria, including Abia State, where there is heightened insecurity. This paper therefore examines how indigenous cultural diplomacy is appropriated as an active change agent and neutralizer that proffer adequate solutions in conflictual contexts. The paper reviewed secondary data sources. The findings of the paper established that the essence of dispute settlement and conflict resolution in traditional Abia societies includes the removal of the root-cause of the conflict, reconciliation of the conflicting parties, preserving and ensuring harmony, and bringing about a win-win situation to the conflicting parties. The paper concludes that indigenous conflict resolution systems in Abia State are process-oriented, victim-centred and they apply persuasive and reintegrative principles in adjudicating disputes. The paper therefore recommends that conflict resolution strategies for sustainable development in Nigeria should always seek to get into the root causes of conflicts.

**Keywords:** Cultural diplomacy, sustainable development, conflict resolution, insecurity

## **Introduction**

Conflict is inevitable in human society. Conflict can be violent or non-violent. Violent conflict is potentially destructive because it features actions that can harm life and property. Our attention in this study focuses on devastating conflicts that threaten people's security, peace and development, especially in Abia State. Conflicts are contests over value, status claims, power, and scarce resources, where the goal of opposing parties is not only to acquire or extract value, but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals (Onwuka, 2004). Every society has its own method of resolving conflict. Ademowo (2015) argues that traditional methods of conflict resolution in African societies have been

mediation, decision-making, reconciliation and negotiation. These methods sometimes included extrajudicial means such as deities, curses or spells to persuade or convince the disputants of the implications of their actions (Ademowo, 2015). Ajayi & Buhari (2014) found that traditional dispute resolution techniques used in the past, such as mediation, reconciliation, negotiation and cross-examination were more beneficial to peaceful coexistence and harmony in post-colonial times than modern methods.

Dispute resolution methods in Abia State enable the traditional institutions such as Ezes, councils of elders, age grades, title holders etc interact with the parties involved, facilitate consensus building, rebuild social bridges and establish order in societies (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014). The major conflict resolution strategy in Abia State despite variations from one community to another include mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, negotiation, cross examination, oath-taking, peace-treaty and cleansing rituals (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Ademowo, 2015) but the law enforcement agents, traditional police, and courts were responsible for ensuring compliance with laws of the land (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014). The disputants often take their cases to elders and neighborhood mediators who can be trusted to manage conflicts with dispatch in local language, using familiar standards of behaviour. In Igbo society particularly in Abia State, the traditional institutions for conflict management include: the family, Amala (council of elders), Okpara system (eldest male), Umunna (clan), Umuada (female born in a town but married out), age grades, Ohanaeze (assembly of the people and the king), hunters' association, and Agbara (local deities or oracles) (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014), still in some communities in the state, the Eze and chiefs, the Ekpo Union (masquerade cults) are inclusive.

It seems however, that the traditional practices in conflict resolution have been relegated to the background lately resulting in the news of social disorder heard from many communities in Abia State today. This is the reason Akinwale (2010) holds the views that the politics of conflict management is expected to connect with the predominant traditions of a society and that the official adoption of traditional measures of conflict resolution is capable of promoting the peace and development in Nigeria and also reduce the overloaded western judicial system. Methods used to resolve disputes in many communities in Abia state include excommunication, fines, negotiation, mediation and traditional (wrestling, purification rituals). For example, according to Onwuka (2004), masquerade (Mmanwu) in the Abia state is used to punish serious crimes such as theft with severe negative sanctions such as excommunication and payment of fines, in respect of certain amounts of

goats, wine. Indeed, a key fact in conflict resolution in Abia State is the use of cultural diplomacy, which is widely practiced throughout the state. According to Wusu & Isiugo-Abanihe (2006), people in Abia state take advantage of family structures. Wusu & Isiugo-Abanihe (2006) further hold that the traditional child-rearing practices in the state as well as other parts of Igbo land used to be a communal affair within the context of the extended family system or lineage, and the cost of raising children were never borne solely by biological parents. This is invariably the major way of inculcating conflict management lifestyle because any child that is well brought up in such society will have the mentality that he is indebted to such societies. All those have changed today because of western civilization. That is why Arowolo (2010) holds the view that western civilization and culture has precariously contaminated the traditional values of conflict resolution. It is important to stress that western civilization distorted and retarded the pace and tempo of cultural growth in Abia State (Ohiochoya, 2008). One of the most profound consequences of civilization has been an unbridgeable cultural gap between western nations and African countries. Arowolo (2010) is of the view that with the introduction of Western culture and European mode of civilization to Africa, there is slow pace of growth in African cultural heritage. Traditional African cultural strategies of conflict management were simple, swift and unambiguous until Africans became fully 'westernized'. Western culture now is regarded as a frontline civilization. African ways of doing things became 'primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable' in the public domain.

Garba and Umar (2017) hold that the power of the traditional institutions was negatively affected by the 1976 local government reforms and enormous powers were given to local governments instead of traditional institutions and as such these traditional institutions need to be strengthened through constitutional amendments. Apart from this, western civilization and culture seem to have seriously contaminated the traditional values of Africa (Arowolo, 2010). However, the impact of utilizing indigenous cultural diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution in Africa and Nigeria in particular is well recognized. Hence, this paper examines how indigenous cultural diplomacy can be appropriated to proffer adequate solutions in conflictual contexts within Abia State, Nigeria.

### **The Etymology of Conflict**

Etymologically, the word conflict was derived from a Latin word called *confligere*, which means to clash or to engage in a fight or a battle over certain things, goals, or values. It is a battle between or among

individuals and groups of individuals, due to perceived incompatible goals (Best, 2004). This means a conflict between one or more parties seeking to achieve incompatible or competing means or ends. The concept of conflict and the need to resolve it cannot be overemphasized. It is a challenge to peace and security in the international system. Conflict is a disagreement, quarrel, fight, violence, terrorism and any act targeted at causing pain, hardship and unpleasantness in the society. According to Coser (1956), conflict is the struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aim of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values but to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals. Conflict emerges when parties compete over perceived or actual goals, values, or interests. Thus, it occurs when the contenders confront one another with opposing actions and counter-actions. Sometimes, conflict serves as an indicator of change or the need for change. It is an interaction that aims at beating or defeating opponents. Weeks (1994) enthused that conflict is an outgrowth of the diversity that characterizes our thoughts, our attitudes, our beliefs, our perception, and our social systems and structures. It is as much a part of our existence as its evolution. In the same vein, Maoz (1982) asserts that conflict is a stage of incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realised only at the expense of some other values. Specifically, conflict has been ignorantly seen as a negative factor or an issue that needs to be avoided or ignored, which is a typically wrong perception. Rather, the context in which it occurs needs to be considered because conflict can also bring progress, development and mutual understanding, if it is managed constructively or positively.

Interestingly, Dokun (2005) argued that in the Chinese language conflict means an opportunity or chance for change as well as “risk of danger”. In essence, to the Chinese, conflict is neither positive nor negative, it is the response to the conflict that determines its outcome. The background or context, attitudes, perceptions and environment among other things influence the response to conflict situations. The people with negative connotations of conflict tend to handle conflict in a destructive way. Otherwise, having a positive attitude to the conflict situation helps in managing it constructively, and in such a way that it yields positive results like development, change, friendship, improvement, communication, progress, peace and love. More importantly, the costliest peace is cheaper than the cheapest wars; the differences in man’s nature otherwise make conflict an inevitable phenomenon and a recurrent fact of life. Conflict, although good, can be bad. In Nigeria, conflict is seen as a negative phenomenon and as such

it is treated with a regimented mentality of crushing and destruction. The Niger-Delta militancy that was transformed from conflict to dialogue would have resulted in the grounding of the economy of the nation if it was allowed to fester. Conflict is a problem that exists in every society. For Nye & Welch (2009) it represents all aspects of our social life. But whether it poses a threat to security or a challenge to peace depends on how it is treated. Park and Burgess (2019) define it simply as a struggle for status, whereas Mack and Snyder (2000) define it as a struggle not only for status, but for scarce resources and important social change. Samuels (2007) wonders whether groups responsible for political violence to effect changes in government should be considered as legitimate actors or mere criminals. He queries the legal basis of such acts, wondering if its legality depends on the primary motivations for the act. Samuels also wonders if it should be considered a legitimate action, if a group representing a community starts a campaign of political violence due to its lack of access to political and economic power. He postulates some thoughtful questions; asking whether a group using violent acts to resist authoritarian regimes should be seen as legitimate and who is authorized to decide such issues.

Bartos & Wehr (2002) define conflict as a situation in which actors use conflict behaviour against each other to attain incompatible goals expressed in hostilities. This explains the fact that conflict occurs as a result of incompatible goals between disputants and this can involve ethnic related issues, marginalization, underdevelopment due to mismanaged resources and uneven distribution of resources. When conflict occurs it can be between individuals in a society, ethnic groups or States. When conflict comprise of different incompatible goals, it is susceptible to increase of hostilities.

### **Conflict Resolution Strategies in Pre-colonial Africa**

In the traditional African society, conflict may generally exist whenever or wherever incompatible events occurred and may result in —win-lose character. The resolution, transformation and management of conflict may however produce win-win situations too. Truth is a covenant logo that disputants or parties in conflict must not miss. In contemporary African society, nobody cares about the truth. If Africans have to put the falling apart together, her original values must be revisited. Conflict is as natural as the concept of peace contrary to the global or universal conception. Africans have particular ways of conceptualizing conflict. Traditional definitions of conflict regard it as —a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate

their rivals (Onigun Otite & Albert, 2001). However, conflict may generally exist wherever or whenever incompatible activities occur and may result in —win-lose character. The resolution, transformation and management of conflict may also produce a win-win situation.

Bercovitch (2005) argues that the purpose of conflict resolution, whether undertaken by the parties in conflict or whether involving the intervention of an outside party, is to affect the entire structure of a conflict situation so as to contain the destructive components in the conflict process (e.g. hostility, use of violence) and help the parties possessing incompatible goals to find some solution to their conflict. It is based on this that he submits that effective conflict management succeeds in minimizing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict, and providing a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable.

Fisher (2000) asserts that apart from conflict resolution being a means of handling conflicts, maintaining peace and promoting security, there are other forms in which conflicts can be handled either at an early state or at a crisis level. Conflict resolution is more or less the last form of action in ensuring security, because when conflicts are resolved, there is nothing at stake that threatens security or peace anymore. This leaves us with the question of what other forms are measures for which conflicts can be handled. Logically, conflicts can be handled in a chronological manner; first by prevention and then by management. Each person, race, or identity group has their own ways of doing things especially as they concern conflict resolution. While in Europe, for example, the police are an agency of crime detection, several African societies relied on oath-taking and divination in pre-colonial times. These methods still thrive today in some places on a very limited scale alongside torture and skull breaking in the name of interrogation and confession extraction. Also, while the western world placed emphasis on a judicial system presided over by lawyers and judges; traditional African uses council of elders, king's court, peoples (open place) assemblies, etc. for dispute settlement and justice dispensation (Nwolise, 2005, p.155).

However, in Africa, conflict takes various forms and dimensions. It is worthy to note that conflict does not have a single definition from an African perspective. It could be a kind of social unrest or relationships, whether positive or negative. Consequently, conflicts are in magnitude of rage, rift, misunderstanding, family and market brawls, skirmishes and wars. These kinds of conflicts are widespread in traditional African societies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The system theory is conceived by Easton to mean that a behaviour, or a set of interrelated activities, whereby values are authoritatively allocated for a society. Ikelegbe (1996) asserts that the term 'allocation' covers both the distribution of scarce (tangible) values, and the choice between mutually incompatible (intangible) values. It is when such allocations are made authoritatively (as opposed to freely or voluntarily, as in the case of economic exchange) that the process of allocation acquires a political character; allocations are 'authoritative' whenever the persons in relation to whom they are made consider themselves to be bound to accept them. In the process of allocating the societal values, Easton opines that there is environment, feedback, input, output and the political system itself. The theory conceives of political activities as essentially involving the environment, the political system and output. The environment consists of the objective condition and forces that generate demand and support inputs. Support consists of the adherence to law or positive orientations, which promote the political system such as loyalty and patriotism (Uchem, 2001). Demand are the articulated needs, problems and articulated needs, problems and aspirations which are brought to bear upon the political system. The political system consists of the institutions, process and personnel of the government. The political systems act as the processors of inputs into outputs, which are authoritative allocations or outputs are the public policies. Public policies are therefore the reaction of the political system to environmental elemental demands and pressures (Ikelegbe, 1996).

However, the model assumes that policies are environmental input converted by the political system. It fails to recognize that the characteristics of the political system itself may have considerable independent effect on the content of policies (Olaniyi 1995). For example, policy makers may just be independently creating policies or at best enacting as policies what may be believed to be in the population's interest. Therefore, sometimes, it is not the environmental input that is converted but policy is the result of the characteristics, interrelations, values, bargaining and consensus within the political system itself. What is required is to look at the political system itself, not just as a converter of input but as an independent source of policy output.

David Easton in (1953) popularized the system theory in political studies. In relation to human society, any political system is made up of several sub-groups performing different functions and it is a combination of these function that keep the entire system moving (Olaniyi, 1995) David Easton's system theory can be explained as a two - way traffic between the governor and the governed. The political

system takes inputs from society consisting of demands for particular policies and expression of support for the regime and converts it into output authoritative policies and decisions. These outputs then act as feedback to society so as to affect the next circle of outputs. Outputs are what governments actually do or the service it will render. The degree of success of government policy is tested through feedback. Therefore, policy options cannot be taken for granted, it must be tested, measured, analysed and improved if its performance is to be improved (Olaniyi, 1998). Naturally, people tend to support the government when their needs are met and withdraw support when the reverse is the case. The relationship between inputs and outputs is very vital. Without input, the system cannot work, and without outputs, it cannot identify the work done by a system. However, it is only the demands which cannot be resolved privately that need authoritative decision or matter for serious political decisions.

At times Easton describes political systems as being composed of 'members', but this is already an abstraction from the whole person since it considers individuals only in their political roles. In any case this seems to me to be inconsistent with his definition of the political system as a system of interactions, i.e. of behaviour, not persons or even roles. To be precise, it must be recognized that 'the incidence of violence or coercion' is not exactly the inverse of 'frequency of compliance' although the two variables are obviously negatively correlated. The discrepancy arises where two conditions hold: (a) non-compliance is not accompanied by violence, and (b) non-compliance fails to provoke the authorities to resort to the use of threat of force. The system theory is a relevant theoretical perspective for examination of conflict and conflict resolution and we must take into cognizance the socio-economic and political complexity of the society under study. The conflict tradition which sees conflict resolution and social control as state control designed to protect the interest of a privileged few is obviously deficient in explaining the phenomena of conflict resolution in an acephalous primary group like Igbo traditional society. The exchange model with emphasis on personal rewards is more economic oriented and less sociological and anthropological (Uchem, 2001).

This research adopts the system theoretical framework. The conflict resolution structures of the Igbo group constitute part of the social structure of their society. The functions of these structures are defined in terms of the contributions they make toward resolving conflicts, maintaining consensus and group solidarity. Parsons (1965) argued that human action is directed by norms provided by the social system. He pointed out that the cultural system provides more general guidelines for



action in the form of beliefs, values and systems of meaning. The norms which direct action are not merely isolated standards for behaviour: they are integrated and patterned by the values and beliefs provided by the cultural system. The pertinent strand of system theory to lucid with regard to the research is the dysfunctional assumption. The dysfunction idea posits that they could be unintended or unrecognized, social change or interruptions that could entrench negative effects on society. Dysfunction could be either manifest or latent; manifests are intended dysfunctions whereas latent are unintended that however emanates from the dysfunctional interruptive tendency. Uchem (2001) asserts that obviously Western civilization had a manifest dysfunction of cultural imperialism and imposition of ideology predicated on eurocentrism which manifested in colonial disruption and imposition of new align beliefs on the people of Abia State and Africa in general. However, they did not intend to bring about a breakdown of social order which has emanated from their manifest role. It is pertinent to recognize and critically articulate this latent dysfunctional role, whereas Igbo traditional conflict resolution is largely hinged upon their religious believe which gives it credence and acceptance by all; Western influence has brought about a radical change undermining the potency of historical existing structures that hitherto ensured social order within the community. The people's belief was guided by the faith of the supernatural being that binds and dictates the people's actions and behavior in every circumstance, not a human institution that could be influenced. The community has no faith or trust in such institutions thereby making their efforts towards ensuring social order inadequate.

### **Research Methodology**

**Research Design:** This study is based on a cross-sectional survey research design. The design was adopted because it was cost effective in a study of this nature that involved a large population, and it enabled the researcher to gather data at one point in time within a limited time.

**Population of Study:** The study population of Ngwa in Abia State was used for the study. According to the NPC (2021), the projected population is 26,988 (11,822 for males, and 15,166 for females). The 2021 estimated population is used as the base population because it broke down the population into local government. There are thirteen villages all together in Ngwa and each of these villages has evolved into a community headed by an Eze with his council of elders/chiefs called Ndi Eze. However, HRM Eze Sir Joseph Ndubuisi Nwabeke, Eze of Ezeamara Eziama Ntigha Ancient Kingdom remains the overall leader

of all the Eze since Ntigha is the only Ngwa village that did not ask for an autonomous community.

To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane formula was adopted as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = actual sample size

N = the total population of the study (26,988)

$e^2$  = error limit/ level of significance  $(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$

n=26,988

$1 + 26,988(0.05)^2$

n= 26988

$26989 \times 0.0025$

n= 26988

67.4725

$n = 399.9 = 400$  (approx.)

Non-probability sampling technique, particularly purposive sampling technique was adopted in this study. This technique involves a process of choosing respondents on the basis of some pre-arranged characteristics. For in-depth interview data, 14 community leaders were purposely selected for interview, 2 from each LGA based on their leadership positions in the relevant qualitative population categories. The categories included: 7 traditional rulers (one from each LGA); one village heads; one women's union chairperson; one men's union chairperson; one youth leader; one masquerade cult leader; one age grade leader; and one umuada association leader. Primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study. The rationale for this is to ensure that adequate data is generated for the study. The instruments for data collection for this study were questionnaire and in-depth interview because of the need for a mixed-method research for an investigation of conflict resolution strategies in Abia State, Nigeria.

Secondary data were generated from journals, textbooks and internet materials on anti-corruption agencies and security in the studied areas. Also, similar data were generated from past historical documents about the history of the Igbo particularly those from Ngwa clan in Abia State. Qualitative and qualitative methods of data analysis will be adopted in this study. Qualitative analysis was done using descriptive and Chi-Square. Data generated from structured in-depth interviews will be analyzed qualitatively using textual analytical methods, while data

from secondary sources were analysed using trend analysis. The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the substantive issues in all sections of the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency distribution tables, percentages, graphs and charts. Inferential statistics, particularly chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) will be used to test the stated hypotheses.

### **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms among Communities In Abia State, Nigeria**

Generally, the traditional institutions for conflict resolution among communities in Abia state include: the family, Amala (council of elders), Okpara system (eldest male), Umuanna (clan), Umuada (female born in a town but married out), age grades, assembly of the people, Ohanaeze (assembly of the people and the king), hunters 'association and agbara (local deities or oracles). These are not different from the one found in other traditional African societies. However, Olurunsola (2002) wrote that:

The Igbos consisted of over two hundred independent territorial groups divided into villages. The internal organization of these groups rested upon patrilineal clans and lineages. These groups were autonomous with regards to governmental processes, but social bonds were strong among them (Olorunsola, 2002:157).

Arowolo (2010) holds that traditional management strategies in Abia State have affected all aspects of the social order.

The Igbo women participation in the socio-cultural and socio-political life of the Igbo nation pre-dates the advent of European civilization. The village squares were places and centers of cultural and economic life of the communities. The women gather in groups accordingly for meetings and dialogue. In their groups as market women, titled women association, dancers, etc., their concern is the welfare of their members and the good of everyone. Their meetings were focused on the establishment and operation of just institutions and the protection of the dignity of women and men. For the Igbo woman, social justice raises powerful images of making things, creating equal opportunity, rectifying the wrong, and restitution. The practice of Igbo women was based on equality and social and non-discriminatory society. The respect for gender was very high. Uchem (2001:113) affirms that:

The Igbo women were not marginalized in the traditional Igbo society ... because of their relatively high socio-economic status. Although they were culturally and ritually subordinated, they were not inferiorized, nor powerless; neither were they marginalized in the

traditional setting. This was because of the Igbo dual-sex socio-political system, which provided gender power checks and balances.

Any discrimination, especially against fellow women is frowned at and where it is pronounced, the women come into it whether invited or uninvited. Most of the traditional social rights of women were usurped by men with the advent of colonization. Uchem (2001:133), notes further that “Igbo women became divested of their traditional institutional power by the colonial policies, which marginalized women, were perpetuated by the Igbo male elite and reinforced by the inherited Christianity.” Uchem (2001) went further to affirm that “since those traditional structures which formerly protected women have been undermined by colonialism and Western Christianity, Igbo women no longer have a collective political bargaining power for defending themselves.” While it could be said that colonialism affected the role of women in Africa in general, and Igbo in particular, western education enhanced the life of women and empowered them to know, and affirm their dignity and rights. Education helped to galvanize Igbo women to effectively register their anger at the colonial administration in the Aba riot of 1929.

Suffice it to say that the Umuada Igbo take two approaches to conflict management. Through a conciliatory approach, they make the conflict parties to reach an agreement and to interpret the issues at stake and explore ways towards finding an amicable resolution to their conflict. It could also approach conflict management through force and threat to stem the negative effects of the conflict. Where the conflict has created a deep-rooted feeling of hatred and acrimony, the parties are forced with a threat not to cross the boundaries of hatred. In this case, boundaries are drawn against the wishes of the conflicting parties or at least one of them. Their decision on that case is final. Force and threat approach is not intended to suppress the conflict on the basis of power imbalance but on the parlance of obedience to the group. But to arrive at this point and the use of force, every consultation, opportunities and chances have been given to the parties to arrive at peace. Umuada are not just called in every conflict situation. The Igbo’s in Abia state have many other indigenous mediatory bodies to conflict management and resolution. The family is the first in the process of conflict resolution in cases concerning the family. If the crisis is between neighbours, the families involved are required to come for a dialogue.

Where the family or families are unable to resolve their problem, umunna comes in to help. The Umunna (brothers) is called upon where families cannot resolve their problem. The Umu Ogbo (Age grade or

peer group) takes care of the conflicts within them and functions too as executors of the decision of elders.

### **Principles of Indigenous Cultural Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Abia State, Nigeria**

Communities in Abia state are reputed to hold sacred peace-making and conflict management systems embedded in their customs and traditions (Zartman, 2000). This can be seen in the principle of Udo (Ohiochoya, 2008), a concept that demonstrates the fact that the Igbos have, over the years, developed and tested varied methods of conflict management. This is an all-embracing Igbo interpretation of both negative and positive peace (Francis, 2006).

The term 'Udo' is known to be humanistic and holistic in the conception of peace which states that human beings are one in their relationships with one another. The Igbo societies particularly in Abia State have well defined social political institutions that helped to facilitate conflict resolution. The basic political organization that existed throughout the Igbo societies is what Isichei (2010) describes as village democracy - a system of government that gave everyone – old and young – certain roles to play in the society. The mechanisms for conflict management in the Igbo society are embedded in the traditional and culture of the people. Consequently, conflicts and disputes are resolved mainly by mediation. The management of conflicts amongst the Igbos according to Alagoa (2001) involved the following six principles:

- i. First, the principle of impartiality of the manager of conflict. Rulers in all Nigerian communities were expected to behave impartially in their office.
- ii. The principle of fairness. That is, the poor and weak should receive a fair deal as well as the rich and powerful.
- iii. The principle of accommodation, compromise and a disposition for reconciliation, as opposed to the principle of "winner takes all" or the "zero sum game".
- iv. The principle of reciprocity. The spirit of accommodation must be mutual and reciprocal to be effective.
- v. The principle of moderation and of measured action and response. It was this principle that informed the deliberate limitation of the level of violence in conflicts within Nigerian communities in the past.
- vi. The principle of incompatibility or separation. That is where the parties to a conflict cannot be reconciled, the best policy would be to separate them. (Alagoa, 2001:1-8).

Nevertheless, the use of indigenous diplomatic management of one conflict did not have to include a definite victory for one of the parties involved. Judgment among the people of Abia State usually involved compromise and accommodation. The people of Abia State insist that a good judgment “cuts into the flesh as well as the bone” of the matter in dispute. This implies a “hostile” compromise in which there is neither victor nor vanquished; a reconciliation to the benefit of - or a loss to - both parties (Uchendu, 2005). Various institutions in Igbo land play vital roles in conflict management. These included the council of elders, the Umuada institution, the oracle Priest or Eze Ala amongst others. Those whose actions caused unrest in the society were severely punished to ensure lasting peace. However, conflict management mechanism among the people of Abia State as in other people in Igbo societies were not meant only to assuage or pacify the victim(s) but to act as deterrent to all those who may want to commit such crime(s); not only to appease the living but the ancestors and gods of the land (Brukum, 2008).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Some of the Western or Eurocentric institutions used in resolution of conflict are the courts, the military and police, panels of inquiry among others. However, these mechanisms for resolving disputes have been known to have recorded shortcomings, thus, the necessity of utilizing indigenous cultural methods cannot be over emphasized. There is a need for the Nigerian government to look through the magnifying glass of indigenous cultural diplomacy to see how peace can be achieved within her boundary, how her resources can be utilized for national integration and unity and how it can serve as a catalyst for peace all over Nigeria.

Culture should be on the same wavelength as economic and political structures, when peace is conceived through her traditional tools and her citizens see her diversity as something to be revered and proud off, then the citizens will bask in the euphoria of her culture. It has been written in various papers and said in many conferences how people in most communities in Nigeria fear for the negative outcome of disregarding resolutions from their community priests and shrines, this shows that this tool can serve as a viable and resolute method of quelling the thirst for conflict to a high degree. Furthermore, awareness and sensitization should be important and critical for every member of each community to buy-in and re-establish a connection to the indigenous methods of conflict resolution in Nigeria. The Abia indigenous conflict resolution system is process-oriented, victim-centred and it applies persuasive and reintegrative principles in adjudicating cases brought to concrete

resolutions and this can be amplified all over Nigeria using indigenous systems that suit each community in Nigeria. If Nigerian societies desire to put the falling parts of their communities together and alleviate the state of crises, then her original values of conflict resolution which were revered must be revisited and the foundations restored.

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