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PEACE AND CONFLICT

According to Michael Nicholson, conflict is ana activity which takes place when conscious beings wish to carry out mutually inconsistent acts concerning their needs, wants or obligations. It is an escalation of a disagreement, which is its common prerequisite, and is characterized by the existence of conflict behavior, in which the beings are actively trying to damage one another. Conflict is a crash of interest. The basis of conflict may vary but it is always a part of society. Basis of conflict may be personal, racial, class, caste, political and international.

FEATURES OF CONFLICT

1. It is a process
2. It is inevitable
3. It is a normal part of life
4. Everyone is inflicted with conflict
5. It is unidimensional

The South East region is composed of Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Imo and Anambra. The Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War and the Nigerian-Biafran War) is a good example of violent conflict that took place in the south eastern part of Nigeria. It was a war fought between the government of Nigeria headed by General Yakubu Gowon and the [secessionist state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secession) of [Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biafra) led by late Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu (1933–2011) from 6 July 1967 to 15 January 1970. [Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biafra) represented nationalist aspirations of the [Igbo people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people) (south east), whose leadership felt they could no longer coexist with the Northern-dominated federal government. The conflict resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions which preceded Britain's formal decolonization of [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria) from 1960 to 1963. Immediate causes of the war in 1966 included ethno-religious riots in [Northern Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Region%2C_Nigeria), [a military coup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_Nigerian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat), [a counter-coup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_Nigerian_counter-coup) and [persecution of Igbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_anti-Igbo_pogrom) living in Northern Nigeria. Control over the lucrative [oil production](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_industry_in_Nigeria) in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta) also played a vital strategic role.

Other conflicts that have occurred inter communally during the years include:

**Anambra state**

Anambra is still feeling the effects of the 1967-1970 Nigeria-Biafra war, in which parts of southeastern Nigeria declared themselves an independent Republic of Biafra. The ensuing civil war created a legacy of humanitarian disaster, religious and political violence, and ongoing insurgent conflict. Given the impact of cross boundary crime it is important to note that Anambra shares borders with three non-southeast states: Delta, Kogi and edo.

Violent conflict is a pervasive problem in Anambra State. Armed violence in Anambra State dates back to the Nigeria–Biafra civil war of 1967-1970, which contributed to the massive proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the region. This brutal conflict was a humanitarian disaster in which as many as five million people – largely women and children – lost their lives. In the decades following the Biafran war, Anambra witnessed inter- and intra-communal conflicts including the major conflict between the communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in 1999-2000, which killed hundreds and displaced thousands.

Inter- and intra-community violence continues to be a major problem in Anambra. Hostility continues to simmer between Aguleri and Umuleri; more recent conflicts have occurred between the Akpu and Ajali communities and between Owerre and the Ezukala/ Ogboji communities, as well as intra-communal con- flict within Umunya. When such conflicts dissipate, the weapons and aggression often do not, leading to perpetrators regrouping as criminals or political gangsters.

**Ebonyi state**

Ebonyi is a young political entity, carved out of parts of Enugu (to its west) and Abia (to its south) states in 1996. The result is that Ebonyi has 13 Local Government Areas. There are usually inter-communal conflicts and a common one is the deadly battles between the Ezza and Ezillo people that took the lives of many, non-indigenes inclusive.

Land disputes are the key causes of armed violence in Ebonyi State, with no end to the headline-dominating issue in sight. Clan differences, socio-political inequality and agrarian economic interests – the root causes of these disputes and their resultant inter-communal conflicts – have been difficult to control by governmental authorities. With a paucity of resources and a lack of infrastructure, combined with long-standing communal malice, even issues that may seem minor can escalate to the point of serious violence with major implications across the state and for years to come.

The Ezza-Ezillo crisis is one example. According to Afikpo Today magazine, the dispute between these two rival eastern-Ebonyi communities was inflamed by a 2008 disagreement over ownership of a piece of land on which a phone booth was erected. By the end of December, 2011, the disagreement had escalated, with gunmen attacking Ezillo and killing over 70 men, women and children – including the local police chief. Besides the killings, Ezillo market and other properties were burned to the ground and indigenous communities’ animals slaughtered. The ramifications of this are still ongoing. In the summer of 2013, a bomb was found at a building site on the disputed territory, and as recently as October, 2013, politicians claimed that the withholding of infrastructural improvement money was tied to political and social differences related to the Ezza-Ezillo dispute.

Other drivers of armed violence in Ebonyi State include the University-based confraternity gangs known as “cults” that are much reported at Ebonyi State University in Abakaliki, as well as the so-called “do or die” nature of Nigerian politics. Renewed violence in 2012 and 2013 between University cults has resulted in gun battles, kidnappings, and murder, including the killing of a police corporal in 2012 and multiple deaths in 2013. Ebonyi has, in addition, the federal university in Abakaliki and a federal polytechnic in Uwana, meaning that the potentials of armed violence through University cult activities is, in these areas, rife.

Finally, the fact that Ebonyi state has boundaries with the non-Igbo state of Cross River must be acknowledged. Cross River itself provides a major regional source of income through sand dredging and river transport, but the part of Cross River that sits at the boundaries records a very high incidence of communal violence. This violence has led to the loss of a huge number of lives, for instance in the Ezillo/Izza clashes. And many people impacted by the Ezza/Ezillo conflict were just travelers passing through that and not linked to the grievances of the clashes per se.

**Imo state**

The inhabitants of Imo State are predominantly Igbo, making up a largely rural population of 4.8 million. Imo is relatively less affected by violence than other states in Nigeria and the South East. The drivers of armed violence have been identified in Imo as being the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW); the use of thugs for political violence; the rising rates of youth unemployment, economic hardship and inequality; the exposure to criminal violence through the media and the prevalence of a culture of materialism. The high insecurity in Imo State could be seen as an outcome of the insensitive political and socio-economic policies of past governments that exacerbated sufferings through exposure of the youths to poverty, starvation and joblessness.

The rich and the relatives of the rich constitute the prime victims of kidnapping in Imo state as well as politicians and their relatives. In many kidnapping cases female victims are raped and some people who are mistakenly kidnapped and killed for their inability to raise ransom. Other victims of armed violence include the perpetrators themselves: thugs engaged by politicians, members of cults and those involved in gang rivalry and factionalism.