Decentralisation and Conflict Management in Indonesia and Nigeria

Rachael Diprose and Ukoha Ukiwo

CRISE WORKING PAPER No. 49
February 2008

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Abstract

This paper examines how the history of grievances, demands, and identity has played out in the context of decentralisation in Nigeria and Indonesia. This includes the devolution of political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities and resources to local authorities and the creation of new districts and local government areas. Evidence from the case studies demonstrates that although decentralisation can be a useful conflict-mitigating mechanism by accommodating diversity and managing historical grievances with centralised government, decentralisation can in some instances generate new tensions in communal, ethnic and religious relations. The decentralisation process interacts with conflict dynamics by stimulating demographic changes and creating incentives for local elites to compete for power and resources by mobilising group identities. The paper finds that a key predictor of whether or not decentralisation can mitigate conflict is its impact on horizontal inequalities (inequalities between groups). However, decentralisation can also assist with conflict mitigation by providing self-autonomy and an institutional framework for managing tensions at the local level, as long as the process is implemented as promised to local peoples. An awareness of some of these dynamics is important for managing diversity and structural change through decentralisation.

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<u>Acronyms and Foreign Language Terms</u>

Bupati	District Head (Indonesia)
LGA	Local Government Area (Nigeria)
pemekaran	Lit. 'blooming' – refers to the creation of new administrative regions (Indonesia)
Walikota	Mayor (Indonesia)

Decentralisation and Conflict Management in Indonesia and Nigeria

By Rachael Diprose and Ukoha Ukiwo[1]

1   Introduction

Decentralisation has gained increasing attraction among scholars and in policy circles as an appropriate institutional framework for diverse societies. This is in addition to the current development orthodoxy of reducing the power of national governments and bringing decisions closer to the populace. In fact, a recent survey suggests that since 1980 about 95% of all countries have conferred powers and responsibilities to sub-national units 'with varying degrees of political, administrative and fiscal competences' (Schrottshammer and Kievelitz 2006: 5).   For many developing countries, decentralisation is displacing centralisation which was pursued in the past with such vigour as a nation-building strategy. For instance, a survey of African countries with respect to decentralisation indicates that the question is no longer about the desirability of decentralisation but the degree of decentralisation (Ndegwa 2002). This popularity derives in part from the perception that decentralisation helps to manage the multitude of demands of diverse groups in large nation states.   Decentralisation has the potential to deflate national level inter-group conflict for power, resources and control, particularly in nations with diverse ethno-religious groups which are regionally concentrated.   It can also improve contentious centre-periphery relations, particularly when there is a history of protest against centralised rule and forms of cultural hegemony as has been the case in both Indonesia and Nigeria, the two case studies presented here.

The comparative experiences of the countries implementing decentralisation, however, indicate that the relationship between decentralisation and conflict is not linear, but rather complex. Decentralisation has not always succeeded in resolving or preventing conflicts. For instance, secessionist movements continue to thrive in some decentralising states, albeit in only a few of the new administrative areas (Rothchild and Roeder 2001).   The varied experiences with decentralisation have focussed the attention of scholars and policy makers on possible intervening variables. Some studies have emphasised the importance of the context, especially the size and concentration of minorities, and the nature of decentralised institutions and structures (Schrottshammer and Kievelitz 2006). Others have argued that the factor determining the efficacy of decentralisation as a conflict resolution strategy is the presence or absence of regional political parties (Brancati 2006). But other scholars have been more sceptical of the peace-making consequences of decentralisation and have indeed implicated decentralisation in the outbreak of some conflicts (Brubakar 1996; Kymlicka 1998; Snyder 2000).

Decentralisation is criticised for encouraging the promotion of ethnic, regional or communal identities that are antithetical to national identity. On the one hand, such identities often serve as the basis for unending demands for autonomy which lead to separatist mobilisations (Hardgrave 1994; Kymlicka 1998; Hecther 2000). It has also been argued that decentralisation generates conflict by working against the entrenchment of democratic values because it can lead to the transfer of power and resources to undemocratic social

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forces such as chiefs (Fanthorpe 2006; Jackson 2007), or provide a sphere for domination of minority groups by majority groups at the local level (Horowitz 1991; Suberu 1994). On the other hand, it may reduce pressures from the disparate regions of some countries to destabilise central governments, particularly if there is a long history of complaints with centralised government. For example, Suberu (2006) argues that Nigeria's federal structure, with its multiplicity of sub-federal constituent units, promotes the decentralisation and compartmentalisation of ethno-religious and regional conflicts. This reduces the capacity of such conflicts to polarise or destabilise the entire federation.

Apart from extraneous factors, the relationship between decentralisation and conflict depends on how it affects power relations between groups and classes at the sub-national and local levels. We argue that a major factor that predicts whether decentralisation would ameliorate or exacerbate conflicts between groups is the extent to which decentralisation addresses perceived horizontal inequalities and group domination. Furthermore, it depends on the extent to which the decentralisation process is actually implemented according to the purview with which it was 'sold' to the populace or deviates from this. We illustrate this argument through a comparative study of decentralisation in two regions in Indonesia and Nigeria where inter-group relations have been marred by violent conflicts. This is based on extensive field research in both countries between 2005 and 2006, involving in-depth interviews at the local and national level with members of the elite groups and the populace, with the victims and perpetrators of violence, with members of minority and majority groups in each of the regions examined, and with women, youth, government representatives, traditional and religious leaders, local militias, people living in the regions surrounding the conflict, the media and others. It is also based on the results of a detailed household survey conducted under the aegis the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security, and Ethnicity (CRISE) at the University of Oxford. The survey examines individual perceptions of identity (both self and other), group interaction and allegiance, mobilisation, political action, attitudes to the use of violence, methods of conflict resolution, and other relevant topics.

Indonesia and Nigeria are nation states undergoing 'democratisation' following authoritarian military rule in the late 1990s. Both gained independence in the middle of the 20th century - Indonesia declared Independence from the Dutch in 1945 and Nigeria from the British in 1960. In both cases, colonialism itself contributed to the formation of nation-state boundaries around diverse groups and the contentious identity politics which remain today. Both countries have a large natural resource base which contributes significantly to the national income, the benefits of which do not always reach the citizens proximate to these resources. Nigeria has a federal system of government with autonomous sub-national state and local governments but there was a shift towards political and fiscal centralisation after military intervention in 1966 (Mustapha 2000; Elaigwu 2005). In contrast, Indonesia is a unitary state with a central administration but significant powers have been devolved to districts to such an extent that the country is said to have implemented the substance of federalism without changing the unitary system (Tirtosudarmo 2006).

Nigeria is made up of 389 ethnic groups distributed amongst 36 states and a federal capital territory (Otite 2000). Three of the groups – the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba – are regarded as the major ethnic groups having dominated the three regions into which the country was divided until 1967. The minority ethnic groups are so-called because they were minorities in the former regions. Apart from these ethnic cleavages there is also a religious cleavage between the predominantly Muslim north-east and north-west states and the westernised Christian south-east and southern states while the north central and south-west states contain an equal number of Christians and Muslims. Indonesia is a nation of some 300 ethnic groups scattered across more than 10,000 islands, with approximately ten of these making up the bulk of the population. The largest, the Javanese, are located mainly on Java island, account for almost half the population. Indonesia is currently composed of

36 provinces at various stages of economic development. The majority of the population is Muslim, although in many districts there are concentrations of particular ethnic and religious groups, which alters the nature of majority-minority ethno-religious politics within the provincial and district boundaries.

Indonesia and Nigeria have both experienced an upsurge in violent communal conflict in certain parts of both countries, particularly in the period following the end of authoritarian rule. This is not because democracy inherently generates conflicts. On the contrary, cross-country evidence has shown that democracies are less likely to experience civil war and communal violence than authoritarian states (Hegre *et al* 2001). Rather it is in democratising countries – i.e., states in transition such as Indonesia and Nigeria – that social tensions are more likely to escalate into violence (Gurr 2000; idem 2001), because democratisation is often associated with changes in power relations and structures and democratic solutions to change are not yet fully accepted (Ake 2000). When democratisation is implemented simultaneously with decentralisation – as in Nigeria and Indonesia – the resulting changes in power relations at the local level have the potential to trigger ethnic and communal violence in the locality, but at the same time may alleviate national tensions.

This article explores how the decentralisation experiment has fared in Indonesia and Nigeria in terms of local-level conflict dynamics. Evidence from the countries presented in this article seeks to demonstrate that decentralisation as a strategy of accommodating diversity can both trigger and ameliorate the potential for violent conflict at the local level (within the state/province). We do not argue that decentralisation is not an appropriate course for ameliorating ethno-religious or centre-periphery tensions. In fact, as our paper shows, decentralisation was long demanded by different groups as the instrument for accommodating diverse interests in both countries. Instead we argue that the conflict outcomes of decentralisation depend on how the process itself is carried out, and to what extent institution-building and government policy give due consideration to the potential conflict outcomes of its strategies and policies.

These issues are explored through a study of the decentralisation of power to the district level in Poso and Donggala Districts in Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, and of the creation of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Warri, Delta State and Calabar, Cross-River State, Nigeria. In both countries the studies selected clusters of decentralised units that have experienced violent ethnic and communal conflicts and those that have not. In Indonesia, Poso, which has a large Muslim and Christian population, has experienced large-scale communal conflict, while neighbouring Donggala, with similar ethno-religious demographics, has not experienced such large-scale conflict. Similarly, in the Nigeria case studies, Warri has experienced large scale violent communal conflict between groups, while in Calabar conflict has not resulted in violence. The units of analysis are the smallest units of government in Indonesia and Nigeria to which fiscal budgets are decentralised, and the selected districts were restructured as part of the decentralisation programmes in both countries. The next section of the paper reviews the Indonesian case study. It discusses the history of grievances about centre-periphery relations, the implementation of decentralisation as a response to these grievances, and the impact of decentralisation on conflict management in the case of Central Sulawesi province. This is followed by a review of the Nigeria case study, focussing on similar themes. In particular the discussion examines the administrative roots of decentralisation in Nigeria, the politics of local government creation and conflicts dynamics in Calabar and Warri. The paper ends with some conclusions arising from the comparative experiences of implementing decentralisation in Indonesia and Nigeria.

2   Indonesia

2.1   A history of grievances and centre-periphery tensions

In 1999, following the end of the 32-year rule of Suharto's New Order administration, Indonesia embarked on an ambitious decentralisation programme.   Programmes of decentralisation and greater regional autonomy emerged in response to demands by the vast and diverse regions of the country for self-management as well as in order to bring government services closer to their beneficiaries. They can also be seen as a response to the long-standing grievances felt in the regions against 54 years of centralised government administration and the remnants of colonial forms of indirect rule and privileges given to particular ethnic groups.

Struggles for regional autonomy in Indonesia long pre-date the *reformasi* (the reform period) following the end Suharto's New Order regime of 1966 to 1998. Contested power relations between the centre and the regions can be found as early as the 1950s, and even in the pre-Independence complaints of ethnic privileging and indirect rule by the Dutch colonial authorities.[2] The regional autonomy debate has long been entangled with identity politics, namely the tension between the unified, single Indonesian identity fought for during the Independence movement and the diversity of Indonesian regional identities. According to Feith (1962: 27), by 1949 there were 366 traditionally self-aware ethnic groups in Indonesia, including ten major groups with populations of over 1 million. While some of these groupings unified to overthrow the Dutch and form a single 'Indonesian' identity, natural loyalties to the communal and quasi-communal groups still existed in parallel with the unified Indonesian consciousness (ibid: 29).

Following the struggle for Independence from the Dutch in 1945, many hoped for social and economic improvements for the general population (Harvey 1977: v). Instead, there was disappointment with the minimal change achieved by the central government administration, stimulating discontent with the centralised system and demands for greater autonomy for the regions. In the 1950s, the regions outside Java – the location of the central government administration – complained of economic and political marginalisation, perceiving that government policy favoured Java (Feith 1962: 6-7).

When grievances against the centre emerged, so too did demands for greater autonomy for the regions outside Java.[3] Legge (1961: 231) argues that the very motto of the Republic, 'Unity in Diversity' (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), recognises the strength of regional awareness and the presence of distinct societies in the regions.   Both ethnicity and economic differences between regions were significant factors in explaining local patriotism (ibid). Although the discourse at the central level often painted these local patriotisms as a threat to national integration, they should be seen as exhibiting dissatisfaction with the central government rather than expressing a desire for the disintegration of the state.   The rebellions of the 1950s exemplify such anti-central government sentiment. For example, the Permesta rebellion[4] in Sulawesi was launched to oppose the increasing influence of Sukarno and the Indonesian Communist Party, as well as the strength of the ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Forces) (Harvey 1977: 151-153). The goal of the rebels was to change national policy through regionalism, *not* separation from the Indonesian state (ibid: 152). Eventually, the demands for greater self-management were accommodated through the ratification of regional autonomy laws in the 1950s: Law No. 32, 1956, and Law No. 1,

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[2] This paper is limited in that it does not discuss centre-regional power relations prior to Indonesian Independence

[3] Feith 1962: 487. See also Harvey 1977: 7 and Legge 1961:13.

[4] Declaration of Charter of Inclusive Struggle (Piagam Perjuangan Semesta Alam – Permesta) in Makassar, 2 March 1957 demanding provincial autonomy. See Harvey 1977: 1 and 173.

1957.[5]   Yet, after these rebellions ended, the key provisions of the 1956/57 Regional Autonomy Laws were revoked when Sukarno implemented Guided Democracy in 1959 (Legge 1961: 209).

Following the end of Sukarno's Old Order in 1966, the New Order administration continued to promote national identity and strengthen the central administration. It endeavoured to solidify the imagined Indonesian identity by promoting its own role as the guardian of the state ideology represented by *Pancasila* (the five principles).[6]   The New Order sought ideological legitimacy through policies that sustained 'stability' in Indonesia following the massive killings which characterised the end of the Sukarno regime and ushered in the New Order.[7]   Development, characterised by top-down decision making and very little accommodation of local diversity, formed the cornerstone of New Order policies promoting stability (Hooker and Dick 1995: 3; Guinness 1994: 269). Regional cultures and traditions were incorporated into national culture officially by promoting the visual and decorative aspects, but other expressions of local culture were stifled (Foulcher 1990: 302).   For example, perceived negative sentiments that could be related to SARA (*suku*, *agama*, *ras*, *antar-golongan* – ethnic, religious, racial or inter-group relations) were used to control the expression of local diversity in Indonesia (Sen and Hill 2000:12).   The central government also controlled the regions by appointing its candidates to provincial and district head positions (those of Governor, *Bupati* (District Head/Regent) and *Walikota* (Mayor)). In 1970, this phenomenon, referred to as 'dropping' from the centre, resulted in 20 of the nation's 26 governors and 60% of all *bupati* and *walikota* coming from the armed forces (Malley 1990: 76). Thus, the New Order's cultural and political hegemony further stimulated grievances in the regions against the centralised system of government and restrictions on the expression of local culture and identity.

2.2   *Decentralisation in Indonesia: responding to past grievances?*

Following the end of the New Order, the new policy of decentralisation in Indonesia was first outlined in the Regional Autonomy Laws: Law No. 22, 1999, concerning 'Local Government', and Law No. 25, 1999, concerning 'The Fiscal Balance Between the Central Government and the Regions'.[8]   Beginning in January 2001, these laws devolved certain powers and responsibilities to district and municipal governments (*kabupaten*/*kota*) rather than the provincial governments, establishing a far more decentralised system than the de-concentrated and co-administered systems of the past.[9]   These laws not only devolved

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[5] The 1956 law was concerned with the financial relations between the centre and the autonomous regions. The law of 1957 was enacted to modify the appointment of Regional Heads. Legge (1961:52) viewed this as more an attempt to weaken their office and strengthen the role of the regional parliaments.

[6] The five principles of the Republic of Indonesia acknowledge commitment to belief in one God, a just and civilised humanity, national unity, and people's rule through consultation and representation, to achieve social justice for all Indonesians. See Guinness and Patrick 1994: 271.

[7] Hooker 1995: 5. Cf. Geertz 1990: 89; Hooker and Dick 1995: 2.

[8] Law No. 22, 1999, devolves central government powers and responsibilities to local governments in all government administrative sectors except for security and defense, foreign policy, monetary and fiscal matters, justice, and religious affairs, without conditions and limitations. It also transfers functions, personnel and assets from the central government to the provincial, as well as the district and the municipal governments (Usman 2001: ii).

[9] Deconcentration is the delegation of authority by the central government to the governor of a province and/or a central government official in the province. Co-administration is when higher levels of government direct lower levels to undertake tasks and functions. The higher level of government provides the costs, means, infrastructure and human resources to carry out the tasks. The lower level of government is obliged to report to the higher level of government regarding the execution of these tasks or functions.

fiscal responsibilities to the districts, but also legislative and policy making powers thus allowing for considerable decentralisation of political power.

Amidst a plethora of changes, the new laws initially allowed for the locally contentious and politically powerful positions of Regional Heads (*Kepala Daerah*) to be appointed by local parliaments rather than by the provincial government which represented central government interests as had been the case under the New Order. Later, Law No. 32, 2004, revised the decentralisation laws allowing for the direct popular election of Regional Heads. Decentralisation and other legislation also allowed for the 'blooming' (the lexical meaning of *pemekaran* – carving out of new regions) of new provinces, districts, sub-districts, villages, hamlets, and wards.[10] The 2004 legislation rolled back the number of new provinces and districts that could be considered for formation and ratification by the national parliament in any one year, and modified the criteria which must be met to form these new administrative areas, although the phenomenon of *pemekaran* continues to this day.

Prior to and during the post-1998 transition there had been an increased assertion by minority ethnic groups of their interests and separate identities, which they claimed to be of parallel importance to their national identity as Indonesians. Post-New Order changes created the space for these views to surface and for local needs to be accommodated. However, groups that are minorities when compared with other groups in the national context often have majority representation at the local level, on the basis of which they stake their claims to power in the context of decentralisation. With regional autonomy, local politics is flourishing and local identity politics have become paramount in defining minority-majority claims and in striving for access to leadership positions. Two particular aspects of the decentralisation process – the formation of new administrative areas and direct elections of the executive at the district level – will be examined in the case studies in the next section.

2.3   Decentralisation and its impacts on conflict management: the case of Central Sulawesi

Between 1999 and 2004, after the end of the New Order, large-scale communal violence broke out in Central and West Kalimantan, Ambon and North Maluku, and Central Sulawesi, among other areas, which reached a peak between 2000 and 2002.[11] Much of the collective violence subsided by the second year of the implementation of decentralisation. Varshney *et al* (2004) put the estimated death toll from collective violence at over 10,700 between 1990 and 2003 with the bulk occurring in the later part of the period. While the country is approximately 85% Muslim and 10% Christian, in many (but not all) of the districts where conflicts took place the size of the ethno-religious groups is relatively balanced.

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[10] Such legislative changes were also supported by amendments to the 1945 Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 – UUD1945*), which were intended to strengthen regional autonomy For example, in the Second Amendment, articles 18, 18A, and 18B grant the broadest authority possible to the provinces, *kabupaten* and *kota*, without differentiating the authority according to level of government. *Kompas* 2002, 12 August, 'Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Repubik Indonesia Tahun 1945 dan Perubahannya', pp. 29-30.

[11] Conflicts of a more separatist nature have also escalated in Aceh and Papua where sections of the population have fought for greater access to resources and self-autonomy/determination. Smaller scale violence has been present all over Indonesia, particularly in West and East Java, East Nusa Tenggara, Riau, and other provinces. It has partly taken the form of waves of vigilantism, and partly of inter-group violent and non-violent disputes similar to the disputes which preceeded the mass escalation of violence in the 'high-profile' conflict provinces. While the rumblings of these conflicts were present before the end of the regime (often preceded by smaller outbreaks of violence), they peaked following the end of the New Order.

2.3.1   The history of the conflict, demographic and administrative changes in Central Sulawesi

Situated on the island of Sulawesi in north-eastern Indonesia, Central Sulawesi province is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse areas in Indonesia, with a total population of 2.2 million people in 2003 (BPS: 2004). The majority of the population are Muslims (78.4%) (ibid). This research was conducted in Poso and Donggala Districts in Central Sulawesi as both districts have a large concentration of ethno-religious minorities (measured nationally) which have become local majorities who challenge the status quo, ie. the domination of provincial politics by the largest ethno-religious group.

Over the past eight years, violent conflict has taken place in several regions in Central Sulawesi. This took the form either of large-scale collective violence or smaller-scale incidents of collective and individual violence, all resulting in the loss of lives and property. Much of this has been concentrated in the Poso District, where the Muslim and Christian groups were almost equal in size at the onset of the conflict. The triggers of some of the major incidents between 2000 and 2002 were youth clashes and seemingly small incidents between individuals which escalated and resulted in the loss of some 2000 lives and widespread property destruction.[12] Local grievances, and to some extent supra-local interests, form the backdrop to the clashes between local groups organised around their Muslim and Christian identities, with each group claiming indigeneity in the region.[13] Conflict has also taken place in other districts such as Parigi Moutong and Donggala, but it never escalated or incurred the same violent outcomes as in Poso.

2.3.2   Poso and Donggala: local inequalities and conflict

As noted earlier, prior to the onset of the conflict in 1998, the population of Poso was split almost evenly between Muslims and Christians (BPS, 1998). By later phases of the conflict, from 2000, mobilisation was overtly along religious lines and the clashes between groups during this period were described by many locals as inter-religious warfare.[14] The Christians mainly involved in the conflict were of the Pamona ethnicity and smaller groups of other ethnicities from the highlands. The Muslims were predominantly coastal Bugis, Gorantalese, and in later phases of the conflict, the Javanese. While many members of the latter three groups have been in the area for generations, some still consider these groups to be 'newcomers'. Thus, during the conflict ethnic divides coincided with both religious divisions and were further reinforced by an 'us-them' discourse centered around who could be considered locals and who could be considered 'newcomers'.

The qualitative interviews conducted in Poso between 2005-6 revealed two major complaints (among many) which underpinned the onset of the conflict in 1998. The first was the disruption of informal power-sharing agreements between Muslims and Christians which traditionally involved rotating the District Head (*Bupati)* position between the two groups. Since the 1990s, a Muslim District Head had been in place for two consecutive periods, and the same person was again appointed in 1998 in the month preceding the first outbreak in December of the inter-group violence. Second, there were grievances surrounding the marginalisation of certain groups – predominantly Christians – from the district legislature (elected) and the executive (all appointed prior to 2004), particularly the key positions in charge of civil service appointments and the allocation of government projects and contracts, all of which created space for favouritism towards particular groups

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[12] Varshney *et al* (2004); interviews with Muslim and Christian leaders in Poso, May 2005.
[13] For more information on the conflict in Poso see: Aragon (2001); Aragon (2002), Cote (2005); HRW (2002), UNDP PDA Assessment (2004)*;* YAPPIKA (2003)*,* ICG (2005), and Varshney *et al* (2004).
[14] For a brief chronology of the phases of the conflict to date, see Brown and Diprose (2006).

in particular sub-districts and villages. Entangled with this was the issue of high-level corruption involving Farmers Credit Union (KUT) funds in 1998 by those close to the district executive. During the conflict, decentralisation began to be implemented with two new districts being carved out of Poso.

In the in-depth interviews many respondents from both sides of the conflict claimed that such favouritism, the domination of the executive by particular groups, and subsequent corruption have had an adverse affect on the standard of living of those who have been marginalised from access to resource allocation and decision making. Both Christian and Muslim respondents also gave these reasons as an explanation of how a seemingly normal fight between youths of different faiths began to widen and took on religious overtones, as the broader grievances began to be channelled through these small-scale disputes. While religion is the first identity label used to distinguish 'us' and 'them' when articulating such complaints in Poso, there are also allusions to ethnic marginalisation and claims of indigeneity and the associated rights of those who claim indigeneity relative to those with 'newcomer' status (although these claims of indigeneity are locally highly contentious, since migrant status is selectively applied and some of the 'newcomer' groups have been in the area for several generations).

Meanwhile in Donggala, once the seat of the provincial capital, similar grievances and demographics exist. There is a large population of both Muslims (60-65%) and Christians (30%) in the region, although the size of the Christian group is not as large as in Poso. Donggala has the same high level of ethno-religious diversity as Poso and some local-level conflict. However, it has never escalated to the extent that it did in Poso. More than a 1000 small conflicts have occurred in Donggala since 1999, but these have never escalated beyond more than a few villages, and rarely have they resulted in more than one or two deaths.[15] As in Poso, there have been several instances of the formation of new districts under decentralisation in Donggala, including the carving out of Parigi Moutong.

When we examine local perceptions of inequalities and grievances in Poso and Donggala based on the household survey conducted in 2006, it is evident that there are inequalities between the religious groups according to the wealth indexes created from the survey. Though the survey was conducted in a post inter-group conflict environment, tensions still permeate both regions, and the findings are in line with the discourse on the causes of conflict, including the marginalisation of particular groups from political and economic processes. In Poso higher percentages of Muslims compared to Christians had access to medium level (Wealth Index 2) and luxury goods (Wealth Index of 3) within the household (this index does not include land ownership), although this is more even in Donggala.

Table 1: Wealth index by religion, Poso and Donggala 2006

Wealth Index	Poso		Donggala	
	Muslims %	Christians %	Muslims	Christians
0	4.6	14.6	13.9	22.0
1	10.7	24.4	28.9	29.9
2	39.7	34.7	36.9	37.0
3	45.4	26.2	20.2	11.0

Complaints of favouritism and of the potential economic and political gains which could be achieved through accessing the public sector continue to pervade public perceptions and discourse, as is evident in the figures below (also drawing on the results of the 2006 CRISE survey). In Poso, access to government jobs, contracts, private sector employment and government services are perceived to be affected by both ethnic and, more prevalently, religious identity (see Figure 1). Similar grievances were evident in Donggala over ethno-

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[15] Daily review of newspaper sources between 1999 and 2006

religious identity affecting access to government and private sector jobs as well as government contracts (see Figure 2 below). However the intensity of the felt grievances was stronger in Poso (see Figures 1 and 3). The perception that identity has affected access to credit was more prevalent in Donggala than it was in Poso. This was also one aspect of inequality which also stood out as a difference between the regions in the qualitative interviews. Furthermore, felt grievances pertaining to ethnic identity as opposed to religious identity were more common in Donggala compared to Poso, where religious identity featured more strongly. This was also found to be the case in the qualitative interviews conducted in 2005-6.

Figure 1: CRISE perceptions survey: perceptions of identity and its impact on opportunities in Poso (N=300)
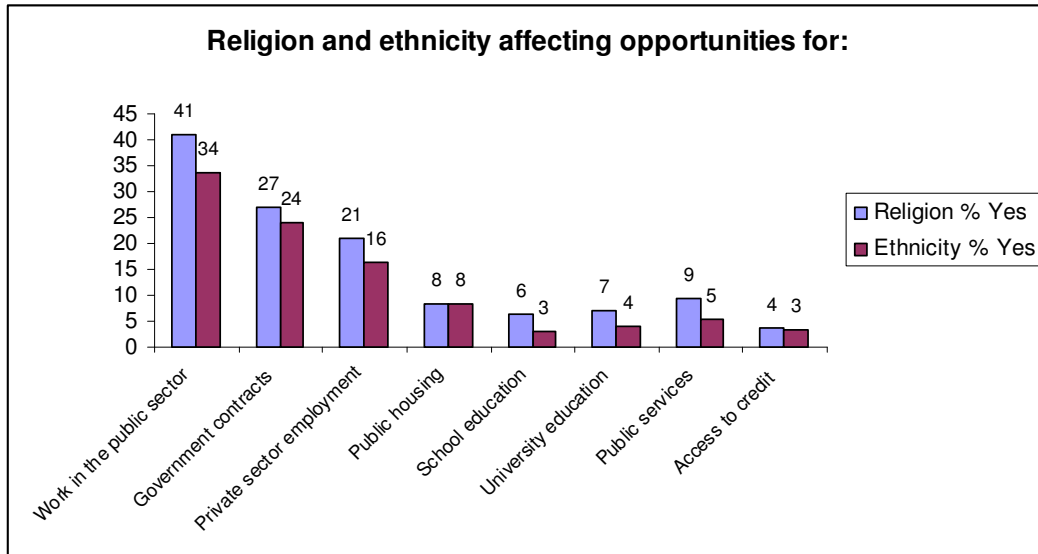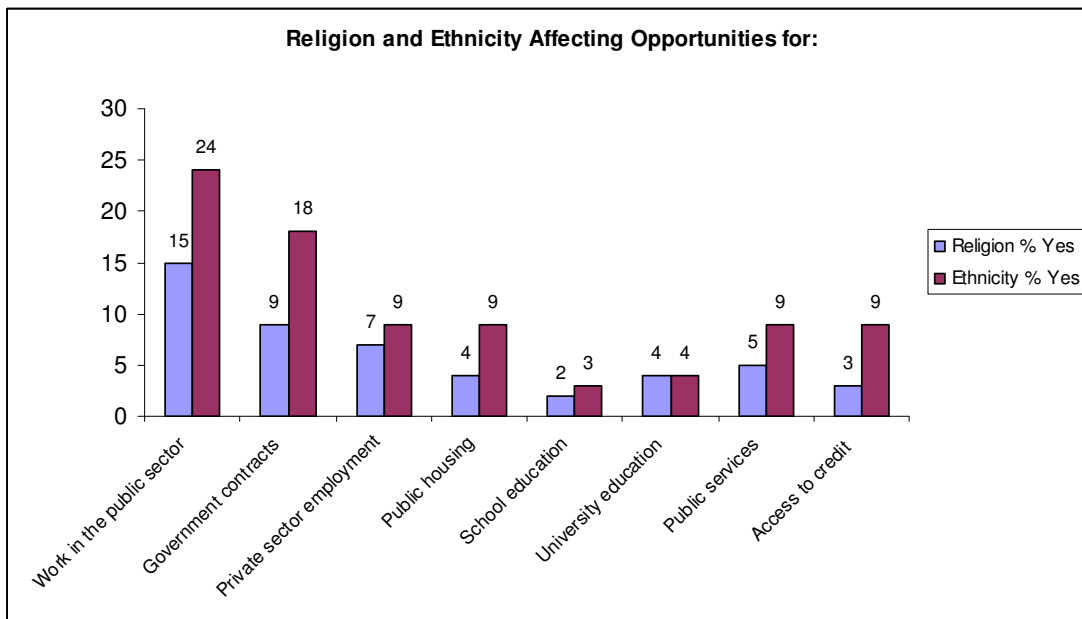

Figure 2: CRISE perceptions survey: perceptions of identity and its impact on opportunities (N=300) [16]

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[16] Unweighted results

Similar trends can be seen when respondents were asked if particular groups were closer to the government than others (Figure 2, below), with many more people in Poso believing this to be the case than in less conflict-ridden Donggala. The discussions in the section on Nigeria demonstrates a similar trend in areas which are experiencing more violence.

Figure 3: CRISE perceptions survey: perceptions group closeness to the government (N=300/District)[17]
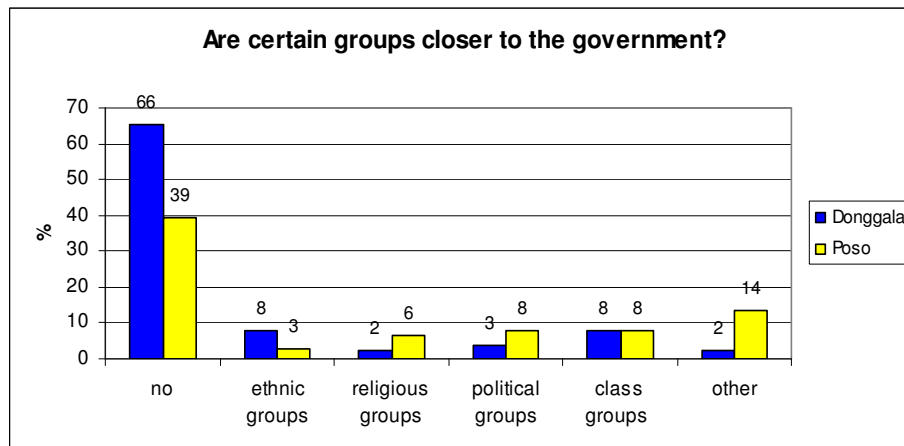
When we examine the figures and the table above in the context of conflict dynamics, we can see that household wealth inequalities between Muslims and Christians are much wider in Poso amongst the richer echelons of the population, creating greater incentives for elites to mobilise – a perfect catalyst for conflict given the history of inter-group tensions. Furthermore, household wealth inequalities are more even across the three categories of wealth in Poso compared to Donggala, allowing for easier mobilisation for conflict across class lines within the groups. During the conflict this was indeed the case, with both the elites and the grassroots of the populace mobilising together on each side . Perceived inequalities in access to opportunities are also stronger in Poso than in Donggala, particularly around religious identity markers which has provided further opportunity to mobilise.

Furthermore, in terms of population demographics, there are four large ethnic groups in both Poso and Donggala. However, in the Poso conflict blocks of people with coinciding ethno-religious identities and common grievances mobilised and were mobilised, partially explaining the conflict trajectory. While many of these grievances and identities also exist in Donggala, mobilisation is much more difficult as many of the identity groupings cross-cut the population rather than coinciding with each other. Firstly, the indigenous ethnicities cross-cut religions and account for two thirds of the population; and secondly amongst the largest group of migrants, the Bugis only form approximately 10% of the population. Consequently, when elites tried to mobilise around contentious identities, it was common to revert to unifying common identities rather than utilise a discourse of difference, as was the case in Poso. Thus inequalities and the potential for mobilisation is much stronger in Poso than Donggala based on both household wealth inequalities in general and across echelons, as well as perceptions of inequalities across other spheres of opportunities and access.

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[17] Unweighted results

2.3.3   Poso and Donggala: the interaction between conflict inequalities and decentralisation

Given these dynamics, what then happens when we introduce decentralisation into the equation? With decentralisation, a number of new districts, sub-districts, and villages have been carved out of existing territories in both Poso and Donggala changing the demographics which interacts with the dynamics of horizontal inequalities outlined above. District-splitting through decentralisation has changed the demographics in Poso significantly. The first instance of this was the carving out of Morowali District from Poso District in 1999. It not only reduced the number of Muslims in the district (although not as significantly as with the later formation of Tojo Una-Una District) but also, the informants in the qualitative interviews revealed, created more jobs and potential opportunities for elites in the new district and thus reduced the competition between elites for power in Poso District, something which has also been seen as one of the root causes of the conflict. Immediately prior to the conflict and during its initial stages, Muslims, particularly those from Bungku and Mori sub-districts, dominated many elite positions in Poso.[18]   These two sub-districts were then incorporated into the new Morowali District, shifting some of the elite competition and the rough demographic polarisation of Christian and Muslim identities to the new district.

Large-scale inter-communal clashes began to subside in Poso at the end of 2001 with the declaration of the Malino Peace Accord. This is not to say that the violence stopped, but rather that it changed form. In 2001 and for some of 2002, violence took the form of raids or attacks on villages, which involved burning down houses, rather than large, full-on clashes between groups, which had all but disappeared by the end of 2001. Human physical violence then began to take the form of attacks against individuals in the form of 'mysterious' shootings, killings and disappearances.[19]   It was also around this time that planning for the carving out of a second district, Tojo Una-Una, began to take place. Two elite sources from the different communities confirmed that the formation of the new district was accelerated as a conflict-amelioration strategy to reduce some of the pressure in competition for elite positions and to meet some of the grassroots grievances pertaining to marginalisation. While this was met by some dissent on the Muslim side, which had dominated the executive in particular in the preceding years, again the district legislature fully endorsed the proposal. By 2003, Tojo Una-Una was formed, shifting the demographics in Poso to 65% Christian and 30% Muslim (BPS Poso, 2006). This provided the opportunity for Christians, now the vast majority in the region, to increase their claims on the district executive and access to government and resources.

Several sources (both Christian and Muslim) confirmed that while there was some discontent amongst Muslim elites, particularly about the formation of Tojo Una-Una District, the proposal to form both Morowali District in 1999 and Tojo Una-Una in 2003 was broadly accepted and endorsed by the district parliament. To some extent, decentralisation managed to ameliorate some of the local tensions in Poso.

While the district-splitting may have alleviated tensions and elite competition in Poso, it potentially passed on the challenges of managing diversity to the new districts. For example, in Morowali, which is now contiguous with Poso, there is intense competition between elites over access to government positions and resources. The region is also rich in natural resources, including plantations and minerals, which provides considerable incentives for mobilisation and power-seeking. Bearing in mind that parts of Morowali were once involved in the Poso conflict, the local history of tensions between the predominantly Muslim Bungku kingdom and the predominantly Christian Mori kingdom provide a context in
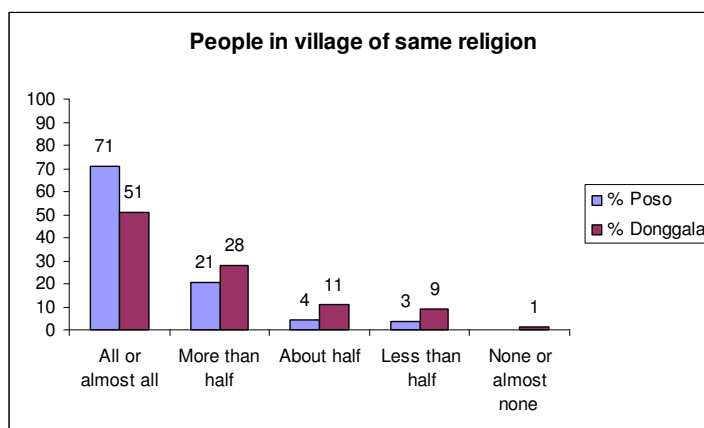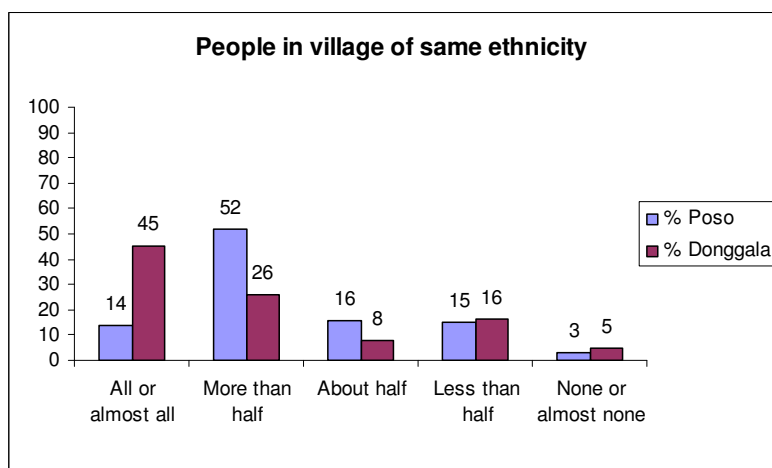
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[18] This was confirmed by both Muslim and Christian sources
[19] Interviews with representatives from Yayasan Tanah Merdeka, LPSM, Poso Centre, KPKPST and other NGOs monitoring violence in the region (2005 and 2006)

which there is potential for future conflict. Currently, the discourse in the district pertains to splitting the region again into Mori and Bungku Districts.

Decentralisation continues to have an impact on population dynamics and community relations through *pemekaran* in Donggala. Parigi Moutong was carved out of Donggala in 2003, as were a number of new sub-districts. In 2006, at the time this research took place, there were plans to form a new district out of Donggala called Kabupaten Sigi, which was endorsed by the recently deceased District Head. Some locals have started to perceive the potentially contentious nature of the new district in terms of ethno-religious demographics if incentives to mobilise are not managed. Plans for the formation are well underway, with civil servant wages and electricity bills being subject to levies to fund the initiative in some areas. At present there are 11 sub-districts which will potentially be incorporated into the new district. The demographics of the new district will mean a polarisation of the locally dominant religions in terms of group size, and will increase the number of ethnicities seen as newcomers as a percentage of the population, thereby reducing the cross-cutting identities which have in the past been one of the conflict ameliorating mechanisms in Donggala. Interviews in the region revealed that at the grassroots level discourse has not considered or focussed on the impacts of such changes at all. Rather, the formation of the district is widely supported by the populace as it will increase their access to public services. However, several sources have confirmed that elite competition for key positions has begun, as has the formation of alliances between elites. Given the change in demographics, the new positions available, the wealth of natural resources which fall within the potential boundaries of the new district, and the inequalities evident in Figures 1 and 2 above, one can conclude that there are now greater incentives to mobilise around some of the more sensitive identities. The experience of Poso suggests that it is important that these challenges are recognised and pre-empted in order to manage tensions in the future

Aside from splits at the district level, a number of new sub-districts and villages have also been formed in Poso.   For example, recently the Poso Kota sub-district where many of the physical clashes between groups once occurredwas split into two to form South Poso Kota sub-district and Poso Kota sub-district. Poso Pesisir sub-district, another location of violence, has been split into three sub-districts, shifting the Christian-Muslim majority lines. Both changes have created greater ethno-religious segregation at the sub-district and village level. At the village level, following the return of refugees from the inter-group phase of the conflict, many (but not all) of the once-mixed villages are now religiously segregated. This is also evident from the CRISE survey results, which demonstrate a high level of religious and ethnic segregation at the village level, particularly religious segregation. This is not a new phenomenon in Poso but it has been strengthened as a result of the conflict. This is different from the dynamics of segregation in Donggala, which is less religiously but more ethnically segregated, and this is also where the identity cleavages lie; that is, in Donggala there is much more emphasis placed locally on ethnic rather than religious identity.

Figure 3: CRISE perceptions survey: perceived level of village segregation, by religion (N=300/District)[20]

People in village of same religion

	% Poso	% Donggala
All or almost all	71	51
More than half	21	28
About half	4	11
Less than half	3	9
None or almost none		1

Figure 4: CRISE perceptions survey: perceived level of village segregation, by ethnicity (N=300/District)[21]

People in village of same ethnicity

	% Poso	% Donggala
All or almost all	14	45
More than half	52	26
About half	16	8
Less than half	15	16
None or almost none	3	5

In some cases this lower-level splitting of sub-districts and villages has heightened ethno-religious segregation in the area. For example, in Kulawi there was once a large population of 'newcomers' with ethnicities originating from all over the island, as well as the indigenous Kulawi people. Now, the indigenous Kulawi predominantly occupy Kulawi sub-district, and the newcomers fall under the jurisdiction of South Kulawi. Some are concerned that these changes could result in inter-sub-district conflict. However, worthy of note are the efforts of traditional *adat* (customary) elders to solidify relations and interaction between these ethnicities through the formation of the inter-sub-district *adat* council which has had much success at mediating disputes from within and between villages, as well as encouraging interaction between the different sub-districts. One of the motivations for the formation of the council was a series of appeals to the population not to get involved in the conflict in neighbouring Poso by both traditional and religious elites as well as sub-district local government officials. This indicates that locals are identifying the potential tensions and problems that could result from decentralisation and district-splitting. In response, interim institutions have been created (some becoming permanent) to ensure that harmonious inter-group relations are promoted and problems are addressed as they arise.

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[20] Unweighted results
[21] Unweighted results

One further consideration regarding the impact of decentralisation on conflict dynamics in Poso and Donggala is the scope the laws have provided for direct election of the District Head (*Bupati*) and how this intersects with local tensions. Donggala is yet to implement its District Head elections, which are planned for 2007-8. While the decentralisation laws allowed for direct elections in Indonesia, this new political space did not result in violence during the direct elections of the District Head in Poso in 2005. Brown and Diprose (2006) attribute this largely to the array of interventions put in place to ensure that the elections remained peaceful, in particular the deliberate inter-religious pairing of all candidates during the elections. Altogether, five slates of candidates stood for the District Head/Deputy District Head elections in Poso. Each pairing comprised a Muslim and a Christian. In three out of the five pairings the Christian candidate was for the *Bupati* with a Muslim as his deputy, in the other two this situation was reversed.

Given the grievances concerning marginalisation discussed above, the history of violence, and the emphasis the population placed on local security, as well as the fact that, following the implementation of decentralisation and district-splitting, the population was 65% Christian, it is not surprising that a Christian whose mother was indigenous to the region, and a candidate who was backed by the Christian PDS party, won in a landslide. The results of the elections showed how religious demographics translated into votes for it was those parties with strong religious links that garnered the majority of the votes (Brown and Diprose 2006).

The above comparative case study shows the complex relationship between conflict and decentralisation. Where there are wide inequalities spread across echelons of wealth between the groups, large groups of people which identify with coinciding rather than cross-cutting identity groupings, greater ethno-religious segregation, a discourse of difference, strong perceptions of unequal access and opportunity between groups, there is greater potential for grievances to surface and mobilisation for violent conflict to occur. However, decentralisation can also alleviate some of these pressures. Discourses centred around cross-cutting identity groups, and efforts to manage tensions and disengage in conflict, create a context in which regional autonomy can have positive effects on local communities. This may be undermined by decentralisation if it changes these dynamics at the local level and creates greater opportunity to mobilise without the necessary interim institutions to manage the tensions potentially triggered by the process.

3   Nigeria

3.1   *Administrative roots of decentralisation in Nigeria*

The posting of Frederick Lugard and Donald Cameron, two doyens of indirect rule to Nigeria in the early colonial period (1906-1935) was instrumental in the institutionalisation of the doctrine of local self-government in the country. However, the philosophy and practice of indirect rule differed in various parts of the country as a result of the different prevailing political systems. This also dictated the pace and direction of reforms in local government in the late colonial period (1940-1960) (Gboyega 2003). For instance in the 1950s, while the Eastern and Western Regions embarked on reforms aimed at increasing the number of elected councillors and creating a 'conciliar' system of local administration, the Northern Region retained the prevailing system in which the Emir was the Native Authority. With the advent of independence in 1960, and within the framework of the existing three-region federal structure, there was no significant change in the system of local government in the country. Rather, local government councils were subject to abuse because dominant political parties in each region used the native courts and local police to intimidate and oppress members of the opposition parties. Although the military, which took over power in 1966, changed the structure of the federation by creating 12 states, local government

reforms remained under the control of states. Thus there was no uniform system of local government.

There was, for instance, a strong tendency in the southern states to move towards a French style 'deconcentration' development administration model in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Local government officials were representatives of the states and not of the people and they were expected to implement the policies of state governments in the locality. This practice generated resentment among the people as local government officials were seen as external agents. The perceived excesses of local government officials led to riots in Western Nigeria as peasant farmers took up arms against the state between 1968 and 1969. . The native authority system experienced slower and less dramatic changes in the Northern region where indirect rule was most successful due to the presence of centralised precolonial political systems. The Emirs (politico-religious rulers) retained their influence in local administration due to the strength of prevailing political traditions and religion. However, although the powers and authority of the Emirs upon which the native administration rested were widely accepted in much of the predominantly Muslim states of the far North, there was fierce resistance to the extension of indirect rule and the authority of the Emirs in the Middle Belt region whose population has substantial numbers of Christians and Muslims. For instance, in 1960 and 1964, the Tiv had revolted against the unrepresentative native administration foisted on them by the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) government.

The 1976 Local Government Reform was the first comprehensive and uniform decentralisation programme in the country. The military government, emboldened considerably by revenue from oil, created 301 local government areas (LGAs) and local government was recognised as the third tier of government with statutory administrative, political and fiscal functions and powers. These powers and functions were subsequently entrenched in the 1979 Constitution where the 301 LGAs were listed alongside the 19 states of the federation. The reform policy provided for directly elected local councils and guaranteed direct funding of local governments from the Federation Account as determined by the National Assembly. The third tier of government was also to serve as the bedrock of the country's federal democracy. For instance, each local council elected a delegate to the national Constituent Assembly established to deliberate on the 1979 Constitution. The cumulative effect of these changes in the context of competitive communalism in the country was that it raised the stakes for having an LGA. This manifested itself in the clamour for local governments in most parts of the country. While the military government resisted these demands for new local councils, the civilian governments elected in 1979 succumbed to them given the imperative of securing votes from different communal groups. Consequently, during the Second Republic (1979-1983) many state governments embarked upon creation of new LGAs, similar to the phenomenon of carving out new districts in Indonesia. The result was that by the time the military intervened again on December 31, 1983, the number of LGAs had risen from 301 to 703. The multiplication of LGAs came at the heavy cost of politicisation and de-institutionalisation. For instance, several state governments arbitrarily suspended elected councils and replaced them with appointed 'sole administrators'. The fiscal autonomy of the LGAs was also compromised because several state governments withheld local council funds. Worse still, political interests overshadowed the criteria of population, viability and administrative efficiency in the creation of the councils.

It is against this background that the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime which seized power on December 31, 1983, abolished the 402 LGAs the politicians had created and reverted to the 301 LGAs in 1984. However, the Babangida regime, which took over in a palace coup in 1985, succumbed to widespread pressure to create new LGAs and States as it faced a legitimacy crisis. It created new LGAs in 1987 and 1991. Realising the political dividends that his predecessor had derived from the creation of States and LGAs, Gen. Sani Abacha,

who took over in November 1993, also created new states and LGAs in 1996, as his unpopular and illegitimate regime was desperate for legitimacy. As in the Babangida period, the criteria for creation of LGAs were murky. It was apparent that LGAs were created to appease and gain support from influential traditional rulers, military officers and politicians. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the exercise was dogged by controversies and partially triggered communal conflicts in different parts of the country, with violent outcomes in Zango-Kataf (Kaduna State), Ife-Modakeke (Osun State), Aguleri-Umuleri (Anambra State), Tafawa-Balewa (Bauchi State), Wukari (Taraba State) and Warri (Delta State).

Violence occurred in these cases because the military regimes were not sensitive to the dynamics of inter-group relations in the localities. For instance, when assigning names to the new LGAs and specifying their headquarters the regime was often blind to historic grievances and perceptions of inequalities and domination. Aggrieved groups often complained that infrastructure and income-generating opportunities were concentrated in towns belonging to dominant groups who usually appropriated the local councils (which in most cases bore the name of their communal group). Such appropriation caused alienation among marginal groups and triggered demands for new LGAs. However, to the chagrin of some aggrieved groups, the new LGAs created by the military governments did not result in the long-expected autonomy but merely consolidated the status quo. Such groups therefore perceived the controversial new local councils as being designed to perpetuate their marginalisation and pauperisation. It is in such cases that violent conflicts accompanied the creation of local councils. However, where local inter-group dynamics were taken into consideration and new councils provided some autonomy to hitherto marginalised groups while not threatening the interest of dominant groups, violent conflicts were avoided. We illustrate this point through a comparative study of creation of LGAs in Calabar and Warri in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

The Niger Delta is an ethnically diverse region accounting for about a quarter of Nigeria's 389 ethnic groups. As ethnic minorities they have historically mobilised against the dominance of the three major ethnic groups, similar to the case of Indonesia where the minorities in the outer islands have mobilised against the larger groups near the centre. As a result of successive state creation exercises (in 1967, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996), the region currently accounts for six out of the 36 states that, along with the federal capital territory, make up the Nigerian federation. With a population of about 22 million, it is virtually coterminous with the oil-belt, accounting for about 95% of Nigeria's oil output. Since the Second Republic (1979-1983), elected state governments, social movements and community based organisations in the region have mobilised, demanding a larger portion of the federally collected oil revenues that accrue to the region on the basis of derivation. Apart from the environmental degradation associated with oil production, the campaign for more revenues derived from the perception that the revenue allocation formula since the early 1970s, when oil became the country's major source of revenue, had been structured to the detriment of oil producing regions. Before the advent of oil, 50 % of revenues went back to the region of source under what was termed the derivation principle. Minority ethnic groups in the oil producing regions claim the change was effected to favour the major ethnic groups whose states are non-oil producing.[22]

While the ethnic groups in the region have mobilised against their domination by the major ethnic groups, especially on the issue of revenue allocation, similar to the case of Central Sulawesi province in Indonesia, there are longstanding and internecine inter-ethnic conflicts within the region. These conflicts arise mainly from the perception and fears of domination and inequalities amongst groups administered as part of the same division, province, state and LGAs. Calabar in Cross River State and Warri in Delta State were selected as case

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[22]See International IDEA, 2000.

studies because they are multi-ethnic divisions where three indigenous ethnic groups have historically been involved in conflict relations. The ethnic groups in Calabar are the Efik, the Efut and the Qua, while the Ijaw, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo lay claim to indigeneity in Warri. Significantly though, while all three ethnic groups in Calabar are only indigenous to the division, the Ijaw and Urhobo are also indigenous to other LGAs and states. This, as well as the presence of oil, we will argue, complicates the nature of inter-group relations in Warri. In the sections that follow, we explore the impact of the creation of LGAs on inter-group relations in the two areas. We start with the case of Warri where the creation of LGAs was the triggering factor for internecine violence.

3.2   *Creation of LGAs and Violent Ethnic Conflicts in Warri*

In March 1997, some enraged Ijaw youth allegedly launched violent attacks on their Itsekiri neighbours sparking off what would be one of Nigeria's worst incidents of ethnic violence since the end of civil war in 1970. Similar sparks resulting from youth clashes can be found in many of the communal conflicts in Indonesia. Although there are no official figures on the casualties, conservative estimates indicate that thousands of people were killed in the protracted violence that effectively ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 2004 (Human Rights Watch 2003). There was also massive internal population displacement as the Ijaw allegedly occupied about 13 Itsekiri villages (Akpotor 2002). The ensuing insecurity was such that many Warri residents and private businesses relocated from Nigeria's second most important oil city.

The trigger factor was the directive issued on March 17, 1997, by Col. John Dung, the Delta State Military Administrator to the chairman of Warri South LGA to relocate from Ogbe-Ijoh, an Ijaw town, to Ogidigben, an Itsekiri town. The directive was perceived as a case of robbing the Ijaw to pay the Itsekiri. This is because the military administrator had announced in October 1996 that Ogbe-Ijoh was the headquarters of Warri South LGA, one of the new six LGAs created in Delta State. The announcement and the subsequent appointment of an Ijaw as interim chairman of the LGA created the impression that the new LGA was created for the Ijaw, demonstrating just how important perceptions were to the conflict. However, this was at odds with Decree No. 36 of 1996 issued on 30th December 1996 and Decree No. 7 of 1997 issued on 3rd March 1997, which listed Warri South West LGA as the new LGA, with Ogidigben as the LGA headquarters. It is on the basis of the decrees that the military administrator announced the 'relocation' of the headquarters of the LGA to Ogidigben, two days after the local council elections held on 15th March 1997. The perception of loss among the Ijaw was aggravated by the fact that the winner of the chairmanship position was an Itsekiri. This perception, which led the Ijaw to resort to violence, can only be understood in the context of the history of ethnic relations in Warri.

This history has been characterised by frantic attempts by the Ijaw and the Urhobo to overturn perceived Itsekiri domination in the region. The Itsekiri dominated external trade with the Portuguese from the 15th century as a result of their advantageous location on the Forcados River in the Western Niger Delta. This domination persisted till the 18th century when British merchants began to explore the area. The Itsekiri bought slaves and oil palm from the Urhobo, which they sold to European merchants. The Ijaw were marginalised in the trade and remained migrant fishermen who occasionally resorted to piracy. As a result of the wealth generated from the trade and their peculiar history, the Itsekiri established a strong monarchy, whereas amongst the Urhobo and the Ijaw power was decentralised and vested in village councils led by the elders. Although, the Itsekiri monarchy declined in 1848 following the movement of the centre of trade away from Ode Itsekiri, the Itsekiri capital, to Benin River, there was no power vacuum as the British consul encouraged prominent Itsekiri traders to elect a Governor to regulate trade. Consequently it was Nana

Olomu, the third Governor of Benin River and other prominent traders who signed the 'Treaty of Protection' with the British in 1884 (Lloyd 1963).

When Nana resisted British penetration of the hinterland Dore Numa, another Itsekiri merchant who was Nana's rival aided the British expedition against Nana. Dore also facilitated the defeat of the uncompromising ruler of the ancient Benin Kingdom and was subsequently rewarded with an appointment as the pre-eminent paramount ruler in Central Province (later Warri Province) of Southern Nigeria. His influence derived from the fact that the Resident was required to consult him on all appointments to the native courts. It is against this background that Dore paraded himself as the 'Paramount Ruler of Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo'. Dore's pre-eminence contradicted the principles of Indirect Rule, which stipulated that colonial officers should rule through the intermediary of traditional authority structures. The result is that while a royalist movement emerged among the Itsekiri to campaign for the restoration of Itsekiri monarchy, the Ijaw and the Urhobo campaigned to be separated from Warri Native Administration, which was Dore's sphere of influence.

The anti-tax riots of the late 1920s, which turned violent in Warri Province, forced the British to consider a reorganisation of local governments along the lines desired by the Urhobo and Ijaw. In 1932, the colonial administration carved Urhobo Division and Western Ijaw Division out of Warri Division. Although the reorganisation led to improvements in administrative efficiency, it did not address the fears of ethnic domination in its entirety. This is because a considerable number of Ijaw and Urhobo communities remained in Warri Division. These communities intensified their campaigns for a separate Division by alleging that the Itsekiri dominated the Division. In another local government reorganisation conducted in 1948, the colonial administration carved out Western Urhobo Division from Warri Division for some Urhobo communities. Nonetheless, the problem was half solved as the Agbarha-Urhobo and Okere-Urhobo communities who live in Warri Township were left in the Division. The administration also refused to create a Division for the Ijaw clans in Warri Division or to transfer the clans to Western Ijaw Division. Colonial officers reckoned the proposed Division was not viable and it was not feasible to transfer the clans to Western Ijaw Division as they were not contiguous.

The grievances of the Ijaw and Urhobo against perceived Itsekiri domination in Warri Division heightened in the early 1950s when the Western Region Government recognised the Itsekiri monarch as Olu of Warri. This is because when the British restored the Itsekiri monarchy in 1936 after the death of Dore, it had recognised the Itsekiri monarch as Olu of Itsekiri. This was to allay the fears of other ethnic groups in the Province, especially the Ijaw and the Urhobo who claimed the title of Olu of Warri implied the Itsekiri monarch was paramount ruler of the Province. However in 1951, the government approved the title of Olu of Warri because it reckoned that with the creation of Western Urhobo Division, 'Warri Division was essentially an Itsekiri territory'. Both the government and the Itsekiri elite believed that the concomitant effect of the successive creation of new divisions was that what remained as Warri Division was Itsekiri 'homeland' although it still contained some Ijaw and Urhobo communities, which the Itsekiri elites called 'enclaves'. This perception was further strengthened by the government's decision to change the name of Warri Province to Delta Province.

The change of name was not sufficient to allay the fears of the Ijaw and the Urhobo. Since direct elections were introduced in 1951, only Itsekiri politicians had been elected to represent Warri Division at both the regional and central legislatures, and they also held ministerial positions at both levels. However, while the fears of the Urhobo were mitigated by the fact that they controlled Warri Township and Delta Province due to demographic factors, the Ijaw were inconsolable about Ijaw marginalisation at both the Divisional and Provincial levels. Consequently, when the colonial administration established a Commission in 1957 to look into the fears of minorities and suggest ways of allaying them,

the Ijaw in Warri Division protested against their marginalisation in the Division and sought 'reunification' with Ijaw in Western Ijaw Division and Ijaw in Rivers Province to form an all Ijaw Rivers State. The Urhobo elites who attributed their marginalisation in the Region to the machinations of the Yoruba-dominated government canvassed for the creation of a Mid-West State. While some Itsekiri elites supported the proposed state, the mainstream Itsekiri leadership, under the of the Olu of Warri, opposed the state, preferring to remain in the Western Region. This group, peeved by Urhobo dominance of Warri Township, also canvassed for the exclusion of non-Itsekiri from contesting elections in the Division.

This request was apparently granted in 1964 when the Mid West Constitution recognised four minority areas and Warri Division legally became an Itsekiri 'homeland' where only Itsekiri could stand in elections. The Constitution gave legal backing to what had been the political practice and the Itsekiri continued to dominate political appointments in the division even during military rule. It is in this context that the Ijaw and the Urhobo unsuccessfully mobilised against continued association with the Itsekiri in 1976 during the local government reforms in which Warri Division essentially became Warri LGA. In retrospect, these objections seem justified because, although Ijaw and Urhobo were now eligible to contest elections and were elected as councillors, the Itsekiri monopolised the chairmanship position. The Itsekiri were also perceived as dominating the traditional council, political appointments and employment opportunities in the local government area. Consequently, the Ijaw and the Urhobo have canvassed the creation of an LGA for each of the ethnic groups in the area. The Itsekiri have historically objected to the proposal on the grounds that the territory is Itsekiri 'homeland' and that Ijaw and Urhobo communities seeking LGAs from Warri were 'settlers'.

The Ijaw and the Urhobo regard the non-realisation of an ethnic LGA after successive LGA-creation exercises as an indication of the triumph of the Itsekiri narrative. The perception among the Ijaw and Urhobo is that successive governments have privileged Itsekiri interests during local government creation. This is particularly the case with the Ijaw who had recognised village councils in the 1950s and expected that such councils should have metamorphosed into an LGA. The Ijaw also protested against the transfer of some of their clans out of Warri LGA, viewing this as an attempts to aggravate their minority position. For instance in 1977, the Egbeoma, an Ijaw clan, was transferred from Bendel State to Ondo State. The Ijaw claimed the transfer was contrived to consolidate the hegemony of the Itsekiri in the newly created Warri LGA. Again, in 1980, the Ijaw rejected the transfer of Ijaw communities from Warri LGA to Ovia LGA and Burutu LGA as a divide and rule strategy. In 1991, the Ijaw were aggrieved that instead of creating an Ijaw LGA called Nein-Ibe LGA with headquarters at Oporoza, as the Ijaw requested, the Federal Military Government under Babangida's presidency created Warri North LGA with headquarters at Koko, an Itsekiri town. The effect of this was that Ijaw communities remained political minorities in both the old and new LGAs. This was even more painful because a member of the supreme military council had allegedly informed some Ijaw elites that the regime had decided to create an LGA for the Ijaw in Warri (Ukiwo 2006).

It is against this background that Ijaw youths resorted to violence when the headquarters of the LGA created in 1996 was literally uprooted from an Ijaw town and relocated to an Itsekiri town. As earlier indicated, the ensuing conflict persisted until 2004 when the state government unilaterally relocated the headquarters back to the Ijaw town where it first started operations. Evidently, violent conflicts occurred because of the perception that decentralisation was aimed at strengthening longstanding political horizontal inequalities rather than promoting self-government and local autonomy. An examination of the experience of Calabar will show that decentralisation can also play a conflict mitigating function when they enhance the prospects for local autonomy and political inclusion.

3.3 The politics of local government creation in Calabar

The tell-tale signs of conflict in Calabar over the creation of LGAs were evident when the Federal Government established a panel on the creation of states and LGAs in 1996. Although the three ethnic groups in Calabar sent a joint memorandum asking for the creation of five LGAs from Calabar, the Efut and Qua went behind the backs of the Efik to ask for separate LGAs. Consequently, when the military regime created Calabar South LGA out of Calabar Municipality LGA on October 1st, 1996, with headquarters at Anantigha, the Efut claimed ownership of the LGA. The Efut 'donated' some land to the government for the construction of the local government secretariat. The land included landed property of Calabar residents, including Prof. Elijah Nta Henshaw who was head of Akpabuyo, an Efik community. Several persons including the secretary of the Efut Combined Assembly (ECA) were arrested for assaulting the Efik high-chief and his wife, and destroying their property.[23]

The Qua claimed what remained of Calabar Municipality LGA. The Efut and Qua paramount rulers respectively changed their titles to 'Muri Munene of Calabar South LGA and Paramount Ruler of the Efuts'; and 'Ndidem of Calabar Municipality and Paramount Ruler of the Quas'. While the Ndidem of the Qua was elected paramount ruler on the basis of the majority of Qua clans in Calabar Municipality, paramount ruler status of Calabar South LGA was expected to rotate between the Efik and Efut paramount rulers.[24] The context of the struggle for paramount ruler status in the LGAs was the directive from the Abacha regime that LGAs should set aside some percentage of their allocation as stipends for traditional rulers.[25]

This struggle resurfaced when Etubom (Prof.) Elijah Nta Henshaw, who had been assaulted by some Efut in 1997, was elected the Obong of Calabar (paramount ruler of the Efik) in 1999. His election sparked off a succession dispute, which prompted the State Government to set up a Commission of Inquiry in 2000, headed by an Efik High Court Judge. This recommended that the Obong should be made president of an apex council of five LGAs and permanent president of the State Council of Traditional Rulers. Although the government rejected the recommendation the Qua and Efut remained concerned that the Efik wanted to carry out their longstanding desire to make the Efik paramount ruler pre-eminent.[26]

It is hardly surprising therefore that when the Efik extended invitations to the Efut and the Qua for the coronation of Obong Elijah Nta Henshaw in December 2001, the Qua and Efut paramount rulers refused to attend because the Obong was addressed as 'Rex Maximus Calabaris'. The tensions generated by the controversy were still palpable when the Ndidem Usang Iso, the Paramount Ruler of the Qua, died. The Qua planned an elaborate programme for the departed nonagenarian. The souvenir programme for the funeral activities triggered another conflict between the Qua and the Efik. The Efik took exception to the fact that the Qua monarch was referred to as 'His Royal Majesty, Ndidem of Calabar, Grand Patriarch and Paramount Ruler of the Akin (Qua) People'. The Efik also complained

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[23] N. Eshiet, 'The Battle for Calabar', *The Pioneer*, 17th February 1997, p. 8-9. See also, N. Eshiet and E. Odiong '3 Tribes fight over Calabar', *The Pioneer,* 10-16, February, 1997.

[24] The principle of rotation allows serving monarchs to hold the post for life. See Letter of the Efut to the Executive Governor of Cross River State on 'Selection of Paramount Ruler for Calabar South LGA', dated 30th Sept. 2002.

[25] The 1978 Edict has been revised as regards payment of stipends to Paramount ruler and chairman of Traditional Rulers Council, Clan heads and member of Traditional Rulers Council and Certificated village heads. See CRSG, *Gazette No. 7*, 2000.

[26] CRSN, *Views of the Cross River State Government on the Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crisis for the selection of Obong of Calabar and Paramount Ruler of the Efiks,* (Calabar: Government Printer 2000).

that the Qua people had used the gathering, which attracted dignitaries from all parts of the country, as an opportunity to re-launch their claims of ownership of Calabar. There were more tensions in Calabar later that year when the Qua restated their claims over Calabar at the coronation thanksgiving service of their new paramount ruler, Ndidem Thomas Ika Ika Oqua II.

The State government intervened by calling a peace meeting to avert violent clashes. The three different groups presented position papers, which contained their claims to ownership of Calabar.[27] Apart from threatening to withdraw official recognition of traditional chiefs who could not guarantee peace in their domain, the State government defused the tension by ruling that Calabar belonged to the government and not to any particular ethnic group. Thus, despite the animosities generated by the creation of new LGAs, Calabar retained its reputation as a haven of peace in a troubled region. Quick intervention circumvented the development of a discourse promoting violence.

The reason why violence was averted in Calabar is that although the creation of new LGAs improved the opportunities for inclusion for hitherto marginal groups, it did not overturn the advantages of the dominant group. This argument can be better appreciated through a brief excursion into the history of inter-group relations in Calabar. Like Warri, Calabar gained prominence as the port for the transatlantic slave trade. The Efik kings and merchants dominated the trade and in this way acquired wealth, power and influence. This early advantage was consolidated in the colonial period as the Efik who were the first to embrace western education became the teachers, catechists and administrative staff of the colonial service. Efik interests were also privileged in the native administration. However, although the Efik were demographically dominant, the colonial administration acceded to the demands of the Efut and Qua for greater recognition. For instance, in 1941 the principle of a rotational presidency was introduced which allowed non-Efik chiefs to be elected as president of the Calabar Native Administration. Thus the scenario in Warri where Itsekiri rulers were accorded permanent presidency status was avoided in Calabar.
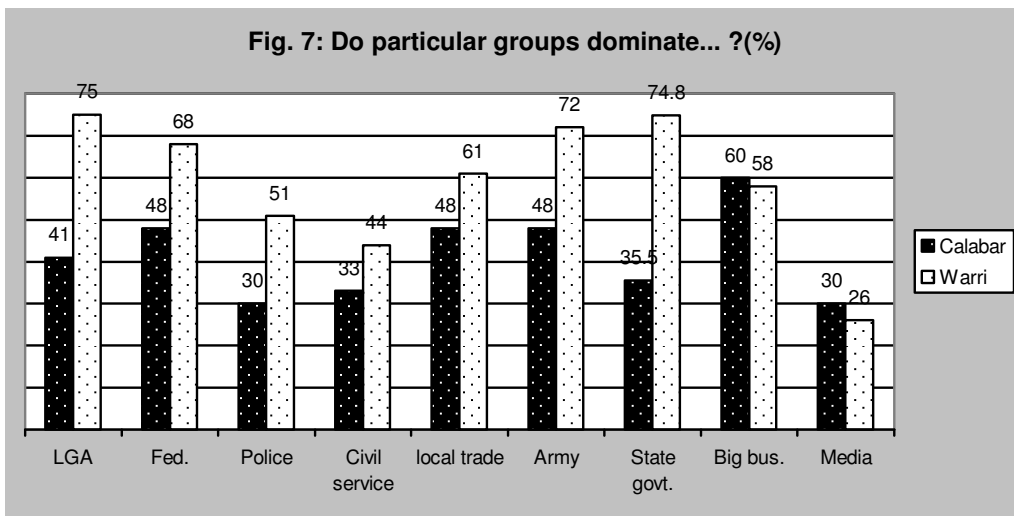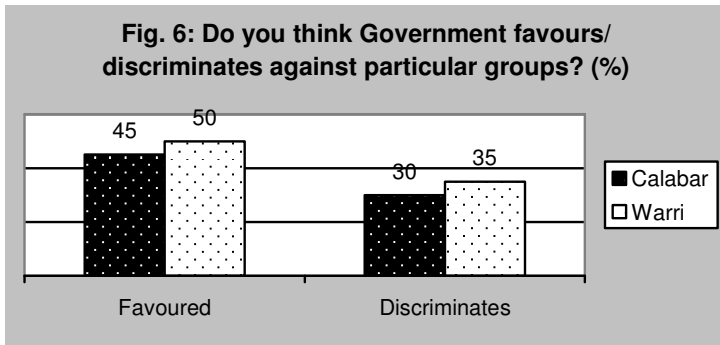
This policy was carried into the period of self-government because the regional and successive state governments granted equal status to the traditional rulers of the three ethnic groups. Although the Efik resented this (against the backdrop of the pre-eminence of Efik chiefs in the precolonial period), they were not overly perturbed, as the Efik ruler with his title of Obong of Calabar remained pre-eminent. Moreover, while granting equal recognition to the traditional rulers, successive governments did not accede to demands that Calabar should be linked to the title of Qua and Efut paramount rulers or that Calabar should be removed from the title of Efik paramount ruler. What the creation of new LGAs has achieved is to enable the Efut and Qua paramount rulers to link their titles to a section of Calabar. Efik pre-eminence has, however, been left unchallenged because only the Efik paramount ruler's title is linked to Calabar as a whole. Moreover the fact that Efut and Qua have claimed the two LGAs has not led to the exclusion of Efik elites and masses from economic and employment opportunities in the local council. This is primarily because the indigeneity of the Efik as the Efut and the Qua is not contested.
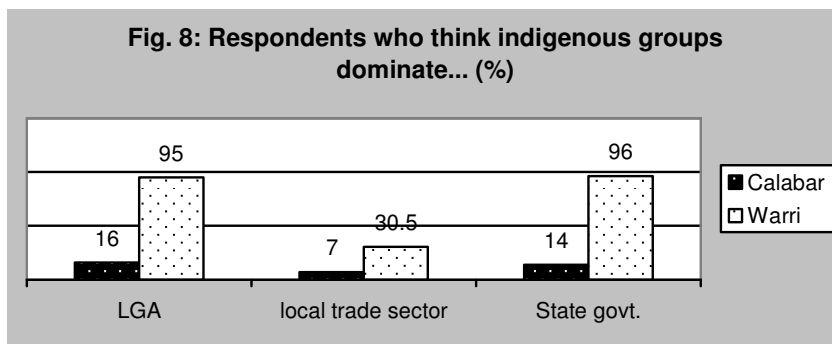
The inclusive arrangements are also evident in the fact that although the Efik dominate political appointments by virtue of their demographic dominance, the Qua and Efut have not been left out. In other words, decentralisation and the new group politics it entailed have been able to accommodate the diversity of the region. Unlike in Warri, where the Itsekiri have dominated the chairmanship of the local council, all three ethnic groups in Calabar have had the opportunity of producing a candidate for the highly valued position. Moreover, since controversy surrounds which group arrived first in Calabar and not which groups are

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[27] QCCA *op cit*, EECA *op cit.*, and ECA 'The Position of the Efut Nation on moves by Government to achieve Unity, Peace and Stability in Calabar' (June 2003).

not indigenous, which is the case in Warri, there is no institutionalised exclusion of any group from employment opportunities. The Ijaw and the Urhobo are particularly aggrieved that benefits from the oil industry have accrued exclusively to the Itsekiri. The presence of oil has raised the stakes for controlling Warri and increased the likelihood of violent conflicts.

The different trajectories of inter-group relations in Warri and Calabar are supported by the results of the perceptions survey conducted in the area, similar to that implemented in Indonesia. As Figure 6 shows, more respondents from Warri where violence has taken place, than in Calabar believe that government favours or discriminates against particular groups. The same trend was found in Indonesia, where respondents from the violence-ridden region of Poso had stronger perceptions of unequal access to opportunities than those in Donggala. Stronger perceptions of inequality in Warri than in Calabar are also evident in Figure 7 which presents responses to the question of the extent to which certain institutions or tiers of government are dominated by certain groups. It is clear that more Warri respondents than their Calabar counterparts believe that some groups dominate the local government, state government, federal government, civil service, local trade sector, army and police.

Fig. 6: Do you think Government favours/ discriminates against particular groups? (%)

Fig. 7: Do particular groups dominate... ?(%)

Fig. 8: Respondents who think indigenous groups dominate... (%)

When asked which groups dominated the local government, local trade sector and state government, Calabar respondents again lagged behind Warri respondents in mentioning an indigenous group as dominating these crucial areas. The fact that 95% of Warri respondents believe that a particular group (Itsekiri) dominates the local government indicates that decentralisation has not addressed the longstanding demands for inclusion in Warri. It is instructive to note that shortly after the survey, a panel of the Federal Character Commission reported that there were no Ijaw staff members in Warri North LGA. It is hardly surprising that violence occurred in Warri and not in Calabar, where only 16% of respondents felt an indigenous group dominated the local government.

4   Conclusion

Clearly therefore, the decentralisation-conflict nexus should be analysed in terms of whether and how decentralisation ameliorates or exacerbates historic grievances concerning inter-group domination and horizontal inequalities, and not just in terms of its impact on service delivery and growth as has been the case in most of the literature. We have examined how the history of grievances, demands, and identity politics in some decentralised units in Indonesia and Nigeria have played out with decentralisation in general across each nation and in the context of the creation of new districts. Grievances about the nature and extent of centralised rule and horizontal inequalities have long existed in both Indonesia and Nigeria, and these form a historical backdrop to the decentralisation programmes, and thus should be considered when evaluating the impact of decentralisation on conflict dynamics and centre-regional as well as intra-regional tensions.

While decentralisation has responded to longstanding grievances by providing opportunities for the expression of diversity and better attention to local needs, there are several key components of the implementation of decentralisation that have the potential to interact with identity politics and conflict dynamics in the regions. Significant structural and institutional change will have ripple effects and can result in new tensions, which will be exacerbated if the process is poorly implemented, something which is demonstrated well by the case of Warri in Nigeria. Both of the case studies presented here demonstrate that decentralisation indirectly interacts with conflict dynamics, particularly by stimulating changes in population demographics through sub-national splitting of administrative units; providing for local autonomy and local participation in decision making through direct elections; and creating incentives for local elites in both new and existing areas to compete for power and resources by mobilising sensitive identities. This is not to say that the demographic, structural, and institutional changes stimulated by the laws and demanded by the populace will necessarily lead to violent conflict, but rather that they do interact with, and can potentially stimulate, local tensions. This can have positive and negative consequences, that is, it can ameliorate past tensions and grievances but also stimulate new ones.

Changing group size, the creation of new administrative areas, the control over natural resources, elite power struggles and alliance building, as well as the struggles for representation of ethno-religious groups in the local executive and legislature, can all be stimulated by decentralisation. Decentralisation tends to result in violent conflicts where there are large groups of people which identify with coinciding rather than cross-cutting identity groupings and where there are strong perceptions of unequal access and opportunity between groups. However, the cases in this paper also demonstrate that decentralisation can mitigate some of these pressures and promote peaceful management of conflict, particularly when these tensions were pre-existing and grievances had already reached boiling point, such as in the case of Poso. At the same time, discourses centred around cross-cutting identity groups, and efforts to manage tensions and disengage in conflict, can allow for regional autonomy to have positive effects on local communities, such has been the case in some parts of Donggala. This may be undermined by decentralisation if it changes these dynamics at the local level and creates greater opportunity to mobilise without the necessary interim institutions to manage the tensions potentially triggered by the process. In this complex way decentralisation has had some indirect impacts on the conflict dynamics in the region.

The worse case scenario is when decentralisation is implemented in ways that exacerbate perceptions of injustices and horizontal inequalities, as we demonstrated with the Warri case. This could either occur where historical minorities are further marginalised by the creation of new local governing units or where historically majorities are transformed into minorities through district splitting. Both situations are tantamount to a travesty of decentralisation to the extent that they fail to guarantee or extend the possibilities for local autonomy and self-governance. All told, it seems that it is particular forms of implementation rather than decentralisation per se that triggers violent conflicts, as shown by the relatively peaceful experience of Donggala and Calabar.

Effective interventions to manage the tensions stimulated by the interaction between social tensions and decentralisation, as well as conflict management strategies which channel inter-group tensions into productive outcomes, as we saw in both Donggala in the Kulawi area and Calabar, rather than destructive violence, will ensure that diversity flourishes in multi-ethnic and religious states such as Indonesia and Nigeria. This will also ensure that what is a potentially a temporary phenomenon resulting from transition does not solidify into long-term grievances and potentially violent conflict.

The extent to which decentralisation 'triggers' or 'moderates' violent local conflict is contingent on how the decentralisation implementation process is carried out and how the consequent new local political, governmental, and institution-building processes are managed. This is subsequently linked to the correlation between the advertised gains of decentralisation prior to its implementation and actual outcomes – are local groups satisfied with the decentralisation process in terms of their perceptions of what decentralisation would provide? It is also linked to how inter-group dynamics, horizontal inequalities, and new local politics are managed in the decentralised context, which is highly conditional on local, regional and the interference of national elites, their interests, grass-roots support base, and how this is mobilised to access the fruits of decentralisation.

Of course, demographics, history, public policy, and elite interests/incentives are not the only aspects to be considered when evaluating conflict dynamics. Mobilisation structures, grass roots grievances/interests, identity consciousness, national interventions, deliberate fostering or provocation of conflict and most importantly local conflict intervention mechanisms are all important elements for understanding sub-national patterns of conflict and violence. The discussion above looks at how the implementation of decentralisation has intersected with some, not all of these elements. However, it does demonstrate that there have been some indirect impacts from decentralisation on conflict dynamics in the

regions. An awareness of these dynamics is important for managing diversity and structural change in other nations and regions undergoing decentralisation.

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Title:
Decentralisation and conflict management in Indonesia and Nigeria

Date:
2008

Citation:
Diprose, R. & Ukiwo, U. (2008). Decentralisation and conflict management in Indonesia and Nigeria. Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford.

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/221117

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