

TAP



TRUE AWKA PEOPLE
Movement for Awka Transformation

FROM INSTABILITY TO POLITICAL ORDER IN AWKA

A Report of The True Awka People (TAP)

The present report examines the contemporary political issues facing Awka Kingdom. It has specific focus on the crises around the Eze Uzu institution and the leadership of the Awka Development Union, Nigeria (ADUN). The report explores the multifaceted dimensions of the present crises, and traces their historical origin and proximate causation. It recommends a range of solutions to resolve the immediate crises and stabilize the polity. It also offers longer-term ideas for institutional reform to engender political order in Awka, as a necessary condition for the socio-economic transformation of the kingdom.

True Awka People

Author/Editor: Dr. Chudi A. Okoye

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was written, edited, designed and formatted by the designated author of the True Awka People (TAP), Dr. Chudi Okoye, based on TAP member inputs, transcribed interviews, media research, document reviews, and further academic research by the author. The report uses data gathered from various sources to develop an *explanatory construct* for understanding the persistence of political instability in Awka town. The report recognizes and leverages the excellent work already done by the Awka Pacesetters Club, particularly its incisive interviews with key players across the spectrum of Awka politics. The point of departure for this report, then, was to ask why, in spite of spirited efforts at peacemaking, Awka continues to be roiled by crises. This question suggests a need to delve into the deeper causes of Awka crises, to seek a conceptual explanation of this phenomena so as to uncover solutions that might have better prospects of succeeding. This study does not believe that there is anything *sui generis* about the situation in Awka. As such it taps into relevant academic research to gain comparative insights and use these to construct an explanatory model leading to the specific set of solutions that it recommends. The report is presented as a coherent system of analysis developed specifically for the True Awka People (TAP).

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TAP LOGO

The TAP logo used in this report was designed by the author, reviewed by Admin, and was approved by the membership.

APPRECIATION

On behalf of himself and the TAP Admin Team, the author wishes to thank Victor CHINWEZE (UbaChukwu Ka Mma) for his vision in setting up the TAP Forum along with his co-founders.

We also thank all TAP members who participated in the discussions, particularly those who took the time to develop specific thinking on the topics of discussion.

Finally, we thank the erstwhile members of the Awka Pacesetters Club's defunct Peace and Reconciliation Committee who did incredible fieldwork interviewing a cross-section of stakeholders in Awka. The report produced by that group made an excellent resource for us, and in fact should be considered a companion document to this report.

We thank one and all.

DISCLAIMER

The author and TAP hereby reject all responsibility for any misrepresentation of the data or analysis presented in this report, or any disputes arising thereof.

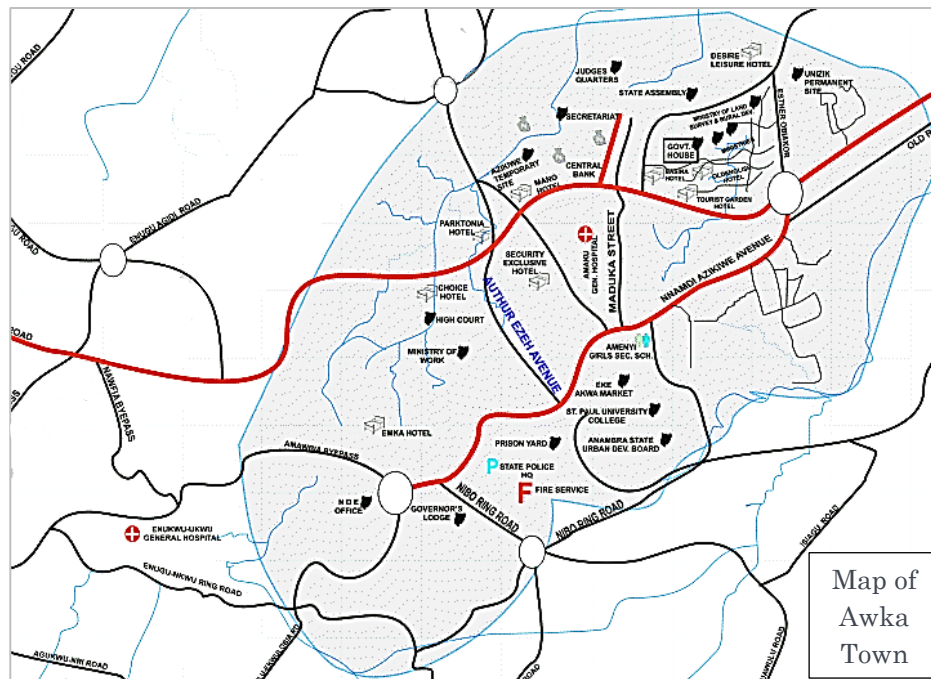


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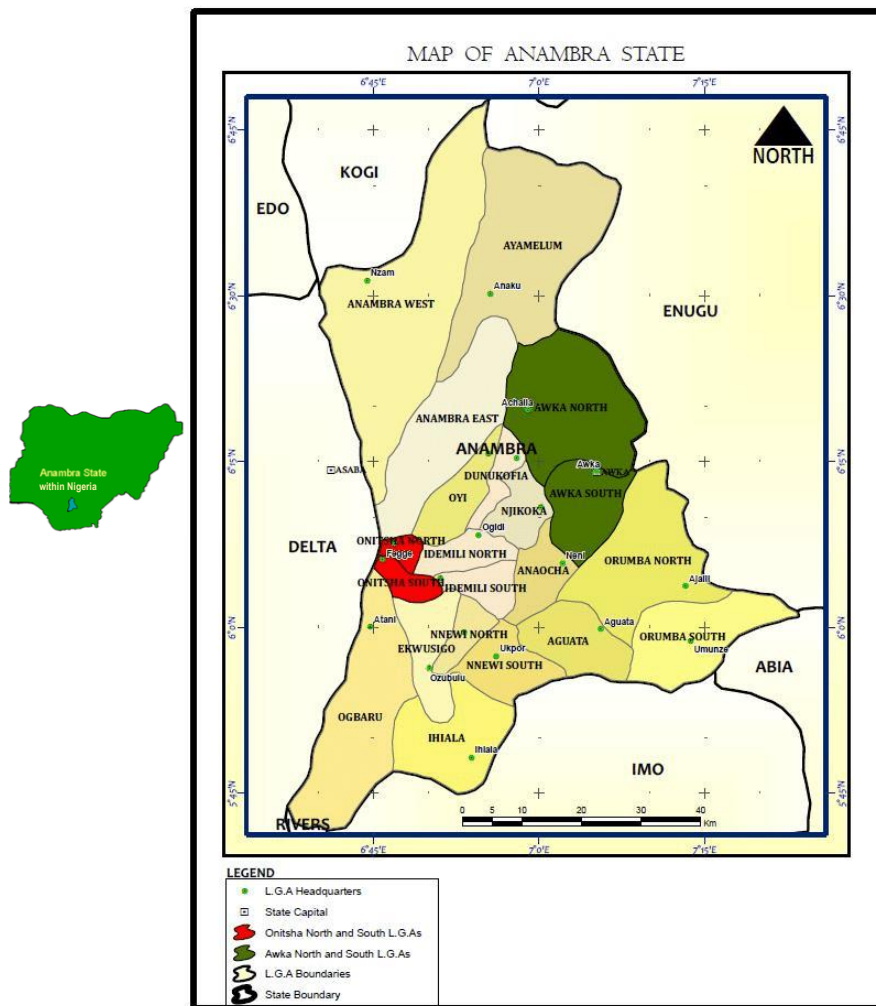
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MAPS



Map 1



Map 2



1. POLITICAL CRISES IN AWKA

ANY casual observer, let alone a civic-minded or politically conscious Awka indigene, will be aware of the multi-dimensional crises currently unfolding in the ancient town. The many crises convulsing Awka have festered for years, seemingly intractable and growing ever fiercer. All levels of Awka governing institutions are embroiled in one facet of the crises or another – from Ndu Ọzọ to the beleaguered traditional ruler (Eze Uzu II) and the Council of Kingmakers, to the leadership of the Awka Town Union. Even the plenary Awka assembly, Izu Awka, and the semi-spiritual institutions of Ọtọchal Awka and Eze Imoka, are not spared the contagion. There are also village-level reverberations and, no less, a denominational dimension involving a stand-off between Awka and the Catholic Church. As things stand now, Awka appears to have two *de facto* monarchs, two Presidents-General of the Town Union, and two distinct Ọzọ groups. The inescapable consequence of the continuing crises is that Awka sovereign institutions have become delegitimated and much-weakened, and Awka polity in its entirety is experiencing an unprecedented level of instability and political disorder.

But the outcome of the crises is not only turmoil and stalemate in the political arena. There are inevitable consequences in other social domains as well. With Awka politics in turmoil and the political leadership weakened and distracted, Awka town has barely benefited from its status as the seat of Anambra State Government, having the possible distinction of being the least developed capital city in the South East, if not Nigeria. There is persistent underdevelopment, poor infrastructure development, chaotic urban development, community upheavals, insecurity, youth marginalization, poor educational and employment opportunities, and – not least – the near-complete irrelevance of Awka in contemporary Anambra State politics. Awka, the ancient shining-city-on-a-hill, is indeed reeling.

How did we get here? And what are the ramifications of the political crises?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the brief introduction above, it will be clear that the political crisis in Awka is multi-faceted. We outline the key fault-lines below, in part to inspire a shared conception of the issues among the people of Awka, and from this hopefully foster a harmonious search for solutions. An outline of the key issues looks like this:

1. Leadership contest and constitutional crises within the Awka Development Union, Nigeria (ADUN).
2. Crisis of the Eze Uzu institution, which has culminated in a veritable quagmire, with a new Eze Uzu purportedly installed while the incumbent is still on his stool.
3. Deep factionalism within the traditional Ndu Ọzọ Society, resulting in the formation of an alternative “Ọzọ Ivbe” society, with an uncertain legal provenance.
4. Uncertainties surrounding the installation of a new Ọtọchal Awka following the death of the former title holder, with contested claims to the position still subsisting.
5. The near-complete relegation of the Izu Awka assembly in decision-making, and the lack of consensus on ways and means for its restoration.
6. The absence of a Grundnorm in Awka serving as the basis for a properly codified, universally ratified Constitution governing the establishment and functioning of Awka traditional institutions.



7. The rising power of the Roman Catholic Church (specifically on issues such as “dust-to-dust” and burial rites), and the corrosive impact of ecclesiastical intervention in Awka affairs.
8. The involvement of the State Government in Awka political affairs, and the apparent co-optation of Awka governing personnel through State Government patronage systems.

The above outline makes it clear that Awka is faced with many issues. However, while the crisis situations in Awka are multi-pronged, at their core these individual manifestations are linked one way or another to the enduring leadership crisis within the ADUN and the long-festering turmoil surrounding the Eze Uzu institution. The nexus of these two issues has created a potent political cauldron which the governing elites of Awka have found themselves incapable of resolving.

Let us now look briefly at these two issues.

CRISES WITHIN THE ADUN AND THE EZE UZU INSTITUTIONS

In Anambra State, as elsewhere, the municipal government structure and the traditional rulership institution constitute major cadres of local government designed to bring government closer to the people. This administrative status attaches more to the municipal structure than to the traditional institution, but both are supposed to symbolize the democratic aspirations of the state government. In Awka, municipal authority is vested in the leadership of ADUN (i.e. the President General), while the apex of traditional rulership system is occupied by the Eze Uzu in Council. The ADUN is a constituent part of the democratic structure in Anambra State, and as such is more powerful. The Eze Uzu institution however commands a powerful symbolic authority as the embodiment of Awka people’s cultural identity and custodian of their heritage. Between these two institutions, Awka town is supposed to find the unified expression of its cultural and democratic aspirations. These two bodies are supposed to ensure that Awka is adequately represented in government, through the local administration system and other state government structures. These two organs are also expected to fully represent Awka town as the seat of the Anambra State Government, ensuring that the greatest benefits accrue to Awka people for surrendering their lands and other assets to the state.

Alas, reality couldn’t be further removed from these aspirations!

The great tragedy of the continuing crises within the ADUN and the Eze Uzu institution is that the two bodies are so tangled up and so utterly weakened that neither of them is able to effectively represent Awka people. The weakness of these bodies arises from the erosion of popular support for the leadership of each, with the result that none of them seems currently endowed with the political legitimacy to represent Awka in Anambra state and beyond. The lack of legitimacy implies that the leadership of these bodies are not currently considered by Awka people to carry a popular mandate; as such, neither of these two institutions can speak authoritatively on behalf of Awka people. This grim verdict may not be wholly apparent to the protagonists and the henchmen in the drama of contemporary Awka politics, but to the extent that none of the factions enjoys the full respect and unalloyed support of Awka people, to the same extent have they all lost the legitimacy to represent the civic body of Awka.

A brief sketch of the current situation reveals why these institutions lack political legitimacy.



The ADUN Crisis

Let us first examine the ADUN situation. The substantive issues relating to this body may be summarized as follows:

- a) The question of leadership tenure and transitional rules; this issue has lingered for a long time, and has culminated in the breakup of ADUN into two factions, each led by its own putative PG.
- b) The existence of numerous court cases resulting from the leadership contest.
- c) Struggle over the interpretation of the ADUN Constitution, and specifically the provision for rotation of ADUN leadership between the two sections of Awka town (Ezi and Ifite).
- d) Disagreements over the use of delegate system in ADUN elections.

The Awka Pacesetters Club has already explored the ramifications of the ADUN crisis in its report. Its work is an excellent exposition of the issues, especially because the team took care to interview all key persons directly or indirectly connected to ADUN. We need not duplicate the descriptive part of its work here, though we will return to it later in this report. Suffice it for now to point up an aspect of the crisis that has not been the focus of deep analysis.

The issues involved in the crisis of ADUN are complex. The immediate trigger might be said to be the failure of the administration of Engr Anthony Okechukwu to step aside after the expiration of its term in 2015. Engr Okechukwu clings on tenaciously to the PG seat two long years after the expiration of his tenure. He is presently in court over the position with another claimant to the PG seat, Amobi Nwokafor. The tangle of issues in this leadership contest seems to revolve around interpretation of transitional rules, delegate system, etc. However, the crisis is compounded by other realities: (a) the disagreements turn on the correct interpretation of the existing ADUN constitution, revealing the underlying deficiency of the constitution itself; (b) the intersection of the ADUN crisis with the kingship crisis, turning both into a dizzyingly complex mix; (c) the intersection of the ADUN issue with the religious issue of Dust-to-Dust, bringing spiritual complexity to a secular matter; (d) the interlocking set of financial interests bearing on the office of the PG, making it an extremely lucrative and rewarding source of private accumulation and therefore difficult to relinquish; (e) the political potency of the position, both as a channel into the corridors of Anambra State Government and a pedestal for higher office.

These are the complex intersections that render the ADUN crisis almost resistant to solution. It is important to keep these in mind, because folks often suggest, perhaps in a bout of leisurely theorizing, that all that is needed is to “talk” to the individuals involved. In other words, folks are suggesting use of mere moral suasion. Given the nature of interests involved, this is likely not an ideal recommendation. We will return to the issue of ADUN later, in the context of the systemic analysis being developed here.

The Eze Uzu Crisis

If the ADUN crisis is a crippling reality, we have a veritable quagmire with regards to the Eze Uzu institution. As things stand now, Awka is confronted with the following reality:

- a) The purported dethronement of the Awka traditional ruler, Eze Uzu II, His Majesty Obi Gibson Nwosu, who appears to have lost widespread support among Awka people but is nonetheless recognized as the traditional ruler of Awka town by the Anambra State Government – which is acting in its capacity as a constitutive authority



- b) The purported enstoolment of a new traditional ruler in the person of Ọzọ Augustine Ndigwe, who apparently has been invested as “Eze Uzu III” of Awka. However, this so-called new ruler, like the incumbent, also lacks widespread support among Awka people. The “new ruler” also suffers the additional handicap of not being recognized by the State Government. Yet, he has been parading himself as the new Eze Uzu.

There is a sense in which the kingship crisis in Awka is intrinsic. This is the sense that the specific constitutional process for the selection of an Eze Uzu has not always been followed. For instance, as the Awka Pacesetters Report states,

Since it became the accepted order in the year [1986] that the kingship in Awka shall be rotated among the two major quarters of Ezi and Ifite..., it is provided that when it gets to any of the quarters, it will go through to the most senior village then to the most senior family, such that it will be a clear and [straight-forward] search to identify the right person to be installed as the Eze Uzu of Awka.

But we understood that this agreed traditional method of searching for the right candidate was not duly and strictly adhered to during the selection of the past Eze Uzu I and even in [selecting] the present Eze Uzu. All these traditional irregularities bred unforeseen doom for the community without the people knowing exactly where their problems [were] coming from. (Awka Pacesetters Club, Peace and Reconciliation Committee Report, 2016, p. 142)

Awka set up constitutional rules for the selection of the Eze Uzu, but for whatever reason the town has found it expedient to circumvent its own selection rules, thereby predisposing each incumbent to ineptual crisis. It was the case with Eze Uzu I; it was the case with the current ruler, Eze Uzu II; and the pattern certainly holds in the case of the purported new ruler.

Following a protracted tussle between Eze Uzu II Gibson Nwosu and a faction of Ndu Ọzọ, the Council of Kingmakers in April 2017 declared that he had been dethroned. Consequent upon this action, they proceeded to name the Head of Ọzọ Awka Society (Ndu Ọzọ) and Chairman of the Council of Kingmakers, Ọzọ Obuora Essel, as the Regent. The Regency was to subsist for a period of six months, according to the Traditional Ruler Amended Constitution 1986, during which time the selection of a new Eze Uzu must be completed. The purported dethronement of Obi Nwosu by the Ọzọ Essel-led faction of the Kingmakers supposedly ensued because Nwosu apparently had failed to appear before the Council to answer charges that had been preferred against him; these charges related to actions said to breach the Code of Conduct that Nwosu had signed earlier on January 1, 2000, not long after his accession, when he had initially been cited for actions said to violate the Traditional Ruler Constitution.

According to our [sources](#), in 2017 Eze Uzu II, Obi Gibson Nwosu, was accused of the following:

1. *Denying and refusing to defend Awka Customs and Traditions even though he is called a traditional ruler;*
2. *Violating the grounds of his pardon by Awka people after he did “Osu na Nkiti” for the previous transgressions;*
3. *Formation of a splinter Kingmakers Council;*
4. *Formation of a splinter Ọzọ institution which he calls Ọzọ Iube;*
5. *Awarding of titles without the Kingmakers’ clearance or knowledge;*
6. *Admission and rustication of cabinet members without the Kingmakers’ clearance or knowledge;*
7. *Violating the property rights of Awka people over land matters to the extent of being linked to a murder of an Awka son;*
8. *Encouraging... an erstwhile President-General of Awka Development Union, Nigeria [so that the latter is able] to continue parading [himself] as President-General [to the chagrin] of the President-General [duly] elected by Awka people;*



9. *Loitering around government offices seeking personal favors and thereby not according dignity to the exalted position of Eze Uzu Awka;*
10. *Abusing Awka daughters who go to him to use his office as Obi, Eze Uzu Awka to advance their [issues];*
11. *Siphoning Awka funds from government with his so-called stakeholders;*
12. *Selling admission quota for Awka to [the] highest bidders who, [quite] often, are not Awka indigenes; and,*
13. *Refusing to reply correspondences from [the] Awka Council of Kingmakers.*

It should be noted that subsequent to the purported dethronement, spokespersons for Nwosu had issued a statement in which they rebutted the charges, one by one, thereupon declaring that the dethronement was baseless. Separately, it was also pointed by other leaders that the purported dethronement had not followed the laid down procedure, and as such could not be of any effect. Undeterred by these arguments, the anti-Nwosu faction persevered, and about seven months later installed a new “Eze Uzu” in the person of Ozo Augustine Ndigwe.

However, the legality of Ozo Ndigwe’s enstoolment is unclear. This is in part because it is the turn of Nkwelle village to produce a successor to Eze Uzu II whenever a vacancy materializes. Ndigwe’s village, Umuayom, is not eligible, having produced Nwosu’s predecessor who was in fact Ozo Ndigwe’s uncle. Ozo Ndigwe’s assertion that he had been nominated by Nkwelle has been punctured, apparently, by a published denial by purported Nkwelle spokesmen denying that their village ever passed over their right or nominated Ndigwe. Additionally, Anambra State Government has issued a statement declaring that it continues to recognize Obi Gibson Nwosu as the legitimate Eze Uzu of Awka. At the recent *Egwu Uzu* festival hosted by Obi Gibson Nwosu (on December 30, 2017), the state government was fully represented, apparently to reaffirm its recognition of Nwosu.

Despite suffering the handicap of non-recognition by the State Government, Ndigwe continues to assert his claim with evidently strong backing by some elite factions, by some civic associations, and apparently by swaths of Awka grassroot. For his part, although he appears to have lost significant popular support, Obi Gibson Nwosu continues to assert his incumbency, enjoying government recognition, the backing of other elite factions, and undoubtedly a level of popular support. This is the stalemate in Awka, a contention of crowns, each side believing that it has a credible claim and unwilling to concede its claim; and yet neither claimant commands the absolute support of the Awka populace over whom they are proclaiming paramountcy.

* * *

Later in this report, we will show that Awka people, with a notoriously republican mindset, had chosen to install some form of monarchy in order to have more effective representation within the state government and beyond. The enduring weakness of the ADUN leadership and the crippling of the Eze Uzu institution mean therefore that the bargain struck by Awka people – that is, the dilution of their republican system and the institutionalization of an alien monarchy to improve representation – is currently redounding to the utter dis-benefit of the town. Awka has not received the benefits it expected when it struck a self-imposed bargain to jettison its republican constitution. Therein lies the great tragedy of the current crises.

At core, as we will argue later, what we are witnessing in contemporary Awka is a traditionally egalitarian society – in which civic powers were once dispersed across diverse institutions and constituencies – now struggling to establish a stable and constitutional monarchy. Compared to other monarchical systems, the Eze Uzu-ship of Awka is very much in its infancy. And like



other monarchical systems in their infancy, the Awka institution will wade through stresses, challenges and instability. Awka is at a historical intersection where egalitarian impulses are still strong, such that the town finds it difficult to invest the Eze Uzu institution with majestic authority and grandeur; and yet, Awka cherishes effective representation in government which it believes can result from having a strong monarchy.

By the same token, the crisis of ADUN leadership also relates to a historical contradiction, in the sense that we have an alien system of town government operating within a cultural milieu dominated by diverse traditional institutions.

In both the crisis of ADUN and that of Eze Uzu, we see a disequilibrium between political institutionalization and cultural mobilization: the Awka institutions, though incarnated by law, do not have sufficient cultural force to mobilize effectively on behalf of Awka people or indeed the government. In such an environment of institutional weakness, we are bound to see eruptions of personal acrimony, inter-sectional rivalry, violence, corruption and utter lack of focus, which are all aspects of the present-day reality of Awka town.

Any search for a solution to these problems will have to start by raising meaningful questions that hopefully hack to the heart of the crises. Such is our task in the next section.

KEY QUESTIONS RELATING TO ADUN AND EZE UZU CRISES

This project is not the first peace initiative or the first attempt to resolve the political crises in Awka. Each previous attempt framed the problem in its own way, and developed strategies in accordance with its conceptual framework. This project too has its own paradigm, for problem statement as well as conflict resolution, encapsulated in the following questions:

1. How can this project hope to resolve the present crises in Awka and bring order to the town when several previous peace initiatives had failed? What specific efforts were made previously to resolve the ADUN and Eze Uzu crises, and why did these efforts fail? Given past failures, what other conflict resolution models can be adopted to tackle these issues? How can we induce a commitment to such a framework by the contending factions?
2. To what extent are the present crises personalized (that is, matters of personal ambition)? Are there any sectional (Mgbogo vs. Mgbede) or historical undercurrents that complicate the issues?
3. Is there a way for us to fully describe to Ndu Awka the real costs of the endless ADUN and Eze Uzu crises, to advertise and dramatize the real consequences so as to emphasize the urgent need for resolution?
4. How can we change the Awka man's notoriously republican and micro-political mindset and inspire in him a greater regard for Awka super-structural institutions?
5. Is it necessary to draft an overarching constitution for Awka specifying the roles of each governing body? How can we do this given the existence of multiple governing documents?
6. How can Awka traditional institutions be strengthened as self-sustaining organs free from manipulation by powerful individuals, groups or governmental agencies?
7. How can we position Awka as the centre of political gravity in Anambra State, not merely the state capital, so that Awka people's interests and political objectives can be more wholesomely and successfully prosecuted?



8. What indeed are Awka people's political objectives in Anambra State? Do these consist merely in securing political and administrative posts for Awka indigenes? Can we articulate Awka interests more forcefully in terms of preventing the usurpation of Awka lands, or in terms of driving the development of Awka infrastructure, attracting more government investment through the location of government agencies in Awka?
9. What are the key Awka political assets and how can we maximize these to secure a greater allocation of political goods for our city? Why has Awka not been able to produce a governor of Anambra State, or indeed occupy any office at the commanding heights of government? Is it a lack of resources, or poverty of political strategy, or both? Why is there such a lack in Awka?
10. How can we improve the Awka brand and strengthen the bargaining power of Awka political leadership in attracting inward investment to Awka, or in negotiating other benefits for Awka?
11. Indeed, how can we promote a stronger development orientation within Awka governing institutions and minimize their extreme politicization? Do we need to change the mandate of these bodies, their personnel and qualification for membership?
12. What really are the grand development objectives of Awka town? Does the current leadership of Awka, traditional or governmental, have a notion of an overarching development agenda for the town? If so, what is it? If not, would it be advisable to establish a think tank for Awka, separate from but coordinate with the governing institutions, providing intellectual subsidy by generating ideas and strategies to animate these governing bodies? Can these disparate entities, intellectual and authoritative, work together to establish a 21st century development agenda for Awka, such as transforming it into a city of modern foundry technology, evoking the blacksmithing heritage of Awka people?

The above questions are just some of the few raised to address the political crises in Awka. These are the primary questions that led to the formation of the informal social media group, True Awka People (TAP), as the latest initiative by concerned indigenes to end the chaos in Awka. As the principal originator of TAP, Engr. Victor Chinweze, stated:

"Look at Awka today and tell me what you see... Anarchy, disagreements, acrimony, chaos and infighting! ...Many things pass us by, yet we stand akimbo looking for what struck us numb. [We miss out on] essential government appointments..., job opportunities that [should be] rightfully positioned for Ndu Awka as [a] capital people..., school admission quota[s] for [our] sons and daughters..., projects designated for the capital city and her people and so-on and so-forth...

The question is, how ready are we to stand to our true form [and claim our entitlements as] capital people?

We all have a role to play... The first step is to have a platform like this where we can freely speak-out, advice or raise ideas that can go a long way in lifting Awka higher and until Awka assumes her rightful position not only in [Anambra] State [and Nigeria] but... in the [world at large]." (Engr. Victor Chinweze, TAP submission, Aug. 9, 2017)

We now turn to a brief description of the TAP group, its objectives and founding principles, and the approach it adopted for data gathering and analysis of the situation in Awka. It is on the strength of the data available to TAP and its analysis of such data that TAP developed the set of recommendations it proffers for resolving the multi-faceted crises in Awka town.



2. THE FOUNDING OF TAP

ALL around the world, we have seen in recent time a rise in populist agitation manifested in increased social-media activism, a new form of democratic participation being erected as traditional channels of citizen engagement have become corrupted, obsolescent, moribund or simply ineffective. From the fiery uprisings recently in North Africa to the Black Life Matters movement in the United States, social media is giving voice to citizens who feel marginalized or disenfranchised by the traditional organs of power. TAP has modest aims in this regard as a modern instrument for the voiceless indigenes of Awka, to enable them to have a say and in fact make a difference in the governance of their town, away from the inveterate combatants.

True Awka People (TAP) is a social media convocation of Awka people, founded as a forum on Facebook and WhatsApp, to foster grassroot-level understanding and discussion of the major issues that currently imperil the political leadership of Awka; to have grassroots sensibilities and opinions permeate the thinking and calculations of contending factions in the leadership struggles; and as well to promote a dialogue among the leadership contenders.

TAP was formed in July 2017, in the teeth of the leadership struggle roiling the ADUN and amidst the kingship crisis which had resulted in the purported dethronement of the incumbent Eze Uzu earlier that year. It was formed out of concern that previous initiatives to bring peace to Awka had not succeeded, and fear that a dire situation could in fact degenerate and become explosive. Indeed, since the formation of TAP a faction of Awka kingmakers – in concert with civic coalitions opposed to the incumbent Eze Uzu – has gone ahead and presumably installed a new Eze Uzu: a forceful action of dubious legality which compounds the exigency of the Awka situation. With a contending stool now erected in Awka amidst a still-festering crisis of town government, the task before TAP is all the more apparent and urgent.

TAP has set itself a proximate goal of working with all stakeholders to restore peace in Awka.

However, while TAP aspires to engage the protagonists in the drama of Awka politics, it also recognizes that the protagonists might be too deeply entrenched to respond to moral suasions, simple admonitions or high-minded suggestions to give peace a chance. Given the deep tissue of material interests at play in the leadership struggles – involving strong personal ambitions, quest for money and power and even defense of family prestige – the task of conflict resolution in Awka is no mean undertaking.

It is in fact this realization, an appreciation of the magnitude of the task, that gives TAP its point of departure. It has had to reexamine past mediation efforts in Awka and considered the reasons why they failed. Was it merely the obstinacy of the disputants that led to failure? Or were the adopted mediatory methods themselves not suitable? As the Awka adage goes, *ovbu na okpu ishi amara akpu, ka ovbu na aguvba aduro nko?*

This is not to disparage any past missions which were clearly earnest and well-meaning. But starting with such an inquisition leads TAP to imbibe the best of the past mediation efforts, to build on these efforts and avoid past mistakes. This has led TAP, for instance, to appreciating the dimensionality of the crises, to an understanding that the issues at play reach way beyond the realm of personal ambition, and are intimately bound up with deep historical contradictions in Awka society. The kingship crisis, for instance, might be characterized at some level as an



unfortunate clash of personal ambitions, but it also reveals the systemic stresses afflicting Awka – a historically acephalous or stateless society now fitfully experimenting with monarchy, an institution it deems necessary for effective engagement with the democratic hierarchies in Anambra State. With a haphazard monarchical experiment amid weak traditional institutions, you have powerful individuals exploiting community divisions to jostle for power and material benefits. There is an additional, often ignored, dimension in the form of external forces stirring the conflict further in their bid to dominate *Agu Awka* for the benefit of their own communities.

A holistic approach such as TAP has adopted leads to a different flavor of recommendations, as we will see later.

While the immediate goal of TAP is to mediate the current political crises in Awka, the group has grander aspirations for the transformation of Awka society. TAP was created to bridge the widening gap between the different strata of Awka society. It believes that Awka people can unite irrespective of group, club, village, class, creed or social status. It hopes to harness the energies, capabilities, ideas and talents of Awka people and focus these around shared ideas of development and societal transformation. It hopes to appeal to the true character of Awka people – rooted in their sense of responsibility, sense of obligation, loyalty, bravery, courage, dependability and diligence – and work with those in leadership to promote a renewed sense of patriotism and civic pride in Awka. In this way, the people and their leaders can together strive to drive the transformation of their town, Awka, the Smithland of Africa.

In this larger sense of societal transformation, TAP members are already contemplating issues of post-conflict reconstruction. In part, there's a strong focus on working with relevant entities to establish a new constitutional order to strengthen the governing institutions of Awka. TAP members see constitutional and institutional reform as a key aspect of political modernization in Awka; a way to redefine rules and roles for the governing elites; and a critically important step towards preventing recrudescence behaviors that could again trigger political crisis in the town. This is reconstruction as political development.

There's also a focus on reconstruction as socio-economic development. In this sense, members of TAP are exploring ways to promote a new development consciousness among the governing elites of Awka, to encourage them to adopt an outward-looking perspective and learn from other municipal systems where the development paradigm is placed at centre stage. A wide range of development-related topics are being highlighted by TAP membership – from infrastructure to trade, inward investment, technology, agriculture, employment, education, manpower, power generation, tourism and the like. TAP hopes to harness Awka networks worldwide; to provide consultation, advocacy, facilitation and implementational support for the sovereign institutions of Awka. TAP could connect these governing bodies to potential development partners such as state and federal authorities, universities, funding agencies, multilateral organizations, global NGOs, multinational corporations and the like, helping to establish best practices in civic and cultural leadership and to drive socio-economic development in Awka.

TAP members are spread across several professional domains. They have relevant experiences, with strong ideas and passion for the development of Awka. Members are scattered across the globe, but from their diverse locations they are eager to help put their hometown on the map. It is time to look more closely at the composition of TAP membership.

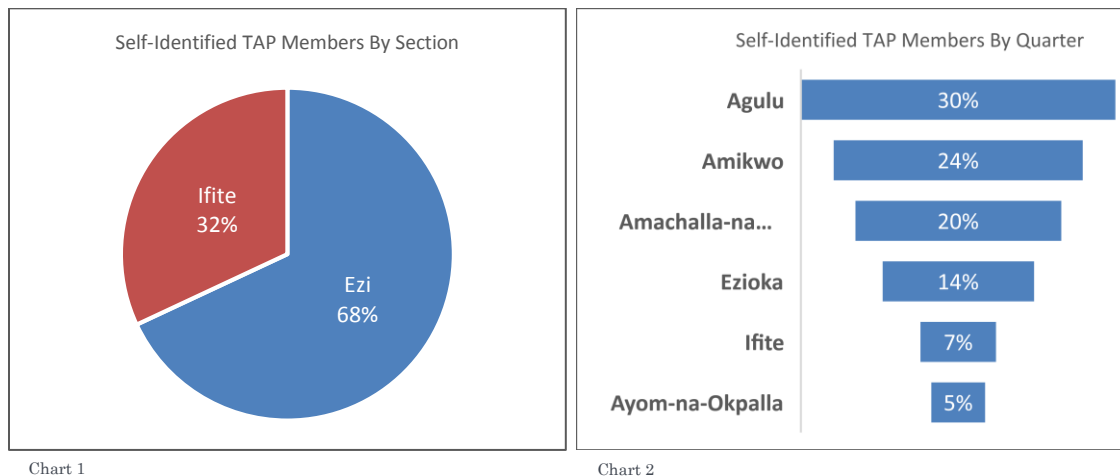


TAP MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

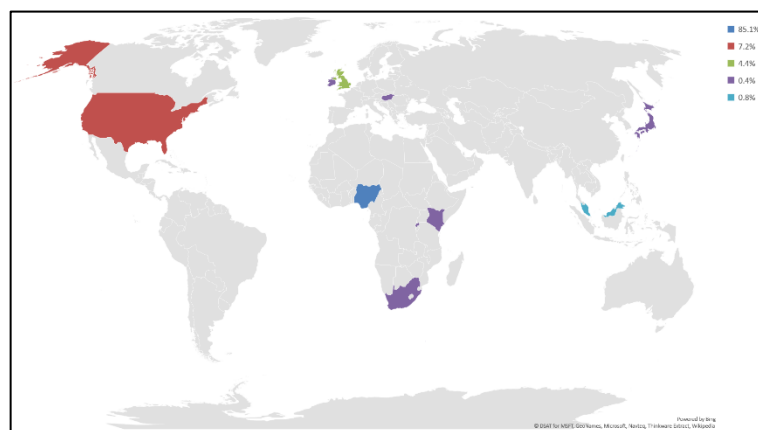
From its creation only last July (2017), TAP membership has grown rapidly. It has already reached the group size limit on WhatsApp and has spilled onto Facebook. This rapid growth, we believe, reflects the yearning of Awka citizenry for peace and progress in their hometown.

TAP membership cuts across generational cohorts, from octogenarians in the so-called “Silent Generation” to “Baby Boomers”, “Generation X”, “Generation Y” (a.k.a. Millennials), and even the tender “Generation Z”, in late teens. Membership includes folks at all levels of educational attainment, from the multi-degreed to the barely educated. Members are engaged in all types of occupation, from professional to business, and they even include currently unemployed folk. TAP membership equally covers the spectrum of religious beliefs; is pluralistic in political and associational affiliation; and represents a diversity of social strata and family backgrounds.

Beyond all this, however, a crucial fact to emphasize is that TAP draws membership from all corners of Awka. All sections and quarters of Awka, and nearly all 33 villages, are represented, though to differing levels of membership density. About 68% of members are from Ezi Section, and 32% from Ifite Section (see Chart 1 and Chart 2 below).



TAP members are spread across several locations, with many residing in Awka, Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and other parts of Nigeria, and a sizeable number (5%) in diaspora (see Map 3).



Map 3: Location of TAP Members



FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF TAP

TAP has attracted a diverse membership because it is open to all Awka indigenes, regardless of their stance on the extant issues of Awka politics. TAP membership rules are not prohibitive or exclusionary. There are simple rules for joining, and simple guidelines for member conduct. The forum was founded on the Voltairean principle of free speech. Its guidelines call only for a constructive, civilized and incisive debate of issues pertaining to Awka and its people. The TAP forum welcomes all perspectives and all useful inputs, and it is biased towards none. But while the group itself remains strictly non-partisan on Awka issues, it understands that the principle of neutrality attaches only to the corporate entity. Individual contributors to the TAP debate are not required to be “neutral” – though that is ideal – only that they make their points with logic, reasonableness and genuine peace-making intent.

TAP maintains a transparently non-partisan stance because it is not sponsored by anybody or any interests at all. The forum was founded by independent-minded Awka indigenes who are passionate for peace to return to Awka. The founders were not affiliated with any factions in the political wrangling in Awka. It was the strong belief of the originators in non-alignment that in fact led to the founding of TAP, as a contrast to other overtly partisan initiatives also seemingly striving – without success – for peace and reconciliation in Awka. As the principal originator of TAP, Engr. Victor Chinweze, has stated, “introducing this platform [was driven] by the quest for a very neutral stage to address [the] prevailing [issues facing] Awka..., and above all, to enable us share vital information seamlessly and in no time.” The neutrality of TAP implies that it can treat all sides with fairness and objectivity, that it genuinely seeks to understand the perspective of each side, and will not ignore or suppress any claims. In this way TAP hopes to win the respect and confidence of all stakeholders. This in turn means that TAP, itself without decision-making powers, can extend its reach and political influence among the decision-makers in Awka.

Clearly, then, TAP as group believes that it cannot fully dissect the issues in Awka if it were to suppress any voices or legitimate viewpoints. Therefore, TAP has welcomed members from all political perspectives, including hyper-partisan advocates of one or other faction in the Awka crises. In the debates that ensued, several partisan viewpoints were expressed, often heatedly, as might be expected. TAP Admin was aware that some partisan leaders joined or monitored these debates, and it was gratified that the platform provided an opportunity for these leaders to hear the voices of ordinary Awka indigenes, away from their bubble of partisan contestation. While it was the role of TAP leadership to moderate and modulate the debates, all reasonably articulated viewpoints from the diverse membership were evaluated. It was from these sundry submissions that a synthesis was developed that formed the basis of the present report.

In the next section we provide an analysis of the political situation in Awka, based on member inputs and other research data obtained by TAP.



3. TAP ANALYSIS OF AWKA CRISES

MUCH effort has been made to explain the myriad issues that create political disorder in Awka. Though undoubtedly well-intended, the explanations typically given by observers tend to lack the desired level of rigor or coherence. Some have adduced spiritual explanations for the crises, believing that somehow Awka is incurring the wrath of God for some purported errancy! Others see the crises entirely in personal terms as the result of clashes between over-ambitious individuals desperately seeking power and personal aggrandizement.

Perhaps there is something to these types of explanation. While itself conceding the validity of micro-personal explanation, TAP believes that the crises have deeper sociological implications which must be explored to fully understand their root causes.

In line with its principles of objectivity and neutrality, TAP is following a structured problem-solving approach to investigate the conflicts in Awka. This requires a proper description of the problem and careful hypothesizing of root causes. It also requires proper research to back up any presumed theory of the case. In order to provide a meaningful analysis of the situation, TAP believes that data must be holistically sourced, diligently processed and then coherently presented to aid understanding. Only when such methodical approach is taken can one begin to see the contours of the crises. To this end, then, TAP has used different research methods to gather data on the ramified causes and consequences of the conflicts in Awka.

TAP DATA GATHERING METHODOLOGY

The methods used by TAP to gather data on the situation in Awka include the following:

- **Member Inputs:** These include formal submissions, analysis and commentary on the TAP forum
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** These are on-the-record interviews conducted with several key players
- **Expert Interviews:** Formal interviews with private individuals with deep knowledge of the issues
- **Formal Documents:** These include constitutions, court rulings, reports, communiques, books/articles
- **Media Reports:** Particularly newspapers, radio and TV reports, verifiable internet materials, etc.

From these multiple sources, TAP has assembled data for its own independent analysis of the Awka situation, pitched at varying levels of explanation: historical, systemic and personal.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Oral tradition and anthropological studies affirm that ancient Awka was a segmentary society. 'Awka' is essentially a commonwealth of autonomous villages that coalesced over time into an organic republic. But while the evolution into statehood required the institution of centralized political structures, the underlying autonomy of the constituent villages – themselves made up of lineage-based clans and kindreds – has survived.

It is a reasonable hypothesis, which TAP wishes to advance, that at its core the crises in Awka emanates from the contradiction of moving from a *kinship* to a *kingship* system in a society in which egalitarian instincts still hold firm. Communal laws are binding and sacrosanct in Awka; but at the same time there is a strong sense of individual self-determination culminating in a culture of 'rugged individualism', to adapt the American phrase. Although the federating units of Awka saw the value of a *unified* community, they never evolved into a *unitary* city state.



In this, Awka was not unlike most Igbo communities. It is widely attested in the anthropology of Igbo societies that they were, up until the arrival of colonialism, largely stateless societies, having few, if any, central governing institutions. Awka was one of the Igbo communities with the fiercest disdain for monarchic or oligarchic rule. Without being familiar with the Athenian notions of democracy, and completely unaware of revolutionary upheavals that had led to the establishment of the English *Magna Carta* (1215) and *Bill of Rights* (1689), French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) and United States *Bill of Rights* (1789), the Awka of antiquity autochthonously developed a culture that upheld the values of individual liberty and political democracy. These values were not codified in any written document resembling the classical documents of Europe and the United States. But they were deeply embedded in Awka cultural precepts and unwritten laws. They were embedded in the hearts of the people, and evinced in the confidence and self-assertiveness of a proud people who did not accept the superiority of any other culture or community. Awka abhorred the idea of personal rule, and was only governed by preceptual codes that embodied the collective spirit of the temporal and ancestral community. It was this attitude that led to the institution of a **gerontocratic** system wherein the oldest person in the community, Oṭochal Awka, was revered as the embodiment of communal authority, as the personification of the collective wisdom of the temporal society and the intuitive counsel of Awka ancestral spirits.

In his celebrated booklet of oral history, *The Awka People*, Barrister Amanke Okafor tried to capture the primordial political order in Awka, stating as follows (note the spelling, “Oka”):

By their system of government, the Oka people were the freest people in the world. They were republicans. No one man ruled over them (Oka enwere eze). In their society, they regarded each other as equals. They were ruled by their laws, in the making of which every citizen participated. They managed their affairs in the democratic assembly of the whole people, called “Izu Oka”, to which every citizen had the right to attend. The womenfolk had their own assemblies.

The nearest thing to kings that the Oka people had was the Society of Ozo title-holders. The members of this Society had traditional functions in Oka, and had a part in the management of the affairs of the town. They declared wars and made peace, on behalf of the town; and they settled disputes. But they ruled no one. They were just “primus inter pares” – first among equals.

*When the British came, they wanted to make Onwurah Uzoku the paramount Chief of all Oka. But Onwurah declined saying that anyone who allowed himself to be made king of Oka would be struck dead by the gods of Oka instantly! (Amanke Okafor, *The Awka People*, 1992; PDF transcript, pp. 5-6)*

Allowing for the slightly imprecise language of a non-professional historian, the account given above by Barr. Okafor captures the antiquity of Awka political organization and the attitudes underlying it. The account shows clearly that kingship is alien to Awka people. A striking part of the account is the horror expressed by Onwurah Uzoku who had been invited by the colonial administration to assume the position of Paramount Chief for all of Awka. A similar reluctance was displayed decades later, in the dying days of colonial rule, by another Awka chieftain also asked to assume paramountcy over Awka people. This was in 1959 and the person in question was Ozo Obuorah Nnebe. The Eastern Region Government at the time had decided to accord recognition to traditional rulers as partners in local administration. Several towns that were at the time without traditional rulers were encouraged to select one. Awka was among them. Based on an excerpt of a [report](#) attributed to P. Hezekiah Dike, Awka at the time approached Nnebe who was seemingly reluctant and had to be “cajoled” into acceptance. It was thus that Awka came to have its first traditional ruler, in the person of Ichie Obuorah Nnebe. He started out as a 2nd Class chief, but would become a 1st Class traditional ruler in 1971.

But *every* traditional ruler that Awka has selected has faced a crisis of legitimacy. Ichie Nnebe endured constant challenges, with large parts of Awka, primarily “Mgbogo” villages, refusing to acknowledge the paramountcy of this Agulu chieftain. This was one of the original causes of the



“Mgbogo vs. Mgbede” conflict. The next traditional ruler after Nnebe, Ozo Alfred Ndigwe, who was installed as the first “Eze Uzu” under the amended constitution of 1986, similarly suffered endless challenges. In our time, we have witnessed the serious crisis of legitimacy faced by the current traditional ruler, Eze Uzu II Obi Gibson Nwosu. Just as Nwosu now suffers the reality and utter humiliation of a competitive crown, his two predecessors also had to contend with the fact of competitive crowns whilst still on the stool. In all these cases it has meant that the Eze Uzu, putatively paramount over the entire Awka polity, was or has been unable to command the undivided loyalty of Awka people as a whole. Without the indivisible support of the entire Awka citizenry, there follows a crisis of legitimacy. This makes for unceasing instability.

We could theorize that the pressures and indignities heaped on Awka monarchs are simply an instinctual control mechanism enacted by a society that remains uncomfortable with the idea of monarchy though it recognizes the opportunistic need for such a system in the Nigerian democratic dispensation. That is, Awka has reluctantly accepted the idea that it must have a monarchy. But, at the same time, Awka attempts to preserve its democratic traditions by constantly holding the feet of its monarchs to the fire, to impose constraints on their behavior and their presumptions. This would be the positive case, a benign explanation of the curious dynamic in Awka.

Obi Gibson Nwosu, during his meeting with the Awka Pacesetters Club in 2015, provided an interesting perspective in line with the above analysis. According to the Club’s narrative,

[Eze Uzu II recalled that] Awka did not have an original culture of kingship. In the past, the Ozo Prestigious Group was the power engine of Awka [politics]; [it] dictated the rulership, cultural and traditional patterns of the Awka society... The Ofochal Awka was... the [ultimate] symbol of rulership of Awka people akin to a king... The Ozo Awka [was] the ruling class, but [the buck stopped] with the Ofochal Awka whose approval must be sought...for...every decision made [before finalizing] agreements.

The Eze Uzu opined that [the] emergence of an Awka King did not quite go down well with the [Ndu] Ozo who felt that the power they wielded all through [Awka] history had been watered down tremendously, and so [they] did not and [have] not relented in challenging the powers and leadership of Awka Kings, including his present kingship... [He said] that this had been the way of Awka people and that he is not the only one it happened to. The same thing was done to Igwe Alfred Orimili Ndigwe, Eze Uzu I; it also happened to Ichie Nnebe..., those that were kings in Awka before him.

Continuing, he said that one has to look deeply and realize that it is a common practice of Awka people to disgrace and disregard their leaders and kings. [He cited the example of] Orimili Ndigwe, [noting] that people threw sands and stones at...his car, on the road and at village squares. Why? Because, Awka was yet to come to terms [with the fact] that the king is the ruler and no longer the Ndu Ozo! (Awka Pacesetters Club, Peace and Reconciliation Committee Report, 2016, pp. 13-19)

This is a remarkable, and to us entirely plausible, analysis. It would seem to explain, at last in part, why all the three monarchs Awka has installed, each endured constant pressures and abuse particularly among Ndu Ozo. One might see this simply as resistance from institutions facing increasing irrelevance in a supranational civic order. As Nwosu describes it in the Pacesetter report:

[In pre-modern times], the moment the Ozo Awka [took a] decision and the Ofochal Awka concur[red], it [became] a law of the Awka people. [However] this medieval arrangement [that served Awka well] in the times of old... can no longer work for Awka people. It can't work! Right now [Awka is] an integral part of the country Nigeria; there is the federal government constitution with provisions which supersede every other rule of engagement. In the order of governance, there is the Federal Government, State Government, Local Government and then the Town Union administration as officially upheld. The President-General (PG) heads the town union, whereas the Monarch – the traditional ruler – supervises the leadership of the town union led by the PG.

These are the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There is nothing like the ‘Ozo Society’ in the Nigerian Constitution, or ‘Ajaghija’ or ‘Ahiajioku’ or ‘Amanwulu’. Nevertheless, the[se] are customs which can only be respected [by the] people [even if they have no role in the national dispensation]. (Pacesetters Report, op. cit. p. 19)



The foregoing suggests that Awka may truly be experiencing the pains of a ‘prismatic society’. It may be trapped in the tension of a stalled transition, straddling the twin prisms of its own tradition and ‘modern’ monarchy. To explain further, Awka may still be striving to adapt its political tradition – a form of ‘gerontocratic democracy’ in which certain institutions prevailed – to a new monarchic order which relegates those once-powerful institutions. There is a kind of irony in the fact that Awka is having to replace its old republic with a monarchy specifically to gain more effective representation in the modern democratic order. It is a Devil’s Bargain that thrusts Awka into constant tension, a debilitating tension.

It may just be that Awka needs more time to settle into the idea of having a monarchy. For, if one really thinks about it, Awka has operated a kingship constitution for only 58 years – from the initial accession of Obuorah Nnebe; in fact, 46 years from Nnebe’s emergence as a 1st Class Chief in 1971; or a mere 31 years since the adoption of the 1986 Traditional Ruler’s Amended Constitution and the ascendancy of Qzọ Alfred C. Ndigwe as the first Eze Uzu. This is not long enough a timespan for a heady republic to discard its millennia of non-monarchic habits!

The foregoing clearly points up the systemic stresses that have been playing out in Awka for long, which contribute to the perennial instability of its politics. We now turn to look at these.

SYSTEMIC STRESSES

Political theorists often conceive of the state as a system, with structures (political institutions, civic associations) created to perform specific roles. In advanced systems, these structures are created by well-defined rules to perform functionally differentiated roles. These roles become inputs into the conversion processes of the system, yielding outputs that produce effects in the society. These effects generate feedback loops which in turn trigger new inputs. In this way, the system persists in a continual, predictable order.

Awka too is a system with its own structures which include the apex governing institutions – the Qtochal Awka, Eze Uzu and his Council, Kingmakers, Ndu Qzọ, Izu Awka, the ADUN and other authoritative entities performing the ‘output’ roles of rule-making, rule-implementation and rule-adjudication; and the vast variety of other political or civic institutions, formal and informal, performing ‘input’ roles such as interest articulation, interest aggregation, political mobilization, socialization and communication. The latter includes lower *echichi* groups (Ndu Ajaghija, for instance), village councils, age groups, women’s groups, social clubs (Pacesetters, Ambassadors, Okwanka etc.), market associations, and various other institutions like media, churches, schools and so on.

A major systemic issue in Awka concerns the fact that the *constitutive rules* that create many of its governing bodies, and the *regulative rules* that govern their behavior, are not optimally defined. The rules themselves are in some cases ambiguous, and the structures they establish often functionally undifferentiated. If, in the past, there was a clear differentiation of roles in Awka, the absorption of *some* Awka governing institutions into the administrative machineries of the state government and the relegation of others does create an ambiguity that Awka must deal with. What are the proper roles of Awka governing institutions in the modern democratic setting, and how can these be properly codified to strengthen these institutions?

The absence of a Grundnorm upon which the constitutive and regulative rules are set in Awka has been the source of constant disorder. And we have seen, whether in the crisis of ADUN or in the interaction of Eze Uzu and Ndu Qzọ, or indeed in other interactions among the governing elites, persistent evidence of constitutional crises often translating into serious political crises.



Often by design error, but also due to regrettable deviancy, the constitutions of Awka have not proved capable of defining and regulating political behaviors in a way that conduces to political order. It is indeed an irony. A polity like Awka, deeply jealous of its democratic traditions, should, in moving to a monarchic system, want to write detailed and highly regulative constitutions to ensure that monarchic institutions remain within the constraints of prescribed behavior. It would not want to leave anything to chance, lest monarchic structures begin to assume extra-constitutional powers. Awka should want a constitutional monarchy in which all institutions of state are regulated by detailed constitutional law.

Yet, ironically because Awka for millennia has been a stateless entity, it seems to lack the institutional capability to construct the kind of constitutional framework required to preserve its traditions in a monarchic order. This is not to say that Awka as a *society* does not have the capability; it just lacks such among its current governing elites. Of course the answer to this, as we will recommend later, is to leverage whatever relevant talents avail themselves within the larger society, whether at home or in the diaspora. But until that is done, Awka has to wrestle with the irony of desperately needing sophisticated constitutional frameworks for its new monarchic institutions but is unwilling or unprepared to produce such.

Many of the political eruptions in Awka actually involve some kind of constitutional question:

- The three traditional rulers Awka has installed since 1959 all faced challenges to their legal status
- The contest between the incumbent Eze Uzu II and Ndu Ozo is at its core a constitutional question
- Same with the stand-off between Eze Uzu II and the Awka Council of Kingmakers
- The ambiguity surrounding the roles of Izu Awka and even Ofocha Awka is a constitutional matter
- The relationship of Eze Uzu and the ADUN, often crisis-bound, certainly raises legal questions
- And, of course, the crisis within the ADUN itself is by and large a constitutional crisis
- Not least, the role of the state government in Awka affairs frequently raises a legal conundrum

Clearly, the major issues in Awka politics often arise from legal and constitutional ambiguity. This ambiguity arises both from what the various Awka constitutions say – the language they adopt – and what in some cases they fail to say. Serious constitutional reforms are called for to define and regulate the role of various institutions in the Awka political system. It is clearly the absence of a firm constitutional order that promotes the type of individual behaviors that constitute the proximate cause of much political disturbance in Awka. We will look briefly at some such behaviors in the next section.

PERSONAL-LEVEL EXPLANATION

Several members of TAP were inclined to explain the crises in Awka in purely personal terms. The instinct here is to assume away any systemic or structural distortions and focus instead on the motivations and actions of key players. We had a submission from one eminent member positing that there was no crisis in Awka except for matters relating to Eke Market revenues. Chief Ochiagha Dilim Okafor, a key a player in the arena of Awka politics, stated as follows:

“People are not sincere to themselves. The whole crisis in Awka centered on the revenue collections from Awka main market which Ozo Austin Ndigwe, during his [tenure] as the Chairman of the Local Government, increased [from 25%] to 35% of the rents from the market. Other issues are not an issue... Let's arrange a meeting of all past PGs and ask them who and who collect[s] the rents from the market.” (Chief Dilim Okafor, TAP submissions, Aug. 20, 2017)

Chief Okafor had made a similar point 17 months earlier in an interview with Pacesetters:

“There is no problem in Awka.” What is happening is that some people have refused to let go [of] their penchant for greediness and unwholesome ego trip. (Pacesetters, op. cit. p. 137)



An explanation like this *can* be attractive, given its clarity and simplicity. It carries additional power coming from someone intimately involved in the matters. Ochiagha's suggestion is that all Awka issues would be resolved if we focused on tracing the collection and disbursement of Eke Market revenues, with a meeting of the past ADUN PGs called to discuss the matter. This suggestion resonated strongly with TAP members. In fact some, like Chief Charles C. Okafor, suggested that Dilim should "highlight more on Eke Awka revenues, [and] if possible give [the] names of those who share it, [because] money is part of this problem." (TAP submission, Aug. 20, 2017.) However, other members, like Christian Nwozughu, were quick to point out that this could be disruptive. Our member, Ogochukwu Peters Nwobu, put it succinctly: "[Calling the] names of those that are sharing Eke Market money may not be necessary as it might jeopardize [our] efforts to put Awka together." (TAP submission, Aug. 20, 2017.)

One has to stand back and consider the prospects for a parley – pulling together all past PGs – which aims primarily to ask the eminent invitees "questions [about] what has been happening to such a huge fund [collected on behalf of] Awka people." It would be somewhat optimistic to expect anyone to attend such a meeting, or if they did for such a meeting to run smoothly and produce any meaningful results. No wonder several members balked at the idea of following the Eke Market money, though many welcomed the suggestion of calling a meeting of the PGs.

It also seems slightly unreflective to suggest, as Ochiagha did, that there are no other critical issues confronting Awka except for the question of Eke Market revenues. Ochiagha had stated that other niggling issues like Dust-to-Dust were merely "sinister [and] diversionary measures [designed] to keep the people busy," presumably while the attack on Awka treasury continues. This is not to deny the validity of such a claim, difficult though it may be to prove. But, more importantly, it encourages a sort of analytic reductionism that closes off any further enquiries that could actually yield deeper insights into the causes of Awka crises.

There is no doubt that personal motivations are important. Whatever the systemic architecture, it is in the end the behaviors of men that determine the success or failure of a political system. In all the eruptions witnessed in Awka, it is the clash of egos, the collision of ambitions, the grim pursuit of power and prestige, fear of losing such, fear of privation, the insatiable pursuit of money, perquisites and patronage, squabble over the sharing of loot, greed, embezzlement, corruption, lack of self-restraint, disregard for the law, exploitation of office, exploitation of the masses, lack of shame – in short, the pervasive traits of what Max Weber called 'prebendalism': these are the unfortunate pathologies of Awka politics. No one can deny them: they are present in the ADUN rivalries, in the accusations and counter accusations between Eze Uzu and Ndu Qzọ, in the calculations of the factions supporting one or the other protagonist. These malignant pathologies are there. And as one of our members, Chimezie Nnadozie, suggested, these are the "fertilizing agents" feeding the roots of Awka crises, chief among them being: "arrogance, pride, finance, sponsors, supremacy, *et al*" (TAP submission, Aug. 19, 2017).

It was arguably frustration over the persistence of these pathologies that led some TAP members, like Engr. Ifeoma Umeadi, to stress the need for prayer, redemption and divine intervention!

But appeal to the divine, however laudable, is not political analysis.

TAP has to focus on the secular, using empirical and theoretical logic to explain the reality of Awka politics – as we have hopefully done above. It is only in so doing that TAP can develop meaningful solutions to tackle the instability of Awka politics.

In the next chapter, we set out the solutions devised by TAP, based on the logic of its political analysis, for the resolution of the immediate crises and the long-term transformation of Awka.



4. TAP RECOMMENDATIONS

WE now arrive at *the* critical point of this study. That is, after all the research and arduous analysis, what does TAP recommend as solutions to resolve the crises in Awka? What is TAP recommending that has not been previously suggested? In this study, we have deliberately followed an analytic path, rather than a descriptive path. Other illustrious groups have made serious efforts in the past to bring peace to Awka. Some, such as the Awka Pacesetters Club, undertook highly commendable field work and then produced an admirable document which reports its findings. Awka Pacesetters is an institutionalized club with a formal status. So the approach it took was appropriate for it.

TAP is in reality an incipient social formation: it is yet in infancy. However, what TAP lacks in longevity and status it has in talent. As we indicated earlier in this report, TAP is a nonaligned social media group open to all Awka indigenes of discerning age. It does not seek to become a social club, but a *social movement*. It has a radical vision to become an agent of change in Awka, as the fount of progressive ideas, providing advocacy and enablement for decision-makers. Because of its vision and its stance, TAP has attracted a unique mix of talents as part of its membership. Among the ranks of its members, TAP has highly experienced Awka people accomplished in their own occupations but also knowledgeable about Awka affairs. We have people who are not merely knowledgeable but have been in the arena of Awka politics as full participants and even leaders. We have others, a bit removed from the Awka arena but with deep knowledge of the rest of the world. And we have youngsters, brimming with enthusiasm and ideas hoping to help shape the Awka of their patrimony.

All of the above is simply to say this: TAP represents a grouping of persons but more crucially a fusion of ideas. It has a unique intellectual persona, and out of this flows its unique ideas for correction in Awka.

The proposal TAP lays out here is in two parts. First, we offer a set of short-term solutions to deal with the exigent situation in Awka. Then we offer a set of longer-term solutions which should be implemented once the situation in Awka is stabilized. We will look at these sets of solutions in turn. In this, we will present our ideas as the collective opinion of TAP members. However, in the rare instance that it becomes necessary, we will call out an individual member who either disagreed with the consensus, or who was its most ardent advocate.

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

TAP had to think hard about its recommendations for resolving the immediate situation in Awka. As we stated at the start, currently there are two contending monarchs in Awka, the incumbent Eze Uzu II Obi Gibson Nwosu and the challenger Ọzọ Augustine Ndigwe, crowned “Eze Uzu III”; there are two Presidents-General of the Town Union, Engr. Tony Okechukwu and Amobi Nwokafor; and two distinct Ọzọ groups, the old Ọzọ Awka Society and the new Ọzọ Ivbe.

These tripartite contentions seem to have defied any remedy. The camps are all entrenched in their corners and will not budge. There have been several attempts to resolve the crises: these include conferences, town halls, private consultations, demonstrations, prayers, you name it; yet nothing seems to persuade anyone to stand down. TAP knew that it “had to be fearless” in the inspiring words of our member, Hon. Okechukwu Onyeama. TAP knew that it had to think of radical solutions. In the end, therefore, TAP recommends the following:



The Eze Uzu Crisis

- **Peace Conference:** One of the most widely suggested ideas among TAP members is a meeting of all stakeholders involved in the kingship crisis. Members had different terms for such a meeting – from ‘Town Hall’ as suggested by the likes of Chief Charles Okeke (TAP submission, Dec. 6, 2017), to ‘Truth Commission’ as proposed by Chief Dilim Okafor (TAP submission, Dec. 14, 2017). Such a conference will have to be carefully managed, since it must involve the key governing elites of Awka. Given the very high stakes now on display, it would require great diplomatic skills to persuade the two kingship claimants, along with their factions within the Ọzọ Awka Society, Council of Kingmakers and other structures, to commit to such a conference. But greater monarchic schisms have been known in world history, and TAP believes that a fruitful peace conference, carefully orchestrated, is not only possible but could produce positive results. TAP proposes to set up a special committee whose mandate will be just such a task. Part of the role of this committee will be to devise strategies by which Awka could *pursue peace through strength*. That is, while seeking ways to engage the combatants in a diplomatic resolution, Awka must apply some pressure on the rivals by raising the threat of a demand for mutual surrender.
- **Mutual Surrender (Nuclear Option):** In the event that a peace conference is impossible to organize, or if organized, fails to end the kingship rivalry, TAP makes bold to suggest the radical idea that Awka must ask *both* of the contenders to stand down, in a kind of mutual surrender, in the larger interests of the town and even the state. We recommend that Awka should prepare for the possibility that peace cannot be brokered between the warring parties, and that it must thus contemplate the nuclear option. If it requires great skills of diplomacy to orchestrate the peace conference, it would be extremely difficult to enforce the proposed nuclear option. But it is not impossible. Should initial peace efforts fail, Awka could devise a combination of inducements and pressures to persuade the two kingship contenders, Eze Uzu II, Gibson Nwosu, and Ọzọ Augustine Ndigwe, to both surrender their claims – in the greater corporate interest of Awka. The idea of a simultaneous surrender, first suggested by this author, is the logical stance for TAP if peace initiatives prove unsuccessful. For, as things stand, because both contenders have so much at stake, none shows that it would be likely to countenance a unilateral surrender in favor of the other.
 - **Gibson Nwosu** is carrying on in his role secure in the fact that he enjoys the official recognition of Anambra State Government. Also, having held the title for 20 years, he knows too well the prestige and material benefits accruing from it to relinquish it to Ndigwe. Besides, he would not want to go down in history as the first Eze Uzu to be unseated by a challenger. Since both of his predecessors had successfully fended off similar challenges, Nwosu might fear that history would be unkind to him should he allow a young man like Ndigwe to get the better of him. There is an issue of personal pride involved. But there is also evident disdain for his challenger, whom he probably considers pompous, unscrupulous and over-ambitious, and thus unfit for the stool. He might also suspect that his challenger harbors imperialist desires (Ndigwe allows himself to be acclaimed as “His Imperial Majesty”!), and for this reason could harm an Awka Crown that requires utmost humility. Nwosu would be concerned about leaving a legacy where a future Awka monarch could be challenged by anybody, if Ndigwe were to get away with it! That would leave the Awka stool with a precarious posterity, and it would be blamed on him. So, Nwosu will prove recalcitrant, both for personal and institutional reasons.



- **Augustine Ndigwe:** An ambitious man like Ndigwe, who has coveted the stool for so long, will not voluntarily surrender it now that he has, in his view, attained the ascendancy. Having invested so much money, and with his prestige now on the line, it is almost unimaginable that he would ever consider a unilateral surrender. Such a concession would hurt his reputation across the country, and might even impact his business career. He has raised the stakes so much, especially with the steps he has taken since his presumed enstoolment. He has orchestrated visits with the Oba of Lagos, the Etsu of Nupe and others; has conferred subsidiary titles to supporters; he hosts 'royal' events and daily holds court; he is building his support base with purse and pageantry; and has raised such din and drama around himself that it is inconceivable for him to stand down voluntarily. TAP simply does not see Ndigwe being responsive to moral suasions. The kingship is his life!
- **Carrots and Sticks:** Given the impossible conundrum posited above, Awka might have to demand the mutual abdication of both Nwosu and Ndigwe. Clearly, neither of them can rule Awka in peace, except if one of them were implausibly to decide to stand down. Awka clearly cannot accommodate two crowns. Awka must recall the painful Mgbogo vs. Mgbede fissures that followed the crowning of Ichie Nnebe. Awka was nearly splintered then, and even now the fault-line remains in Awka politics and could widen with the current crisis. Externally, there is growing restiveness in broader Anambra about the instability of the 'capital monarchy'. The prestige of Awka monarchy is at stake. If the counter claims continue and unrest builds, Awka will gradually become less attractive as a destination for tourism and events. Other towns will become more attractive. Think of the potential effect of this for a city with a dominant hotel, hospitality and tourism economy. Think too of the political consequences, up to and including the potential loss of Awka capital city status. Awka must act! If peace fails, it must find a combination of inducements and pressures to orchestrate a mutual surrender.
- **Building Pressure:** TAP has some ideas how Awka can build pressure on Nwosu and Ndigwe and force them both to surrender. The crux of it is to erect a *Third Force* strategy. Currently, Awka has allowed itself to be divided into just two factions lining behind each of these contenders. Other elite groups and Awka grassroots appear to have been lured into a binary choice. Those who aren't choosing, a majority of Awka people, seem unconcerned or misguided. If a *Third Force* emerges it could change the spectrum of choice. It could mobilize opinion and support away from the combatants by presenting alternative data and alternative options. It could educate the masses by deconstructing the implications of the current crises, the current and future costs to Awka; and it could explain the logical improbability of peace under either man. The nucleus of this *Third Force* will be discussed in closed circles. But once it emerges, it will try, among other things, to do the following:
 - **Kingmakers, Ndu Ozo and Other Title Holders:** Try to peel off support for either crown among these elite groups
 - **Silent Notables:** Reach out to silent and uncommitted Awka notables. Most of them are probably disgusted with the deterministic choice currently on display and are choosing to stay out of it. TAP should draw up a list of such notables.
 - **Socialization and Mobilization:** Mount a campaign to educate the populace, using the public media and other grassroots-level tactics
 - **Plebiscite:** Conduct a plebiscite at home to record public support for the *Third Way*



- ***Awka in Diaspora:*** Reach out to Awka people in the Nigerian and global diaspora
- ***Potential Legal Action:*** As a last resort, threaten legal action; it is clear that both claimants have some level of legal jeopardy!
- ***ANSG:*** Persuade Anambra State Government to withdraw support for Nwosu and help to prosecute the *Third Way*, in the interest of peace in the capital city. TAP can help broker an intervention by the state government.
- **Inducements:** Whilst building up pressure as outlined above, the *Third Force* should also seek ways to incentivize the two contenders. This might include financial rewards, public acclaim, positions within the Anambra State Government, etc. Whatever their shortcomings, these two men are still Awka luminaries – probably even patriots – and should be given a chance for a dignified and face-saving exit. Nwosu for instance is 80+ years old, and must surely be getting exhausted by the endless crisis. If he agrees to stand down, Awka should send him off in a graceful public ceremony with all Ndu Ọzọ in attendance with a line-up of people pouring encomiums on him for his “selfless” gesture of standing down so that peace may reign in Awka. We can name some buildings and more streets after him. Same deal with Ndigwe. He might be reminded that he’s a young man who will be further elevated for standing down at this time in the larger interest of Awka. Although the stakes are high for each of these men, there is a slight possibility of a conciliatory response from them. TAP should reach out to people close to these men to explore other ways to incentivize them.
- **Regency Period:** TAP recommends that Awka should ask Eze Uzu II – consulting with Ndu Ọzọ, Council of Kingmakers, and Anambra State Government – to select someone from his village, Amikwo, to serve as regent for six months – in accordance with the Traditional Ruler Amended Constitution of 1986 – until the selection of a new Eze Uzu.
- **Selection of New Eze Uzu:** With a regent in place, Nkwelle Village should be notified and invited to nominate a candidate for the next Eze Uzu. Nkwelle must be encouraged to find someone from within, and not nominate an outsider. This is to avoid the sort of confusion that arose with the purported nomination of Ndigwe to represent that village, with the village later scrambling to refute the claim. It had to take out a newspaper advert to deny the claim, and eventually secured a court ruling barring Ndigwe from parading himself as the Eze Uzu sponsored by Nkwelle.

The ADUN Crisis

TAP members have keen interest in the ADUN crisis. Some members in fact have detailed knowledge of the intricacies of the crisis, having been involved one way or another, either in ADUN branch leadership, or in past conciliation efforts. As such, these TAP members have specific insights into the crisis. For the short term, members recommended the following:

- **Meeting of Past PGs:** The suggestion by Chief Dilim Okafor to organize a meeting of all the past ADUN PGs seemed very popular with TAP members. There was some hesitation about his original suggestion that the focus of the meeting should be enquiries about the collection and disbursement of Eke Market revenues. As TAP member Obiageli Ilodigwe argued, “the focus of convening the meeting [shouldn’t] be about Eke Awka revenue which may distract us from our priority of restoring peace to our beloved town.” Yet, Ochiagha



was insistent on the centrality of this issue in understanding the ongoing crisis. In a later submission, he argued that

“the moment the villages collect their share of the [Eke Awka] proceeds the better for all of us, and the do-or-die [attitude towards] becoming PG will reduce, and Ozo Awka Society will then look into their constitution and go by it” (TAP submission, Dec. 14, 2017)

There were certainly members who stood with Ochiagha. “Thank God Ochiagha has bared the face of the masquerade,” wrote Kene Nweze. “The picture is now very clear. It’s clear that there is a lot of gain in that office of PG, [hence] the endless struggle for this post...”

Despite lack of consensus on broaching the revenue issue, there was widespread agreement on the need to organize a meeting of past PGs and the current claimants. Members agreed that such a meeting would be a critical step in unpacking the issues afflicting the Union. Engr. Amobi Umeadi, for instance, suggested that “we should get hold of Engr. Anthony [Okechukwu] with his secretary..., Amobi with his secretary, immediate past and present Awka Ambassador Presidents, President of Pacesetter’s with chairman of his Peace and Reconciliatory Committee, presidents of the following [ADUN] branches: Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Onitsha and Warri and five members of the Admin of TAP. This enlarged house [will] be able to chart the way forward [for] Awka” (TAP submission, Sept. 3, 2017).

We will be specifying in the next chapter that such a meeting can be facilitated by a TAP committee, set up specifically to handle stakeholder outreach. The committee will review the issue of market revenues and determine if it would be appropriate to incorporate this into the agenda.

- **Withdrawal of Court Cases:** It was noted by several members that the most critical issue currently facing the ADUN is the existence of contradictory court rulings favoring each side of the contest. The executive faction led by Engr. Anthony Okechukwu appears to have legal cover based on the rulings of an Enugu High Court, which challenges the ruling by an Awka High Court delivered in favor of the executive faction led by Chief Amobi Nwaokafor. Both camps are making their claim on the basis of legal rulings which contradict each other. It is therefore impossible to achieve any kind of resolution with these contradictory rulings remaining in force.

As our member, Victor Chinweze pointed out, the court rulings need to be quashed and the court cases withdrawn before any meaningful solutions can be pursued (TAP submission, Aug. 18, 2017). Part of the reasons this crisis has lasted for so long is the legal quagmire that resulted from the suits and counter suits. These cases must be withdrawn or quashed to give room for new solutions.

- **Caretaker Administration:** There has been a long-standing suggestion for a new caretaker administration to be put in place to run the ADUN. This committee should be tasked with reforming the ADUN constitution which, when completed, should be used to conduct new election. It is of course up to the state government to approve the establishment of any caretaker administration. The Awka Pacesetters Club, in an interview with Chief Chike Obuekwe, described the process thus:

Approval will be requested to be granted for an official caretaker committee to run the town union affairs pending when the problem is fully resolved.



Following the request, the town would raise the list of people that the town [has] chosen and repose confidence upon to effectively serve in the committee. There shall be a clear Terms of Reference and a Mandate for the committee so raised.

Once done, if the application is well received after due diligence, the government will then announce it and effectively the committee automatically assumes the roles and responsibilities of a town union government. The caretaker committee shall remain the channel of communication and interaction between the town and the government in their official capacity pending when their term, mandate and terms of reference became exhausted and satisfactorily fulfilled. (Pacesetters. Op. cit. p. 127)

Our member, Richard Dozie Nwanna, suggested that “after going through the lawful process [to install a caretaker administration, if] the government insists on working with Tony Okechukwu, Izu Awka [should] be called to fix a date where all of us will match to the government house to protest the government action” (TAP submission, Sept. 2, 2017). Member Benson Nwobum agreed with this idea of putting pressure on the government, arguing that “without a mass action, the government will not care.” He suggested however that “a committee should be raised to interact with the state government to recognize the Awka caretaker committee. If the govt fails to do so then a mass action will follow” (TAP submission, Sept. 2, 2017).

- **Role of Government:** It is important for Anambra State Government to show greater impartiality in the matter. Government’s interest in the crisis is understandable, given that ADUN is an arm of local administration. However, government intervention cannot be at the detriment of constitutional propriety. We will have more to say about this in the next chapter.

In addition to the consensus opinions outlined above, some TAP members had other specific opinions about the issue of ADUN and how to tackle it. As an example, we present below, in edited verbatim, one such submission provided by the TAP members Worer Obuagbaka Esq:

Worer Obuagbaka Esq:

“The sore has been allowed to fester for too long. It is our collective pain.

[Engr. Tony Okechukwu] is at the center of the... ADUN crisis. We must acknowledge that he is a great son of Awka. He might have good intentions for vying for PG, a position which he later [won]. Everybody believes he started well; using his resources for the betterment of the town. Sadly, at a certain point he derailed. Why? Was he carried away by the perquisites and allurements of office, necessitating his subterranean efforts to amend the Constitution of ADUN to favour his elongation in office? Has he been less than [transparent] in his dealings? Was he a victim of corrupt and failed Nigeria political system? Too many questions indeed. This is not the time for recriminations. If he was a patriot, he would be wondering at the topsy-turvy of events. He would feel scandalized at this quagmire in which he is the epicentre. He came to serve, but look at where he found himself; middle of crisis.

The bitter truth is that Engr. Okechukwu has a major role [to play] in resolving this crisis. To think otherwise is to our peril. Majority may not acknowledge him as PG but the government recognizes him as such. Providence is on his side as the coercive power of the state is solidly behind him, [which causes] him to behave like a bull in a china shop. It [will be fruitless] to think of [an] enduring peace in ADUN without his cooperation. In the light of this, I suggest we make the following offers to him.

- (1) A promise of higher political office in future if he is interested in the State or national politics.
- (2) To allow him to pilot the affairs of the Union for 12 months under the doctrine of necessity.



(3) *He should not conduct any election or amend the constitution*

(4) *Sir Amobi Nwaokafor will take over as the PG after Tony Okechukwu's tenure of 12 months.*

(5) *All parties will sign an MOU and will withdraw all of the cases in court.*

We must be willing to shift grounds if we want to resolve this problem. There must be that spirit of give and take. This macabre dance must be put to an end. Awka has become [a] butt of cynical jokes in Anambra State...

Leadership Tenure: To prevent the recrudescence of this type of crisis in [the] future, we must abrogate [the] second tenure [provision] for our PGs. We are living witnesses to the damage the issue of second tenure for executive offices has done [to] the political life of this country. Why do we want to [make the same mistake]?

Election: I am not fully in support of [the] delegate system of election into ADUN offices. It will not reflect the wishes and aspirations of the people. Under this system, wrong people get elected. The delegates, more often than not, seize the opportunity to enrich themselves. They shamelessly offer themselves to the highest bidder. They are easily compromised.

However, if we should adopt [a] delegate system, I suggest we chose [a] high number of delegates (say 30) from each village. With this high number, the inherent capacity of political... scavenger[s] to prejudice the ADUN elections would have been greatly impaired.

Rotation: The rotation of the position of PG between Ezi and Ifite sections is counterproductive. It is politics of exclusion which destroys [meritocracy] in a community, state and the country. Politics of "turn by turn" does not only punish talents but it also rewards laziness. It produces people who are ill prepared for the task of leadership, bringing up nitwits and parvenus as role model. This is disgusting... The PG represents the whole of Awka, [not exclusively] Ifite [or] Ezi. His ultimate allegiance is to the town. It is my humble opinion that the best be elected irrespective of where [they come] from" (Worer Obuagbaka Esq., TAP submission, Sept. 30, 2017).

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

With widespread concern about the political crises in Awka, TAP members were understandably focused on finding immediate solutions. At the same time, there was strong emphasis on longer-term changes that should mitigate against political degeneration in the future. Much of the long-term ideas centered around constitutional reform, institutional revitalization, and behavioral reorientation. And they concerned both the ADUN in particular, and Awka town generally. For the most part, in the sections below we report the edited verbatim of member submissions and other materials which typify the general long-term recommendations gathered by TAP.

Long-Term Solutions for ADUN

Virtually all contributors to the ADUN pointed to the need for leadership contenders to have a reorientation towards service and integrity. Senior TAP member, Chris Umeadi, pointed out that if one looked at the claims and counter-claims of the major players (as reported by Pacesetters) "you will understand that greediness for power [and] control is the bone of contention, instead of call to serve our dear town Awka" (TAP submission, Sept. 2, 2017). For this reason, Engr. Amobi Umeadi suggested that "anyone wishing to serve as PG of [ADUN] should forget every form of personal quest but see it as a call to service." He acknowledged "that [the] office can be anyone's stepping stone to political stardom," but argued that this was "if and only if you serve Awka meritoriously." For this reason, he suggested that "every PG signs a [strongly-worded] code of conduct prepared by Awka at Izu-Awka," to regulate their behavior (TAP submission, Sept. 2, 2017). Member concern over the orientation of ADUN leadership was so strong that



some even called for the dissolution of ADUN or abolition of the office of PG. As Kene Nweze stated, more in exasperation, “there is nothing developmental about our Awka Development Unions and PGships!” But, as Engr. Umeadi pointed out: “We can't do without the office of the PG in this modern age... Government works [with] the PGs of [all] town unions [as part of the local administrative structure], and not [the] Awka PG [alone]. If you do not have a PG, you will not be represented.” In the end, TAP members agreed that the office of ADUN PG is critical for Awka development, but they demand a reorientation towards service, and also recommend stronger controls imposed by Izu Awka.

- **Constitutional Reform and Behavioral Reorientation**

Excerpt from Awka Pacesetters Report:

Having consulted widely, carefully and painstakingly with all the people involved and opinion leaders in Awka concerning the socio-political problems confronting Awka town generally, we have been able to identify the absence of a generally acceptable constitution as one major problem upon which all other problems hinge on.

Previous administrations in Awka Development Union starting from 2004 when Engr. Nzekwe Ibe was at the helm of affairs identified with this problem and quickly tried their best to ensure that Awka people were well governed with a constitution. Therefore, they registered the 2004 Constitution, but as time passed and years rolled by it was discovered that the 2004 constitution was no longer meeting expectations and demands of modern day Awka people. So again, the constitution was amended by the executive of Linus Ofordile's Caretaker Committee administration which brought in the 2008 constitution, while the 2004 constitution gave more delegation powers to the ADUN outside branches, during elections, the 2008 constitution gave the village branches more delegate power.

However, it was this 2008 constitution that was used though slightly modified by the Chief Chike Obuekwe-led committee to elect the present executives of ADUN whose tenure had expired constitutionally on 13th March 2015.

However, the executive of Engr. Tony Okechukwu identified some fundamental problems associated with the 2004 and 2008 ADUN constitutions (and other institutional constitutions) and decided to organize a forum where Awka people will come together to discuss [these] issues more objectively hence the Awka

Summit of December 2013. At the summit, the Engr. Tony Okechukwu led executives were mandated to formulate a well-articulated popular constitution that will stand the test of time for Awka people.

He went frontally without wasting time to form a constitution drafting committee made up of distinguished Awka men who diligently and selflessly produced what is now called 2014/2015 constitution.

It is true that Awka people mandated the govt. of Engr Tony Okechukwu to produce a constitution for the people, but there are conventional methods and procedures a constitution must undergo before it will have the backing and force of the Awka people.

Problem started when the rightful persons and procedures of doing so were not involved in the process of amending and passing the constitution, namely, the (branches outside Awka and the distinguished members of the AGM) the (Izu Awka) etc.

This wrong method of constitution amendment and passage gave rise to a lot of doubts and loss of confidence on the town union administration.

Again, another reason for the rejection by the Awka people of Tony Okechukwu's executive led constitutional amendment procedure is the realization that he made himself land committee Chairman for additional 15 years after leaving office without the approval of Awka people, through Izu-Awka.



Therefore, Awka people are demanding for another constitution that will have the confidence and backing of the Awka people. (Awka Pacesetters Club, Peace and Reconciliation Committee Report, 2016, p. 140-141)

Chief Chike Obuekwe: Excerpt from Awka Pacesetters' Report:

Awka should come together, forget the [ADUN] election or its outcome for now and firstly repair her dignity and ties with the government.

Let a committee be set up to look at the town union's existing constitutions especially the 2004 and 2008 versions and marry them to form an authenticated and updated constitution that will effectively treat all the contentious aspects or failures of the previous ones. This is considering the seriousness of the matter and the position of the town union in today's government scheme of affairs and the interest the activities of the town union currently generates.

If / when merged to a single constitution, the final document shall be sent to all [ADUN] branches and to all the villages to be read, understood, debated, so that at the end of the exercise a most credible and acceptable document shall then be presented to Awka for approval without any dissenting voice.

After that, there shall be a standing order or law of the land that will state that nobody, no matter how highly placed shall amend the constitution without a comprehensive, tacit or explicit approval of Awka people, through the right and appropriate channel including a proper Izu-Awka!

Originally, ADUN was a design of Awka people living outside Awka, [set up] as a function of their developmental activities to the good of Awka and well-being of their members. But now, things have changed and everybody is aware and government also has come into the management of their affairs, so Awka ADUN has to be streamlined to capture all these diverse dynamics of today's town unions.

In as much the government is now into the control (and the funding) of the town unions, it has therefore stirred up a lot of interest from every sides, ambitious or selfless. The resultant pressure the state of affairs has heaped on the fragility of the Awka institutions and her people brought about this crisis... It is for these reasons that Awka should immediately get organized and set aside every inordinate ambition and present herself as one in a meeting with the governor with a view to seriously look into the problems all the previous constitutions had thrown-up with a view to resolving them.

Awka must remove religious sentiments in Awka affairs, going-forward. Awka also has shown lack of capacity to implement resolutions so reached in matters of importance, it will be to this end that there must be established a deliberate mechanism (or Task Force) to ensure that Awka follows up and ensure that her decisions and resolutions are well carried out. A lot of Awka meetings had been done and resolutions so reached that never saw the light of the day, nor persons whose activities were found sanction-able properly reprimanded or sanctioned.

In general, Awka people are good people and values her citizens, but a lot is desired to put the town back on her foot and requires that everybody must come out to take our destiny by our hands. He however instructed that we must stand on the truth and say the truth no matter whose ox is gored.

It is unfortunate that, by virtue of the disrespect the Awka institutions have openly attracted to themselves, the government likewise does not regard our traditional institutions.

The face of Awka as represented by the Eze Uzu kingship may not have a pride of place in the government circles since he is equally disdained by his own people!

Awka kings must be seen to be above board and must be removed from cheap and unwarranted blackmails, unnecessary meddling in petty things and politics without recourse to the shame and drawbacks it will bring to Awka and the well-being of his subjects.

Again, he implied the level of distraction that religion has wrought on the Awka person, given the level of sentiment it has generated regarding the dust-to-dust rites. In this case, joining the church in what should ordinarily be a simple Awka matter.



Is it not clear that the Catholic church will continue to lend their support and patronage to him for the reasons that he – Chief Anthony Okechukwu – is being removed because he is of the Catholic faith? Chief Anthony Okechukwu succumbed to the dust-to-dust rites as against the practices of Awka customs and tradition. This singular act indeed complicated the matter and pitched him against the Awka traditional institutions and Ndu-Awka in general depending on the individuals' or collective convictions. So, we must divulge ourselves of religious sentiments, if peace and sanity must be discussed.

Chief Anthony Okechukwu has lost the confidence of the people, so if his supporters including Ojeligbo [Senator Ndi Obi] will come to that realization, it will be fair on Awka to be on the part of the Awka people, since the government listens to him.

[In] the end, the way forward in stepping up the peace effort is to bring the best and the brightest in addition to representatives from Awka institutions, Groups, past/present Executives of ADUN, alongside representatives of the Chief Anthony Okechukwu faction to assemble in a round table discussion with a view to possibly dissolve the standoff. This, if done will usher-in a new understanding which will form the basis for championing a new face of Awka before the government.

The Oṭochal Awka was the ceremonial head of Awka in whose place Awka people assemble for the people's meetings, since he remains the approving authority on resolutions and decisions.

But, today due to the [lack of direction in] Awka, all sorts of dimensions for summoning an Izu Awka continues to emerge according to leanings and affiliations. As a result, the Izu Awka of today is marred with unwholesome manipulations, thuggery, brigandage and distortions.

These things have deepened the inability of the town to forge a common front in decision making and political stand-point. Awka requires a functional town union to resolve every [anomaly]. It is an effective town union that can genuinely put [all] other institutions back on their feet again.

On the influence of money in the delegate system, [Obuekwe] advised that last minute release of the names of delegates would also reduce the monetary influence. Also, with the two 'Ogbo-na-achi obodo' who has 3-delegates each.

On the sources of income to the Awka administration, he said that there are commissions accruable to Awka from sources like markets and parks in Awka, land deals/compensations and government subventions etc. Saying that the money so involved is massive enough to sustain to a great extent, the governance of Awka including the running of all the institutions and the traditional stool.

On how he succeeded with the election, he explained that delegates were each given a tag. There were three hundred and sixty-nine delegates. The number of the unique voting cards were equally the same as the number of the delegates, which took care of infiltration with spurious voting cards. The respective contestants were then handed their separate voters box. The process required that every delegate would walk up to their preferred candidate and drop in the voting card in his box. This allowed the delegates also to protect their own votes and also, it eliminated all the manipulation, ballot box stuffing, confusion and disagreements that follow every election.

Counting was done openly, candidate-after-candidate, in a full glare as it was ensured that the total number of votes cast were in correspondence with the accredited delegates. So, there was no room for inconclusiveness or after election squabbles.

Awka shall be wary and prayerful concerning the evil plots, antics and antagonism of the surrounding towns especially Amawbia that has encroached dangerous into the heart of Awka lands. They were reported to have sworn by their medicine(juju) to the nature and actualization/realization of 'Awka-adi-na-ofu', as fetish as that may sound, the happenings in Awka appear more than meets the eye signifying that Awka has yet to be one, many years after assuming the status of a state capital.

We must therefore rise to shame and disgrace all the Awka haters and detractors. (Pacesetters' Report, op. cit.)



Engr. Hyacinth Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne (also touched on issue of Eze Uzu here):

"The situation in our dear Awka requires patriotism. Patriotism is a very practical thing that only actions can portray.

It's good for someone to offer his services towards making his town great but it requires patriotism for the person to know when his actions have started negating his good will /intentions. The good will that made Engr. Tony Okechukwu to offer his services towards making Awka great has now become counterproductive. This is the time he needs to show patriotism. His actions, as a patriotic Awka man who offered himself to serve his people should be able to prove that he is truly patriotic and had actually offered himself for service to the good of his people.

This also applies to Eze Uzu. This is the time these two Awka men should show patriotism. I believe Awka people will celebrate them if they willingly submit to patriotism and allow Awka to move forward.

The publication credited to Engr. Tony Okechukwu to the effect that he was being victimized because of his Catholic faith tells us that there is religious angle to the crisis in Awka. Both Eze Uzu and Engr. Tony Okechukwu are Catholics, who have openly gone against the position of Awka on dust-to-dust crisis and /or made pronouncements against the position of Awka on this matter.

There's nothing wrong with an individual practicing any faith he chooses but there's everything wrong with a person leading a people putting his faith over and above his office as the leader of the people. Eze Uzu and PG have it as a duty to place Awka first before their religion/ beliefs / faith because they are no longer individuals they are institutions.

In a situation where their roles as Eze Uzu and PG conflict with their faith, they have the options of reverting to the status of individuals by resigning, so as to satisfy their faith or remain in office as the leaders of Awka and accordingly lead Awka people standing on the side of Awka and not on the opposite side.

Just ask yourself, in the face of a court action between Awka and the Catholic Church on dust to dust crisis, where both the Eze Uzu and PG are openly against Awka, who will lead Awka through the court case. Will Eze Uzu and PG obey Awka or will they obey the Bishop of Awka Catholic diocese? What will they tell the court in support of Awka while they have openly denounced Awka on the case? Any way you want to put it, no leader, who puts his faith first before his town and his people can ever serve his people well. Such leaders can only put their town and their people to ridicule in defense of their faith.

I maintain that any leader who wants to lead a multi-religious community, like Awka, must have [out]grown religious sentiments. Way forward:

(i) Eze Uzu should choose between the throne and his faith. If he chooses his faith, he should resign for another Awka man who has out-grown religious sentiments to take over. If he chooses the throne, he should denounce his pronouncements against Awka and undertake to always align with the position of Awka on every matter. A traditional ruler cannot be going against the tradition of the people he vowed to protect. Thereafter, the issues surrounding his dethronement and the likes should be looked into with a view to finding a workable resolution.

(ii) Engr. Tony Okechukwu should realize that he is key to finding a lasting peace in Awka and show patriotism by resigning in obedience to the constitution that brought him in, which gave him only one tenure.

(iii) Chief Amobi Nwokafor should trade off any ambition for second term as his own show of patriotism. During the one and only tenure of Chief Amobi Nwokafor, he will preside over the writing of an Awka constitution that will strengthen Awka governance institutions and usher in the an ADUN executive in line with the constitution, which Chief Amobi Nwokafor's led one tenure executive would have perfected for Awka.

This is a call to patriotism and all those who answer the call should be celebrated by Awka people as great achievers and men of peace. (Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne, TAP submission, Aug. 24, 2017)



Long-Term Solutions for Awka

The selected submissions above pertaining to ADUN already touched on broader issues that concern the people of Awka. However, there were some exemplary submissions specifically focused on Awka-wide themes that we present below. They range from institutional and constitutional reforms to the issue of religion in Awka town.

Again, here we present the slightly edited verbatim of leading member submissions.

- **Institutional and Constitutional Reforms**

Engr. Hyacinth Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne on institutional reform:

"In my opinion, the only way forward for the actualization of the Awka we all dream of in this group is to establish a good governance structure for Awka. Awka needs strong Awka governance institutions with a governance structure that will make it impossible for any individual or group to manipulate or hijack Awka affairs. The powers, duties and functions of each of the institutions will be clearly defined in an Awka constitution, which is urgently needed. A constitution that will address all the issues about Awka based on various / several experiences.

Izu Awka should not be an all-comers affair. Izu Awka needs to be restructured such that each village would have a definite number of representatives, who would be nominated, elected, appointed, chosen, selected, by his village or our brainstorming may throw up. As of today, it's possible that non-Awka indigenes attend Izu Awka because there is no screening and method of identification.

All the village representatives, who could be recalled by their village or be expelled by Izu Awka for misconduct / low attendance and replaced by their village, must be men of TRUTH, men of caliber and impeccable character, money and position SHALL NOT and MUST NEVER be a factor in the choice of village representativeness. All the Ofochal (eldest men) of each of the 33 villages should be automatic members of Izu Awka.

Izu Awka is the apex decision making institution in Awka, other institutions like, Eze Uzu / Cabinet, Ozo Awka, Awka Development Union Nigeria (ADUN), Council of Kingmakers and Ulo na Achi Awka (Ruling Age Grade) Awka youth, should be operation[al] institutions that would execute the decisions of Izu Awka as it concerns their respective operational responsibilities as would have been clearly specified in Awka constitution.

For instance, the duties and functions of Eze Uzu / Cabinet should be customs and traditions; Ozo Awka - judiciary as the apex court (for cases that have already gone [through] the family, the umunna, the village and the quarter judicial processes as Awka traditional judicial system was ancestrally fashioned); ADUN - development; Council of Kingmakers - Chieftaincy Affairs; Ulo na Achi Awka - day to day running of cultural and traditional affairs of Awka in consultation with Eze Uzu and his cabinet. Awka youth as may be directed by Izu Awka and /or ADUN. All the executive members of these operational institutions should also be automatic members of Izu Awka.

Once these institutions are properly established and manned by men of TRUTH, caliber and impeccable character, Awka will be a town to be proud of.

When this is achieved, individuals and groups will become totally irrelevant and any defaulter to the decisions of Izu Awka will be punished as may have already been specified in Awka Constitution or by Izu Awka, as the case may be." (Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne, TAP submission, Aug. 5, 2017)

Engr. Hyacinth Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne on institutional behavior:

In my opinion, I feel it's important we also address some of the things that belittle our institutions and Awka as a people.



We hear of the visit of Nigeria Presidents to the Traditional Rulers of various towns while the serving President is on state visit. I don't know if such honour is accorded to Eze Uzu, the Traditional Ruler of the Capital of Anambra State. Instead, it's our own Traditional Ruler, Eze Uzu Awka that will leave his throne to this place and that place. Who knows, maybe Eze Uzu also goes to see the Bishop of Awka Diocese, instead of the Bishop coming to see him.

Most of, if not all, the meetings concerning Awka and the church were usually held within the church premises. First, a delegation is usually sent to the Bishop to find out when he'll be free to hold a meeting to discuss an issue that concerns Awka as a people. Yes, this is in order, so as to fix a convenient time for both parties.

What I find belittling to Eze Uzu, PG, Ozo Awka, Awka Committee on any issue concerning Awka as a people, etc. is holding the meeting within the church premises?

In my opinion, any meeting concerning Awka as a people should be held at Eze Uzu Palace, if Eze Uzu will. If Eze Uzu will attend, it should hold any other place, like Ozo Awka meeting venue, etc but not the church premises. There's no way Eze Uzu, PG, Ozo Awka, or a committee representing Awka in a matter concerning Awka as a people, will leave our home and move to the home of a stranger in Awka domain to hold such a meeting. It's very wrong.

A stranger in any person's domain pays allegiance to the person who provided a place of residence to the stranger. Strangers in Awka domain should also pay allegiance to our Eze Uzu, Awka institutions and Awka people.

I'm specific about matters concerning Awka as a people. In this circumstance, the Committee on the matter, constituted by Awka, either at Izu Awka or by an Awka institution should be accorded the respect due to Awka as a people in whose domain the stranger resides.

I'm not talking about a matter between Awka Christians or Muslims and their church, Bishop, General Overseer, Imam, etc. I'm talking specifically about a matter concerning Awka as a people. Awka should be accorded our due respect as a host to the various strangers and their institutions residing in our domain. (Ifeyanichukwu Uyanne, TAP submission, Aug. 27, 2017)

- **Awka and Religion**

Engr. Hyacinth Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne on religion:

One issue that constitutes a very big hurdle to the actualization of a united Awka is religion. The rivalry and divisions created by the various religions / Christian denominations help to breed crisis in our beloved Awka. Each religious group struggles to ensure that their members occupy high positions in Awka institutions. The churches get their members into these high positions so that those their members will be doing the biddings of their Bishops / leaders of their churches instead of doing the biddings of Awka as a people.

In this respect, any Awka person that has not outgrown religious sentiments should not be a member of Izu Awka or a member of any of the operations institutions. This is because such people that have not outgrown religious sentiments, who obey their Bishops / church leaders / church doctrines / faith / beliefs and disobey the decisions of Izu Awka are the people the churches use to polarize Awka.

It's only those who have outgrown religious sentiments that can actually execute the decisions of Izu Awka without seeking the opinions / permission of their various church leaders. Of course, the opinions of the various religions and Christian denominations most often vary. In which case, if we have those loyal to their religious leaders the rivalry among the various denominations of the church and the rivalry between Christianity other religions will continue to tear Awka apart as a people. In this situation, achieving any meaningful progress will be a complete mirage.

Therefore, efforts MUST be made to ensure that Christians and [adherents of] other foreign religions... that will make the list of membership of [the] governance institutions [prescribed above]



are not religious [fanatics] but liberal[s]... who believe in [fact-based and rational] decision-making... [They must be people] who believe that the collective decision of Awka as a people is supreme for the governance of Awka town /people. (Ifeanyichukwu Uyanne, TAP submission, Aug. 5, 2017)

Worer Obuagbaka Esq. on Dust-to-Dust:

“The pouring of sand by a widow or widower into the grave of a departed partner during burial has been generating crisis between the Catholic Church and Awka community. The custom of the people forbids it. Hitherto, in spite of this cultural restraint, the community did not pay attention to this practice. Indeed, it was optional and there was no sanction on a widow/widower who decided to go against it. The customary restraint was gradually dying and would have died permanently in the careless flow of time. Sadly, the Catholic Church in its synod in 2003 decided that Catholic widows and widowers must begin to pour sand into the graves of their departed partners and insisted on enforcing it among Catholics. This is how a dying culture which had fallen into decrepitude and dystopia became invigorated, clanking its medieval chain to the chagrin of a peaceful community. Peace was murdered and there is no love lost between the Church and the community. It has brought a recrudescence of bad blood between the two groups. There is always apprehension in Awka whenever a wife or husband of a Catholic is dead.

By insisting on its position, the Catholic Church wants to debunk the belief of the community that if a man goes to bed with a widow who had poured sand into the grave of her husband, the husband will kill the man. The same thing will also happen if it is the widower that does this. The pith and kernel of its argument therefore is that pouring of sand signifies continuing relationship. The restraint by the community is therefore considered heterodoxy. On a thoughtful reflection, I think this is a wrong assumption and fallacy which the Church should have waved aside. This belief is false because it is superficial. It is just superstition. Does a dead man have power over his wife or anybody else? There is not a scintilla of hard evidence pointing to the potency of this customary belief. In the acid test of the so-called love, assuming a wife suffered terminal illness before she passed on and the husband maltreated her and was to a greater extent responsible for her death, will the man’s sin be extenuated by performing the dust to dust rites? Human beings can pretend. Shakespeare said “there is no art to find the mind’s construction on the face”. And the Holy Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9 “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The Catholic Church in Awka which is sui generis knows better than I do. To do a moral scavenger’s work, I say with humility that the pouring of sand into the grave is not an end to itself. The performance of these rites will not take anybody to Heaven. We can deceive people but not God. This practice has no spiritual significance. On a sober reflection, I think the Church is quarreling with the community about how to dispose a decadent and putrid body whose soul is either in bliss with God or cast into Hell. The body is important only when it is inhabited by the soul. There are dead persons whose bodies were not recovered. Some bodies are cremated. Jesus Christ admonished one of his disciples in Mathew 8:22 “follow me and let the dead bury their own dead”. Africanus told Cicero in a dream “A virtuous life is the highway to Heaven. Beneath the moon there is nothing that is not mortal and doomed to decay, except for the souls which by the grace of the gods have been conferred on humankind” I know as a fact that mutilated bodies who were servants of God and holy will rise resplendent and whole on the last day. Let us attach more importance to the soul than to the body.

There are innumerable evils plaguing the society which the Church should address. Few examples are as follows; Criminal accumulation of wealth by our political leaders, kidnapping, fornication, adultery, election rigging, religious hatreds, armed robbery, looting of public treasuries, corruption etc. The Igbo region has become a centerpiece of violent crime. It is appalling that people who rig elections come to church for thanksgiving. The society is suffused in moral decadence and corruption has become an article of faith. One may ask; does the performance of dust to dust rites have any redeeming influence on the souls in purgatory? Does it not amount to promoting [hedonism]? Socrates warned “an injury to the soul is far more serious than the loss of an arm or leg or an eye”

Umudioka village in Awka is currently in Court with Rev.Fr. Patrick Chukwuma as a result of misunderstanding that arose from the obdurate refusal by the villagers against the performance of dust to dust rites in its soil. The priest alleged he was assaulted. As a Catholic I will be filled with grief to see a Rev. Father in a witness box giving evidence to secure the conviction of people who



allegedly offended him. Yes, I know it is an offence against the State but he is the complainant. The same man of God who had taught me to love and forgive my enemies. It presents an ugly spectacle. He should stand towards everybody in loco parentis. A pure heart free from hate and bitterness. Socrates again warned Crito; "One ought not to return an injustice or an injury to any person, whatever the provocation". And our Lord Jesus Christ says in Mathew 5:39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also". Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, said "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself"

It has been argued that this restraint is a heathen custom. I doubt if this is true. "Custom then, is the guide of human life" wrote Scottish philosopher David Hume. It is, no doubt, a guide to understand the soul of a community and its people. The Church has argued that the community does not get involved when the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity is burying its members. My answer to this is that this is a secret society which the Church is not.

The Bible does not stipulate how a dead body should be buried. What is special about the corpse? Nothing. According to Plato "... the goal of the soul is to free itself from the body in order that it may see Truth clearly...The human soul is debased by the body. However, since it existed before it came into the body, it may free itself from the body and continue to exist after the body has been destroyed". It is therefore disheartening that the Church is attaching much significance to the body that will soon decay instead of saving the soul from impending doom. Beyond the razzmatazz of worldly comfort the soul will pay dearly for the insatiable desires of the body. The body has been identified by SAINT AUGUSTINE as the source of all evil and danger to the soul.

The Church has further argued that the community should not be involved in its burial ceremonies. Jesus Christ came not because of those who are well but for those who are sick spiritually. The burial ceremonies provide a veritable ground for propagating the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many sick souls in such occasion. The Homily by the priest will change the hearts of many recidivists and malefactors. The solemn celebration of Holy Mass in the presence of the so-called idol worshippers will win souls for Christ. Furthermore, our brothers and sisters who have abandoned the Catholic faith due to vicissitudes of life will begin to have a rethink.

The Church should spend its time in preaching against the social malaise that has taken over the society. The custom of a people should not be viewed a monstrous barbarity. It should understand the ways and social mores of the community and get back to the business of winning souls for Christ. This crisis is all much ado about nothing and awesomely disappointing. If the priests had their ears to the ground, they would have heard that among the Catholic faithful there are overwhelming voices of discontent and malcontent. My love for the Catholic Church and its priest will not blindfold me from pointing out their errors. I respect the priests not only for their asceticism and vow of celibacy but also for their great learning and in-depth knowledge of philosophy.

The irony of this virulent relationship is that Catholics who refuse to perform dust to dust rites go to the Anglican Church for their thanksgiving. The Anglican Church Awka is happy and in high spirits betraying the triumph of a miner who had finally struck gold. It has said it innumerable times and wisely too that it is not bothered about dust to dust rites.

The gullibility of the people should not be exploited. The performance or lack of the dust to dust rites will not change the course of a soul. This is standing logic on its head. We must discern between falsity and truth, between colorable glosses and pretenses. Diogenes wrote, "the purpose of history includes showing the pitfalls of the past, for them to be avoided in future." Soren Kierkegaard said "life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward"

This is not the first time the Catholic Church is interfering in the custom of Awka community. In 1975 the Church forbade the slaughtering of hen which will be eaten by an intending couple before the wife finally goes to live with her husband in a traditional marriage ceremony. This is called "igbu okuku onye uwa". The attempt to outlaw this practice generated a great deal of disenchantment and quarrel in the town. Peace was restored in 1982 when the late Bishop Albert Obiefuna intervened and decided that the practice should continue but with little modification. To allow sleeping dog lie, the people accepted this adjustment and there was tranquility until now.



Just a recap. Look at the issue objectively. The law recognizes marriage under customary law and under the Act. A marriage is being contracted under customary law in the woman's family house. The Catholic Church whose priest is not solemnizing the union is dictating to the community the do's and don'ts. Is this not provocative?

I was among the people mandated by the Awka Catholic members in Lagos to discuss the present lingering problem with the Arch Bishop of Awka Diocese, His Lordship, Bishop EzeOkafor. He granted us audience in spite of his busy schedule on 29th December 2011 but told us that the position of the Church was sacrosanct.

*The Church has argued that there is freedom of religion as guaranteed by section 38(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended). This argument is a digression. Nobody is asking any person to abandon his religion. I must point out also that the right given in section 38(1) is not absolute. It is subject to section 38(4) which forbids secret society. There is a further derogation in section 280(1). As far back as 1956 the former Eastern Region created its Customary Courts. Ethnic Customary Law though unwritten is recognized by our Constitution. "It is flexible and always subject to motives of expediency." So held the Court in *Lewis vs Bankole* (1909) 1N.L.R @100-101. In our Courts, rules of Customary Law are valid if they pass three tests. These are (1) The law must not be repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience (2) It must not be incompatible either directly or by implication with any law for the time being in force. (3) It must not be contrary to public policy. I humbly submit that the position of Awka community is in consonance with these three tests. In the case of *Eshugbayi Eleko vs Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria* (1931) A.C 622 @637, it was held as follows: "...the Court cannot itself transform a barbarous custom into a milder one.....the more barbarous customs of earlier days may under the influence of civilization become milder without losing their essential character as custom....it is the assent of the community that gives a custom its validity".*

The Church has not complained that the community does not allow it to preach the Gospel or refused to donate land for expansion purposes. It has also not complained that the priests are starving. The only complaint is that it is asked by the community to save a widow/widower a further ordeal of passionate weeping by preventing her/him from coming near the grave to perform the dust to dust rites. What is evil or unbiblical about this restraint? What is special about a smelling cadaver that may have sent a soul that once inhabited it to Hell or Purgatory? Socrates again expressed regrets about human body, "so long as we keep to the body and our soul is contaminated with this imperfection, there is no chance of our ever attaining satisfactorily to our object, which we assert to be Truth.... and the reason why we have to acquire wealth is the body because we are slaves in its service..." The Church should not make death to look as evil. According to Cicero "death is not an evil, being either a change of place for the soul or annihilation... For this life is truly death and I could, if I would weep for it." And Plato re-echoed this point when he said: "the whole life of the philosopher is a preparation for death... let us acclimatize ourselves to the idea of death... once we have arrived at the other place and only then shall we live"

For all practical purposes, the community is not saying that masquerades will grace the burial ceremonies of Catholics. It is not asking for an opportunity to perform any ritual or fetish on the corpse. If the Rev. Father, the catechist, the zonal leader and the children of the deceased perform the dust to dust rites at the grave, is this not sufficient? We live in an environment where truth is in short supply. This is definitely not a combination of Christian and traditional rites. We all know the rituals involved in traditional burial.

In the terror of the moment, let us subject the position of the Church to philosophical dialectic. According to the Church, the pouring of sand into the grave of the husband signifies a subsisting relationship. And having performed this ritual, any lecherous man or in-law who makes love with her will die untimely through the spiritual power of the late husband. Assuming this is true and in return of this simulated love, the spirit of the husband begins to appear to her physically and in dreams, will she not be worried and scared? Will she not in distress go from one powerful man of God to another for prayers? Will she not begin to complain bitterly that the difference between her and the late husband is like the chasm between light and darkness? Will she not diffidently bark at this dead man to live her alone? Will she not invite the white garment Churches to chain and padlock this man's effigy on the grave? This same scenario applies mutatis mutandis to the widower. The pouring of sand is a mere show of chicanery and playing to the gallery. In this situation, nobody cares to find



out whether the attitude of the surviving partner is responsible for the death of the other. Shakespeare said "...to show an unfelt sorrow is a service which the false man does easily".

Frankly, a widow who refused to pour sand into the grave of her husband but living in the fear of God is nearer to Heaven than one who in the full glare of the world religiously pour sand into her husband's grave but blasphemes God in every of her acts" (Worer Obuagbaka Esq., TAP submission, Dec. 10, 2017. This piece was first published in the Sun Newspaper of June 27-28, 2012).

Excerpt from Awka Pacesetters' Report:

The socio-political atmosphere in Awka town became more charged during the burial rites of Qzọ Aforka Okechukwu, Late father of Engr. Tony Okechukwu, during the burial, it was discovered that the wife of the deceased performed the dust-to-dust right as against the tradition of Awka people. More so when it was an agreement between the Qzọ Awka and Engr Tony Okechukwu that such dust-to-dust rite performance will never take place. In all of the severally meetings held between Engr. Tony Okechukwu and the Qzọ Awka, there was this double assurance given by Tony Okechukwu that his mother will never perform such rite. [For] this reason, on the burial day the Qzọ Awka came en-masse to accord one of their own a befitting farewell journey to the spirit world but to their... chagrin and utter disappointment, it was the opposite of what they (Qzọ Awka) were assured that took place, and they have to abandon the occasion.

When we confronted Engr. Tony Okechukwu with this question of betrayal, he claimed that it was true that he assured the Qzọ Awka that the dust-to-dust rite will never take place at his late father's burial with strong conviction. Continuing, he said that, it was to his greatest shock to realize that it was one Onye-Qzọ that was in attendance in one of the meetings he held with Ndi-Qzọ-Awka, who went behind and informed the Catholic Bishop of the agreement between him and Qzọ Awka. To this end the Bishop was influenced to bury his late father before performing the burial Holy mass, that by so doing his (Engr. Tony Okechukwu's) mother will perform the dust to dust right, thereby provoking heavy sentiment in the town.

All these were aimed at ridiculing his person and attracting the wrath of Awka people against him. However, Engr. Tony Okechukwu who did not know that all these were based on a personal ego to swallow him in the crisis, went ahead, swallowed his pride, and still went further to meet with Qzọ Awka and apologized to them over the ugly incident that marred his late father's burial ceremony. (Awka Pacesetters Club, Peace and Reconciliation Committee Report, 2016, p. 141-142)

* * *

In the foregoing sections, we laid out details of the recommendations proffered by members of TAP to resolve the political issues currently playing out in Awka. We proposed some short-term solutions to arrest the exigent situations, but also suggested longer-term reforms that would drive political modernization in Awka. Most of the recommendations proposed here are radical and challenging. But TAP has developed an action plan to drive the recommendations.

We now turn to TAP's action plans in the next chapter.



5. TAP ACTION PLAN

THE recommendations presented by TAP in the preceding chapter are manifestly radical and far-reaching. TAP has no illusions that the recommendations will meet with ready acceptance. Clearly, our proposals will upset a lot of powerful interests, and they will surely put up a stiff resistance. If you think about it, we are proposing nothing less than a revolution! It is a revolution that aims, in the short-run, to sweep the Augean Stable of stale and stalemated contestations – in the case of Awka town administration and, more dramatically, in the case of kingship rivalry. It is also a revolution that seeks, in the long term, to overturn a political and constitutional order that has benefited a few but left Awka as a whole in a hole – crippled and comatose.

For these recommendations to have even the merest chance of success, TAP must be prepared to work for it, if we are as committed as we claim. There was a declaration in the last chapter that TAP is not seeking to be a social club, but a social movement. Movements tend to have more radical agendas than clubs, and they are often far readier to work for a revolution. Well, we are a movement; a *Movement for the Transformation of Awka*. So let's get to work!!

Set out below are some of the practical next steps proposed to kick things off:

1. **Ratification of Report:** Present this report to TAP's plenary body for review and ratification. It is possible that members will propose some changes. If so, this will be done and the report will be re-presented for ratification. Given the radical nature of our proposals here, it is important that we have consensus, or at least that the proposals be endorsed by a significant majority of members.
2. **Creation of TAP Political Action Committee (TAP-PAC):** Much of the solutions proposed by TAP requires consultation with key political stakeholders and Awka notables and engagement with the state government (see below). It will also involve concerted efforts to socialize the *Third Way* agenda and mobilize popular support behind it. This will be the mandate of TAP-PAC. This committee will comprise some of the most powerful members of TAP – the elder statesmen amongst us; stars with stature in Awka political universe who can reach the key players in Awka politics. That is, people who can 'reach' Awka political luminaries physically, emotionally and intellectually. TAP-PAC will be the *political vanguard* of TAP; and like such vanguards, it will be responsible for TAP political strategy and its tactics. It will have the task of translating the intellectual output of TAP Think Tank (see below) into actionable strategy. This group will have the task of building the nucleus of the *Third Force*. They will know who, among Ndu Ozo, Awka Kingmakers, and other political elites has soft affinity towards the binary kingship choice currently available to Awka. It will be the task of TAP-PAC to create disenchantment towards the determinism of the current binary choice. TAP-PAC will be the nerve centre of TAP political engagement.
3. **Awka Stakeholder Outreach:** This action is implied in the TAP-PAC entry above. Once TAP-PAC is constituted, it will map out a plan for engagement with various stakeholders.
4. **Stakeholder Conference (SC):** A convocation of political stakeholders will be necessary at some point. However, this will require a lot of preparation. Much like diplomatic conferences where a lot of preparatory work is done behind the scenes prior to the public symposium, the SC conference will be called after TAP-PAC builds a strategic agenda, socializes such agenda among stakeholders and has done work to galvanize support for its proposals. TAP-PAC must never stumble blindly into any such conference. This is an important point to stress because we have seen that within TAP there is often an instinct for impulsive action. We saw earlier how many people were calling for instant meetings with the key players in the Awka drama. This instinct will likely always remain within TAP, but TAP-PAC, being a strategic group, must listen but not allow itself to be stampeded into over-hasty action by over-eager agitations!



5. **ANSG Engagement:** An engagement with Anambra State Government is critical. Everyone knows that its continued recognition of Gibson Nwosu is the chink in the armor of Augustine Ndigwe. On one level, no one can blame the state government. The 1986 Traditional Ruler Constitution which Awka drafters prepared does seem to make the state government a constitutive authority in the selection of an Eze Uzu. The constitution is not clear on whether the state has veto power – that is in fact one of the weaknesses of that document, as we have seen. Be that as it may, because of the ambiguity of the constitution the state government, having coercive powers, has arrogated to itself something akin to veto power in the constitution of Awka monarchy and town government.

The problem with this is that in a situation such as we have now, in which Awka is presented with an unpalatable binary of kingship choices, it becomes an extremely material and provocative fact that the government is backing one of the options. The same is true regarding ADUN. Awka could be persuaded to back TAP's *Third Way* option of rejecting both contestants and starting afresh. But it seems that the state government is backing the *status quo ante* represented by Tony Okechukwu. As such, the thick finger of ANSG machinery is on the scale, as in the kingship instance.

TAP, through TAP-PAC – its formidable *vanguard!* – must make the Anambra State Government see the logic of the *Third Way*, and convince it to persuade kingship and the town administration combatants to stand down. The government has a key role to play here. For instance, if the governor calls Eze Uzu II for a quiet meeting, and encourages him to stand down, TAP believes Nwosu will concede. The same is true for Ndigwe. Right now, despite issuing statements declaring its support for Nwosu, the state government has not directly invoked its coercive powers to force Ndigwe to stand down. Perhaps it recognizes that any direct confrontation with Ndigwe could create security challenges in the state capital.

Still, TAP-PAC must find ways to secure the commitment of the state government. In fact, this is one of the key tasks for TAP's political vanguard! TAP-PAC should work with the government to develop a mix of incentives and pressures to persuade both the kingship and the ADUN contenders to all stand down, as TAP is proposing. One of the considerations for the membership of TAP-PAC should be the ability to secure access to the state government.

6. **TAP Fund Raising Committee (TAP-FRC):** To be a *revolutionary*, one must be *proto-missionary*. To launch a *movement*, one needs an *investment*. TAP has grand ambitions to help transform Awka. As TAP members, we are all (hopefully) motivated enough to offer our time and talent. But, just as well, we must bring some *treasure* to the *measure* to make our *leisure* a real *endeavor*!

(Sorry folks, your author is using word play to broach a difficult topic.)

TAP member, Hon. Onyeama, had warned as we began our deliberations that this undertaking will cost “time [and] money,” and that we should “be ready to entertain insult[s] from [several quarters.]” Clearly, we are going to need money for these things that we plan to do. Revolution costs money. Apart from operational costs (travels, events, stationery etc.), we will need money for specific projects like the proposed plebiscite and the mobilization campaign. But the idea here is not to tax our members. Instead, we want to create a fund-raising committee, TAP-FRC, that will canvass funds on behalf of the group. The state government should be willing to aid our efforts. Awka notables interested in long term peace and progress in Awka; banks and businesses operating in Awka, or affiliated with Awka people in other parts of Nigeria; Awka people in diaspora, both groups and individuals; Awka social clubs; even TAP members willing to *volunteer* financial support: These are all potential fund-raising targets.

One thing to insist on is that TAP must remain an independent movement! This imperative insists because our very success depends on our inalienable objectivity and our transparent integrity. TAP-FRC must not solicit funding from anyone looking to use TAP for their partisan pursuits. We want to call it as we see it, and any financial ties to partisan sources will undermine our ability. Besides, there is a safety angle to this. TAP is questioning the political orthodoxy in Awka, and by extension the interests benefiting from it. This is a brave and noble undertaking. And it is one we can carry off



if we are believed to be neutral and are not sponsored (or teleguided) by anybody. It will also keep us safe! We will be less likely to face violence and vituperations, as Hon. Onyeama fears, if we are seen not to have any partisan financial ties.

7. **TAP Think Tank:** This is the intellectual engine of TAP, its brain trust. The unique strength of TAP is that it has highly intelligent members who can think independently. We are an independent movement, not just because we are neutral but because we have people capable of thinking outside the box. This team will be TAP's temple of ideals and its altar of ideas. It frames the *ideals* that will guide all of TAP's excursions into political or development issues. It establishes the principles that inspire all of TAP's actions. But it is also the inner room for *ideas*. Ideals translate into ideas which then translate into strategy. TAP Think Tank establishes the vision (ideals), generates ideas as to how to achieve the vision, and then works with TAP-PAC to translate the ideas into strategies. The Admin Team will nominate candidates into TAP Think Tank based on intellectual ability and communication skills.
8. **TAP-WACC:** Finally, we come to this. TAP Welfare and Charity Committee. This will be the group to cater to members' welfare, which administers to member needs as a community. But its mandate is not jollity and conviviality. And its focus is not only internal. It is also the charitable extension of TAP in the larger Awka community. TAP-WACC is the TAP charities commission, the benign face of TAP in the Awka community which ensures that TAP is tapped into the basic needs of Awka people and that their cares are also fed back into the work of TAP Think Tank. In this sense, TAP-WACC is an important feedback mechanism for TAP. We will open this group up to the entire membership for volunteers.

We have set out above the next steps needed to translate TAP's proposals into action. Some of what we outlined are initiatives to transform TAP into an organizational machinery. But we also laid out some specific actions that will be taken to actualize TAP's dreams.

We are ready to go, if this house approves our plan!



APPENDIX

FROM THE CO-FOUNDER'S DESK

One of the initiators of TAP, Engr. Victor Chinweze, provides an account of the immediate circumstances that led to the emergence of TAP. Here is his recollection, in his words:

“TAP was originally brought to be based on the inconclusiveness of the Awka Pacesetters Peace and Reconciliation effort. Yet in my capacity as the scribe of the defunct Awka Pacesetters Peace and Reconciliation Committee, that prepared the Pacesetter's Report, I saw no reason why peace [should] remain elusive in Awka, based on the quantum of data collected.

After the successful presentation of the [Pacesetters] Report to Ndu Awka at Finotel Hotel Awka in April 2016, nothing else was done and time was running out.

TAP originally aligned with the club (Awka Pacesetters Club, Nigeria), in continuation of the Awka peace drive, but the incumbent leadership who instituted the committee at the first instance did not support or was not eager to go further.

Thereafter, I, in liaison with the Chairman of the defunct club's committee (Ogbuevbi Ugochukwu Anaere) decided to go ahead with the TAP initiative.

Ugochukwu Anaere became a passive Admin on TAP, based on his personal political reasons. Whereas, I, Victor Chinweze, went headlong!

So, on the 25 July 2017, TAP opened its doors globally and became an entirely Awka entity.”
(Engr. Victor Chinweze, private WhatsApp message, Jan. 13, 2018)

TAP MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES

- *The TAP group shall be open to every freeborn Awka man or woman that has reached the age of reasoning.*
- *This is a voluntary group. Participants reserve the right to leave the group at any time. Nevertheless, participants are encouraged to show their resilience and support for the true essence of being onye Awka by remaining steadfast in what they believe-in and by speaking-out in a most modest manner. A sense of diplomacy is encouraged at all times.*
- *The group is, to every intent and purpose, designed to bridge the wide and salient communication gap amongst the different strata of people in Awka.*
- *The group shall not in any way be controlled by any interest, social or pressure group such as club, village, Awka section, or any individual.*
- *Matters of collective concern(s) and wellbeing of the human self shall be of utmost priority in the group. We care only about Awka and her citizens.*
- *The group must be transparently neutral in all political disputes arising in Awka, whatever the inclination of individual members. Hard topics requiring strong approach may be envisaged without recourse to undue friction.*



- *Participants shall show restraint in choice of words – use of inoffensive expression is highly encouraged, especially when the subject is weighty.*
- *Effort must be made to tailor contributions to issues, to provide useful information, ideas, discussions, news, health and fitness, technology, state and national discussions etc., that could in some way impact on Awka town and its people.*
- *To better manage site assets, members should minimize the sharing of jokes, pleasantries, greetings, etc. This is necessary to have enough room for more genuine and important matters.*
- *If possible, every quarter of Awka may be represented by the Admin or other group leadership team. This will build trust and credibility for the group, and also extend its reach and influence.*
- *The group is a discussion and information sharing forum which seeks to influence public discourse in Awka. It seeks political influence but recognizes that ultimate decision-making powers reside with duly constituted governing institutions in Awka. TAP aims to work with those institutions, to focus their attention on development issues and help to drive reforms that will strengthen their decision-making abilities.*

TAP ADMIN TEAM

TAP aims to have one Admin representing each of the seven quarters of Awka:

Ifite Section

Name	Quarter	Occupation	Phone #
Chief Kenechukwu Okeke	Ayom-na-Okpala	Clearing Agent	+2348099993625
Dr. Chudi Okoye	Amachalla-na-Ato	Senior Data Scientist, T-Mobile USA	+14259996888
Dr. Kingsley Nwozor	Ifite-Awka	Geo-Scientist, Lecturer, ASU & Aberdeen Uni	+2348087190369
Ike Nwosu	Nkwelle	CEO, Global Awards Worldwide Contracting Ltd	+2348035926330

Ezi Section

Name	Quarter	Occupation	Phone #
Kanayo Dike	Amikwo	Pensioner, President Kanolis Concept Nigeria Ltd	+2348033157292
Hon. Dr. Collins K. Ejikeme	Ezi-Awka	Banking & Finance Consultant; Pensioner	+2348033401472
Obiageli Ildigwe	Agulu	Chartered Accountant	+2348098218244

Group Admin: Engr. Victor Chinweze: CEO, IBASE Technologies Limited (+2348033063948)

Total TAP membership:

- WhatsApp – 256
- Facebook – 486



