

The Nigerian State And The Management Of Border Conflicts: A Focus On Amagu And Adadama Border Conflict

**Offor, E. Ogbonnaya, Itumo, Anthony PhD, Nwobashi,
Humphry Nwifuru PhD & Nwogbaga, David M.E PhD**

*Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki*

Correspondence: donogb17@gmail.com +2347064626717

Abstract

There exist myriads of conflicts in Nigeria, and these conflicts arise majorly from the struggle in the ownership of land (especially around communal boundaries). Thus, in defence of community pride, properties and its inhabitants, communities engage in feuds where in most cases lead to full-scale war with attendant consequences, allowing for management mechanisms. The study sets out to examine the role of the state/government in the management of border conflicts, with focus on Amagu/Adadama border conflict in Ebonyi and Cross River states respectively. The paper argues that the state as the possessor of all the apparatus of force with the ability to compel and enforce obedience in troubled areas where local authorities have failed, has to ensure that all avenues of conciliation, mediation, arbitration and the use of force when necessary to achieve peace. Albeit, the intermittent eruption of communal conflict in Amagu/Adadama communities, portrays to a large extent that the states have somewhat failed in their traditional responsibility in quelling the border conflict of the duo communities. The study harps on fragile state theory as its beacon of analysis; adopting explanatory research design, documentary method of data collection and qualitative method of analysis as its analytical base. Findings amongst others, show that the intermittent eruption of conflict in Amagu/Adadama communities is premised on the failure of government to manage and/or proffer lasting solution to the dispute. The study recommends that the federal government and the government of both states should whole-heartedly work out measures to manage and forestall border conflict in these communities.

Key Words: State, Border Conflict; Management; Violence; Peace

Introduction

The history of Nigeria like other nation-states may be described as one of continuous counter with border problems. Boundary conflict in pre-colonial Nigeria had one exclusive nature; they were basically inter-communal scuttles or conflicts that ensue in the course of disagreement between two or more groups exerting certain notable (minor) differences and also on originality and/or indigeneship interest.

In Nigeria, there exist too many kinds of conflicts, notably amongst them is boundary and communal conflicts. More of these disputes came about over ownership of land (farming, fishing, oil deposit, solid mineral deposit etc.) and in defence of community pride and properties and even the people (Nwanegbo, 2009). These conflicts are usually very intense and as destructive as major civil wars and even deep-rooted. They also have even more consequences as

this does not just happen and get normally restored. They go beyond centres and/or decades and even create deep heated resentment. Thus, administrators of Nigerian state machine have had causes to grapple with several cases of boundary and communal conflicts among the various communities in different parts of the country involving over 250 ethnic groups a good number of them including major ones like the Hausa, the Yoruba, the Igbo, Kanuri, Efik etc. (Asiwaju, 2003).

According to Uwakwe (2017) Boundary and land related conflicts at the grass root especially between states over land, water, oil wells or other important natural resources have continued to be on the increase in Nigeria. It is gradually becoming a recurring and annual phenomenon in Igboland, South-Eastern region of Nigeria. This region comprises of Abia, Ebonyi, Amambra, Enugu and Imo states. Oji, Eme, & Nwoba (2014) argued that one of the common features of these conflicts is their confrontational, bloody, and violent dimension which has led to the loss of lives and property of people who hitherto lived together in relative harmony.

Notably of these boundary and land related conflicts in the South-East include the Amagu-Adadama boundary conflict between Ebonyi and Cross River states and the Aguleri-Umleri land conflict between two communities in Anambra state, Nigeria. Amagu is one of the communities that make up Ikwo local government area of Ebonyi state while Adadama community is found in Abi local government area of Cross River state. The disputed boundary between the two states transverse these two communities. Cross River State is a coastal state in South-South region of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Benue State to the north, Ebonyi, Enugu and Abia, States to the west, to the east by Cameroon Republic and to the south by Akwa-Ibom and the Atlantic Ocean; its capital is Calabar. Ebonyi State is an inland south-eastern state of Nigeria, populated primarily by Igbos. Its capital and largest city is Abakaliki. The state which is situated in the South-eastern part of the country shares boundaries with Benue to the north, Enugu to the northwest, Abia to the south-east and Cross River to the east (Etuki, 2013; Uwakwe, 2017).

A notable hotspot of violent communal conflict in the South-East Nigeria could be seen in the intermittent conflict between the Adadama and Amagu communities over border/boundary issues. A peep into the history of the duo communities, will be germane to note that prior to 1920, the Adadama people had common boundary with the Okpitemo people not the Amagu. According to oral history, the Amagu were pursued from Ezza during some of the myriads of inter-tribal feuds, they were accepted to settle in a part of Okpitemo land to farm for the Adadama as petty labourers in order to earn a living. Hence, the people of Amagu became neighbours to Adadama (Okutu, 2013; Uwakwe, 2017).

According to Etuki (2013) in 1920, following the protracted disputes on farmland between Amagu and Adadama natives, the District officer of the then Afikpo district, Mr Shute, G.G had to use pillars to demarcate the boundary or border line between Agbo and Ikwo people. This was based on the agreement endorsed by the local authorities, i.e. elders of both communities; (Agbo in present Abi local government Area of Cross River state and Ikwo in present Ikwo local government area of Ebonyi State). In the words of Etuki (2013) there exist documentary evidence in the national Archives that shows the boundary between the duo communities goes through the Okpitemo and Amagu communities of Ebonyi state.

Conflict however, arose with the duo just like in the case of people with limited space, as a result of their (warlike) historical antecedents, the Amagu people started having problem of

expansion during farming seasons. At the inception, they started fighting their Okpitemo brothers even while they were still paying royalties to Adadama for farmland. Around 1980s, the Amagu people determined to confront their neighbours, they stopped paying royalties to Adadama but started destroying the shute boundary pillars and intruded on Adadama farmland at the border area. Consequences to this, was the protracted dispute and commencement of boundary crises which necessitated several conflict resolution meetings held at various times in Abuja, Calabar, and Abakaliki, at the instance of the (Etuki, 2013; Onyekaozulu, 2013; Uwakwe, 2017).

The problematique of this research stems from the growing and continuous outbreak of boundary crisis amongst the people of Amagu (Ebonyi State) and the people of Adadama (Cross River State) which seems to have defied all settlement approaches by the local authorities, with its attendant consequences which include loss of lives and properties directly affecting the disputants and indirectly affecting passers-by just as was seen in the Ezza-Ezillo communal crisis, and that of Izzi-Ukele (Iyahe) crisis which left many people dead, maimed and displaced.

The incessant eruption of crisis in local areas in Nigeria amongst communities vis-a-vis Amagu and Adadama communities have necessitated the hue and cry of many concerned citizens and indigenes alike of both states to know or ascertain the role of the state and its institutions of government in curbing or salvaging the crisis situation in these communities, since the traditional or primary function of every state is to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

In the quest to actualise the peace pacts, both Local Government Authorities set up a Peace Committee called Adadama-Amagu Development Committee (ADAMADA) in 2001 to maintain peace between the two communities. The ADAMADA peace committee under the leadership of the Vice Chairmen of the two local governments supervised the return and re-erection of the boundary pillars. The re-erected pillars were again destroyed when conflict broke out between the two communities. The National Boundary Commission in 2006 in what it termed “give and take principle” proposed re-demarcation of the boundary. However, this was vehemently rejected by one of the duo communities. Consequently, the boundary conflict has continued to ‘die and resurrect’ (Okutu, 2013; Uwakwe, 2017). Albeit, the crisis is said to have defied all settlement means initiated by the local authorities. To the chagrin of many who have continued to say that the state has not lived up to its expectations while others are at variance with this view.

It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to infer and analyse the role of the state in the management and resolution of the boundary dispute between the Amagu people and the people of Adadama and the intendant issues inherent in the disputing communities. In achieving the essence of this treatise the following research questions will guide the study, viz. what are the remote/immediate causes of the boundary dispute between the people of Amagu and the people of Adadama? And what has the state done to curb, manage and/or resolve the boundary dispute between the people of Amagu and the people of Adadama?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual/Theoretical Review

• Communal Conflict Reviewed

Etymologically, Alimba (2014) averred that Communal conflict is made up of two axiomatic words “communal” and “conflict” while conflict has been conceptualized, communal is derived from a Latin word “communis” which means “common”. Communal relates

particularly to groups, and it involves things commonly used, shared or experienced by a group in a society. Such things can be resources or conflict. When it is conflict, it is known as communal conflict. Communal conflict is a social conflict that relates to a group or groups in a society. When it occurs within a group, it is known as intra-communal conflict and inter-communal conflict when it occurs between groups. It is worth noting that these groups have common social ties, which may make the competition that may ensue to be fierce. The point is that the misuse or unequal distribution of the available resources that should be jointly enjoyed by a group will produce conflict. The conflict will usually be complex to tackle because of the level of hatred that would probably have been cultivated among the parties in the process (Ruth, 2015; Alimba, 2014).

Communal conflict was considered by Azuonwu (2002) as a conflict that occurs between two or more communities. Oboh & Hyande (2006) described communal conflict as involving two or more communities engaging themselves in disagreement or act of violence over issues such as claims for land ownership, religious and political difference leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties. Communal violence (sometimes inter-communal violence) is a situation where violence is perpetuated across ethnic lines, and victims are chosen based upon ethnic group membership (Ikeme, 2002). Dzurgba (2006) was of the opinion that communistic violence is that which occurs between two or more communities over territorial land, farmland and territorial water for fishing. These definitions revealed that communal conflict is more or less community conflict or ethnic conflict. This is not surprising because 'communal' by its interpretation as a phenomenon that is common to a particular group characterises a community or ethnicity. Onwudiwe (2004) attested to this fact when he said that communal friction is what is usually described as ethnic conflict. More so, for communal contenders to have been described as culturally distinct people, tribes, or clans in heterogeneous societies, who hold or seek a share in state power help to buttress the point that communal conflict is often interpreted as community conflict or ethnic conflict. While it is not the focus of this thesis to divulge the differences inherent in these variables, if there is any, it is pertinent to stress that the peculiar identity of "communal" in terms of reference to a group, concerning common issues or elements could as well be attributed to other social groups in a society.

This implied that several communal groups make up a community and therefore, in terms of involvement or participation, communal conflict is narrower than community conflict. Therefore, communal conflict is a state of incompatibility that emanates from a commonly shared or used property or resource by a group or groups in a society. It occurs within or between groups that are defined by some forms of social ties over resources that are jointly owned or shared in a community. Communal conflict arises when two distinct groups in a community disagree over jointly shared resources due to the possibility of inequitable distribution or the problem of domination by a group. The development of this kind of conflict in any society has attachment to commonly shared or used resources or elements which can be tangible or intangible (Ikeme, 2002; Onwudiwe, 2004; Dzurgba, 2006).

The identity of communal conflict is rather fluid in nature. This is because it occurs in divert forms, which can sometimes be misleading to identify. Albert (2001) posited that this form of conflict "often manifest in terms of host-stranger face-offs in which a section of the community tags itself as the host (owners of the community) and some other groups as strangers(that is, those who migrated into the community at a date later than the coming of the

“owners” of the community). Apart from this, communal conflict can also be imbued in religious issues, land, politics, resources, local government, chieftaincy issues, etc. (Albert, 2001).

Highlighting the determinants of communal conflict, Erena (2012) cited in Akpar (2012) revealed that population is the main determinant of communal land conflict in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Equally, in Cross River State, the Biakpan and Etono 11 communal groups clashed over land. In Ebonyi State, communal crises exist between Ezza/Ezillo groups. In Akwa Ibom State, Eyo Abasi and Idua have been experiencing communal crisis over oil rich parcel of land located at the boundary of their localities. Other examples of communal conflicts are the Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu with respect to the Oro traditional festival; Ogoni-Adoni Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba in Lagos State; the Eleme-Okrika which is centred on the creation of state and local government, unclear boundaries and clash over ownership of oil fields, farmlands and waterways; Itsekiri-Ijaw/Urhobo over the movement of LGA headquarters from Ijaw area to Itsekiri territory and land ownership/dispute.

The Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State over land problem; the Ife-Modakeke in Osun State over indigenes/settlers problem; the Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo over ownership of land reputed to be rich in oil reserve. Its pervasive existence in every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society has heightened the state of insecurity. Communal conflict has adopted the posture of intractability and in most cases, highly violent in nature in Nigeria (Nwanegbo, 2009).

- ***Causes of Communal Conflict***

It is germane to note that many factors have been identified by scholars as responsible for communal conflict in the country; as the causes vary from one area to another. Ikeme (2002) pinned down communal conflict to revolve around politics, politicians, and their pursuit of group advantage. Albert (2001) identified indigene/settler problem, religious differences, ownership of land and its resources, goals and aspirations of people as some of the factors that can ignite communal conflict in the country. Yecho (2006) indicated that the causes of communal conflicts are not static but rather dynamic and varied in nature depending on the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the time. Onwudiwe (2004) listed social conditions as population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government as triggers of communal friction. Hembe (2000) indicated that political struggle and colonization, while Albert (2001) mentioned loss of soil fertility, soil erosion, deforestation, bush burning and flooding as some of the causes of communal conflict. Yecho (2006) pointed out that the fundamental causes of communal conflict are poor economic conditions, high level of illiteracy, the quest for, and fear of domination by other groups, land disputes, market ownership, chieftaincy tussle and party politics.

Varvar (2000) indicated that increased demand for land for agriculture, unemployment, rural hunger, poverty impoverishment as communal conflict triggers. Deprivation, exploitation and domination of minority groups by major ethnic groups and leadership problem were highlighted by Angya & Doki (2006) as factors that can exert communal crisis. Equally, religious differences, competition for livelihood resources and traditional chieftaincy tussles were enumerated also by Angya & Doki (2006) as potential communal conflict triggers in the country. Competitions for land and chieftaincy tussle are the major causes of communal conflict in the North. For instance, in Nasarawa in 1993, Alago, Hausa and Tiv clashed over land and chieftaincy from 1995-2005, the Egburra and Bassa in Toto clashed over land, chieftaincy and politics. In 1989, 1990 and 1997, intra-communal conflict occurred in Ipav in Gboko based on land problem. In Taraba State, between the Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb over chieftaincy tussle

since 1996 when it started, it is still ongoing; in 2004 in Adamawa State between the Bachama and Hausa/Fulani over land ownership, politics and religious. On March 5, 2005, communal clash between Maruta (Jigawa) and Burmin (Bauchi) occurred over market relocation. On June 2003, Ekepedo and Ogori clashed over land ownership in Kogi/ Edo States (Angya & Doki, 2006).

- **Border/Boundary Conflict Reviewed**

According to Alao, Ndem, Atere, Nwogwugwu, & Ojo (2012) boundary conflict is a conflict over a land at the border line that as a minimum is defined, or is in the process of being defined, by the parties, by implicit consent or explicit agreement. This means that all stakes and issues leading to disputes and armed conflicts are related to once and somehow agreed upon boundaries. International boundaries are thus sharply defined lines, fixed by nations like fences between their respective properties. However in nature there are no sharply marked boundaries of any sort, only zones of transition (Salleh, 2008).

Vasquez & Henahan, (2001, p. 123) submitted that:

...preliminary empirical analysis consistently shows that territorial issues that give rise to militarized disputes are more likely to escalate into war than would be expected by chance, States and groups have continued to contest territory, often violently; the reasons for a particular attachment have remained.

Hence territoriality defined as territorial states clearly influences conflicts, while it could again be said that territorial attachment in turn is a major determinant of the stakes that actors' particularly, political elites discern in territory. In using these approaches to explain boundary and territorial conflict, one is inclined towards a shift in theory building in helping to explain territorial disputes. Territorial issues do not make war inevitable- far from it. But territorial disputes in international law may be divided into different categories. The contention may be over the status of the country itself, which is all the territory comprised in a particular state. More so, the dispute may refer to a certain area on the borders of two or more states (Vasquez & Henahan, 2001; Alao, Ndem, Atere, Nwogwugwu, & Ojo (2012).

In the same vein, claims to territory may be based on a number of different grounds, ranging from the traditional method of occupation or prescription to the newer concepts such as self- determination with various political and legal factors, for example geographical contiguity, historical demands and economic elements possibly being relevant (Shaw, 1999, p. 334). Border disputes often flare up after they become linked within important economic or social and cultural interests. Disputed territories may contain important natural resources, such as hydrocarbon, mineral reserves, or water sources; provide access to the sea or shared terrestrial resources, such as grazing areas, fertile land for farming or be a strategic location (Alao, Ndem, Atere, Nwogwugwu, & Ojo (2012).

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies on communal/border conflicts and mitigation approaches are reviewed below:

Oji, Eme, & Nwoba, (2014) studied "Communal Conflicts in Nigeria: An examination of Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Conflict of Ebonyi State, (1982-2012)." The study is harped on qualitative approach, and employed the Marxist theory of conflicts and the pluralism theory. The study discovered that issues such as indigenship, land ownership, cultural denigration,

competition for resources and measures taken by the government managing the conflicts were responsible for the conflict. In view of these unresolved issues the paper proffered plausible recommendations.

In the same vein, Uwakwe, (2017) studied “Boundary and Land-Related Violent Conflicts and its Implications on the Education of the Female Child in Igbo land: A Case Study of Amagu-Adadama and Aguleri-Umuleri Conflicts”. The study adopted qualitative research approach as the research procedure. Major discovery of the study is that Boundary and land-related conflicts is an obstacle to the education, peace, progress and happiness of the female child. It is a threat to the realization and manifestation of the potentials of the female child. The study however, recommended that government through the relevant agencies should ensure that conflicts are not allowed to degenerate into violent confrontations. Non-governmental organizations, traditional rulers and government should organize and support campaigns, seminars and workshop to sensitize people against using violence to settle scores.

In a similar study, Itumo, & Nwobashi (2017) carried out a survey on “Understanding the Root Causes of Social Conflicts in Nigeria: Insights from Ezza-Ezillo/Ezillo Communal Conflict in Ebonyi State.” The study adopted quantitative research approach, with the instrumentality of questionnaire while chi-square statistics was used for data analysis. The theoretical framework that anchored the study is the opportunity structure theory. The study discovered that there exist peculiarities to the causes of conflicts in different climes, as espoused by the theoretical framework of the study. The study recommended amongst others that government should provide employment opportunity for the teeming unemployed youths to enable them engage their energies on positive productive ventures and contribute to nation building rather than destabilisation and violent activities.

The reviewed studies above, though related to the current study, are however, dissimilar in the aspects of the methodology and the theoretical approach used in the current study. This study adopts qualitative research approach, explanatory research design, and fragile state theory as its beacon of analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Fragile State theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. Fragile state, similar to failed, weak or collapsed states, is an analytical category that originated in the work of Migdal, Joel S. (1988), and gained prominence from the mid1990s onwards and got further traction after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in US. Fundamentally, proponents of the theory, policy-makers, and academics alike hold that the potential for contemporary conflict is harboured within the state, not between states (Wikipedia, 2017). Proponents of the theory include: David Carment; Stewart Prest; Yiagadeesen Samy; Lewis, Alexandra; Siqueira, Isabel Rocha De; Balamoune Lutz; etc.

Migdal stated the expansion of European economy and world trade in the 19th century led to drastic changes in people’s strategies of survival in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Migdal, 1988). State policies enforced by Europeans, including land tenure laws, taxation and new modes of transportation, changed people’s life situation and needs in these countries rapidly and deeply. Old rewards, sanctions and symbols became irrelevant under the new situation and previous social control and institutions were eroded.

However, unlike Western Europe in the earlier centuries, these countries did not establish a new concentration of social and cultural control as the base of a strong and capable state. This

is because although these countries had the necessary condition for creating a strong state - old social control weakened by the world trade before World War I - they did not have the sufficient conditions. Migdal (1988, p. 270) enunciated these conditions as:

...(1) world historical timing that encourages concentrated social control; (2) military threat either from outside or within the country; (3) the basis for an independent bureaucracy; (4) skillful top leadership that would take advantage of all the above conditions in the state.

A fragile state is a country characterized by weak state capacity and/or weak state legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks. Some states are trapped in a vicious cycle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource 'curse'; others face a legacy of poor governance; many emerging from crisis cannot deliver even the most basic services to their citizens, such as the. In terms of dynamics, fragile states include: • Post-conflict/crisis or political transition situations, • deteriorating governance environments, • Situations of gradual improvement, and • Situations of prolonged crisis or impasse. A fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its sub-systems. It is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and domestic and international conflicts. In a fragile state, institutional arrangements embody and perhaps preserve the conditions of crisis (Wikipedia, 2017).

This theory is apt and applicable to this study because it tends to explain the reason why conflict in Amagu and Adadama conflict has (always died and resurrected) thus, degenerated to an intractable one due to the negligence or minimal intervention by the Nigerian state. It x-rays the failure and/or fragility inherent in the Nigerian state structure and the crises bedeviling virtually all aspects of the state especially in the socio-cultural sphere of its existence. All these, are pointers or indicators to the weak state capacity to repel or manage conflicts in Nigeria.

Analytical Discourses

• *Amagu and Adadama Border Conflict: The Cause of the Feud in the Tale*

Etuki (2013) surmised that before 1920, the Adadama people had common boundary with the Okpitemo people, not the Amagu. According to oral history, the Amagu were refugees who were driven from Ezza during some of the numerous inter-tribal wars. They now settled in part of Okpitemo land to farm for the Adadama as petty labourers to earn a living. This was how they became neighbours to Adadama. In 1920, following skirmishes of disputes on farmland between Amagu and Adadama natives, the District Officer of the then Afikpo District, Mr. G.G. Shute had to use concrete pillars to demarcate the boundary between Agbo and Ikwo people. This was sequel to an agreement endorsed by the Chiefs and Elders of both clans (Agbo in present Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State and Ikwo in present Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State). Documentary evidence in the National Archives shows that the boundary traverses the Okpitemo and Amagu Communities of Ebonyi State (Etuki, 2013; Okutu, 2013; Adoyo, 2013).

According to Okutu (2013) there has been a long standing land dispute between Amegu Ikwo in Ebonyi state and Adadama in cross river which dates back to 1927. While the Amagu people insist that Adadama people are the aggressors as they have consistently encroached on Amegu land well outside the boundary mutually fixed by the two sides as late as 1912 which is

the Ugoli. We are however told that Adadama people are claiming a different boundary location far from the Ugoli, which was established by the two communities.

Both Local Government Authorities even set up a Peace Committee called Adadama-Amagu Development Committee (ADAMADA) in 2001 to maintain peace between the two neighbors. The ADAMADA peace committee under the leadership of the Vice Chairmen of the two local governments supervised the return and re-erection of Boundary Pillars previously exhumed or destroyed by the Amagu people. Minutes of those meetings are with the NBC (Etuki, 2013).

According to Etuki (2013, p. 3):

...the present unprovoked attack started in the morning of Sunday 13 January, 2013 when an Adadama man, Mr. James Edu was attacked in the bush by unknown assailants. He returned to the Community bleeding profusely out of severe machete cuts. On the following day, Monday 14 January, 2013, a group of Amagu people chased Adadama women from their farms and abducted some of them who are still missing till date. By the afternoon of the same day, 14 January, 2013, Amagu people armed with machine guns and other dangerous weapons invaded, destroyed and attempted to set ablaze a Police Station at Adadama newly constructed by the Cross River State Government (awaiting commissioning) and located about 2 kilometres from the interstate boundary.

Etuki (2013) went on to say that the aftermath of the aforesaid mayhem, was the protracted dispute and commencement of boundary crises which necessitated several dispute resolution meetings held at various times in Abuja, Calabar and Abakaliki at the instance of the National Boundary Commission (NBC).

Even when the conflict is said to be calm, it is believed to 'die and resurrect' every now and then. Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends (2016) reported in December 2016 that there was violent criminality and communal conflict. Where, some villagers was reportedly killed and several others injured by an explosion in Abi LGA. The explosion reportedly related to renewed conflict between Adadama community in Abi LGA and Amagu community in neighbouring Ebonyi state over farmland. There has been a reported rise in violence in the last two months, particularly incidents of communal conflict and violent criminality. Peace Actors in the state should monitor the current security situation closely (Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends, 2016). The struggle over farmland, fishing space etc. have continued to be the main or remote cause of conflict between Amagu and Adadama, whereas, the immediate cause is often triggered or sparked-off by any slightest provocation and the need for reprisal attacks ones in a while by the feuding parties.

- ***The Role of the State in Managing the Border Conflict in Amagu and Adadama Communities***

Okutu (2013) captured that Ebonyi state government accused Cross-River state on stalling the peace process in the conflict hotspot. Albeit, affirming the above, the Ebonyi State Deputy Governor (David Umahi) was reported to have accused the Cross River State government of showing lackadaisical attitude toward the resolution of the crisis. He called on the National Boundary Commission, NBC, to urgently initiate a meeting of the two states, so that the

issue could be holistically discussed and solution quickly reached to avoid escalation of the dispute. (David Umahi in Okutu, 2013).

Okutu (2013, p. 6) further reported that the Ebonyi state Deputy Governor stressed that:

“...I wish to categorically state that Ebonyi state government has continued to make concerted efforts toward a peaceful resolution of the land dispute in spite of the provocations, attacks, harassment, abductions and killing of Ebonyi people by hoodlums from Adadama. It is regrettable however that in spite the numerous letters I have written to the Deputy Governor of Cross River for the two states to meet and discuss the issues affecting their border communities, there has been no response from them.

Apart from the letter of 11th December, 2011 to the National Boundary Commission to constitute a joint team of officials of both states and NBC to do ethnographic study of both states to avoid mistrust and hostilities, we have done several reports on the problem without results (David Umahi in Okutu, 2013).

Okutu (2013) however, reported that it would seem that the NBC has abandoned its earlier attempt to do ethnographic study of the area following threats from Cross River state indigenes to the Commission not to step feet into the disputed area. “We hereby call on the National Boundary Commission to expedite action to permanently resolve the boundary dispute. Given the current situation, we urge the National Boundary Commission to urgently call a meeting of the two states so that the issues can be discussed” (David Umahi, quoted by Okutu, 2013, p. 7).

Based on the above, it is dismaying that the National Boundary Commission (NBC) a statutory body of the Nigerian state, charged with the responsibility to delineate or demarcate constituencies and boundaries of states and local governments in Nigeria, especially in times of conflict of land ownership between states, has not lived up to its expectation, due to fear of threats directed at its staff, vis-à-vis lack of political will to do the needful occasioned by vested interest of one of the states or both states. It has been said that the state has the monopoly of force. In other words, it possesses all coercive instrument of force to compel and command obedience. Yet, the NBC, the State governments involved, the security agencies within the Nigerian state have failed to swiftly demarcate the border without further ado, arrest and prosecute anyone or group of persons found obstructing the peace process. More so, the state reserve the right to demonstrate and/or use force, when all known peaceful measures or mechanisms have been exhausted.

In a reaction to the accusation made by Ebonyi state against Cross River state as stalling the peace moves, John Gaul Lebo (the Speaker, Cross River state House of Assembly), quoted by Adoyo (2013) said that it was unfortunate that Ebonyi State was joining issues instead of proffering solution to the crisis that affected both communities. “It is unfortunate that Ebonyi state government should be joining issues on this matter. As it stands, who are the people that have been displaced as a result of the crisis? Based on the aforesaid question, Lebo affirms that that it is the Adadama people that are displaced, by implication are the innocents and assaulted while the Amagu people are the villains or assailants to the violent dispute/conflict.

Quoting John Gaul Lebo (the Speaker, Cross River state House of Assembly), by Adoyo (2013, p. 4), he said that

...it was a priority both in his agenda and the agenda of the state government to ensure that permanent peace returned to the warring communities, adding that concerted efforts were on-going to amicably resolve the crisis which has left the Adadama community restive for the past 6 years.

It is therefore sheer propaganda stunt for officials of the Ebonyi State government to claim that the Deputy Governor of Cross River State was adamant to the calls for peace meetings. It is even this penchant for lying that exposes their complicity in the dispute. At the local government level, several meetings were held between Abi Local Government Council (Cross River State) and Ikwo Local Government Council (Ebonyi State), yet without fruition (Etuki, 2013).

Adoyo (2013) surmised that the Deputy Governor of Ebonyi State, Dave Umahi, while addressing the press at Government House, Abakaliki, lamented that:

...efforts made by Ebonyi State Government for peace to reign in the border communities had not been positively responded by the Cross River State Government, which had remained aloof over several efforts made by the government, instead, the Adadama people had engaged in several provocative attacks on the people of Ndiagu Amagu where no less than eight persons were abducted and one later found dead... Umahi, however, urged Cross River State Government to wake and give peace a chance....

The Federal House Representatives stressed on the need to avert further communal clashes between the communities of Adadama in Cross River State and Amagu in Ebonyi State.

The House noted that:

...the Adadama Community in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State and Amagu Community in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State are the boundary communities between Cross River and Ebonyi State;

Further notes on the 14 January, 2013, armed youths from Amagu Community of Ebonyi State invaded Adadama Community, kidnapped seven farmers, killed one person and wounded about eight persons before finally razing down a newly built Police Station;

Again notes that a vigilante group from Adadama Community moved in to Amagu Community and rescued six of the farmers;

Worried that before that 19 January, 2013 episode, a peace meeting was convened by the Ebonyi State Government where it was resolved that parties should cease fire and withdraw from the boundary line of both states to allow the policemen take charge and to further carry out a joint assessment visit to the affected communities;

Alarmed that on the 18th January, 2013, the MOPOL Commandant in-charge of Ebonyi State Command visited Adadama Community for the first time since the incident of 14 January 2013 happened; (House of Representatives Federal Republic of Nigeria Votes and Proceedings, (Federal House of Representatives, 2013).

Furthermore, the House worried that while the Abi team of the Adadama Community was preparing for joint visit, 20 Armed men in Mobile police uniform came in to the Adadama

Community in two new Hilux vans with no registration number, through Ugep- Abakaliki road, blocked the community entrance, shot the people of Adadama Community leading to the death of eleven people among whom four were beheaded, and consequently displacing over 2,000 people... the house expressed its heart felt commiseration with the affected to communities over the unfortunate incident... To the chagrin of many, the House expressed its disappointment on the failure the Nigerian Police to make any arrest yet, of the perpetrators of this crime, and had not issued any statement of any kind with respect to the incident (House of Representatives Federal Republic of Nigeria Votes and Proceedings, 2013).

The House therefore, appealed thus:

- (i) The two communities of Adadama in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State and Amagu in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State to maintain peace forthwith;
- (ii) The Governors of the two States to maintain peace and caution, as well as restrain their citizens from further escalation of the crisis;
- (iii) Mandating the Committee on Special Duties to conduct an investigation in to the remote causes of the communal clash and report back to the House within four weeks.

With all this beautiful condemnations, and resolutions made by the House of Representatives, and other government officials; nothing more has been done by the Nigerian state through its institutions like (the law making, the law implementing/enforcing and the law adjudicating bodies), the National Boundary Commission (NBC), the security institutions and the concerned states. As they have continued to pay lip services to a matter of national importance. Even though there exist little presence of military personnel, yet, it has not quelled or nipped the conflict in the bud. When there seems to be calmness, cold war ensues amongst the duo, waiting for any slightest reason for the ember of violent to be fanned, thus; a vicious cycle of clash begins. This is because the right thing has not been done by the Nigerian state. A long term solution to the lingering problem as espoused by commentators and concerned citizens, is for the National Boundary Commission (NBC) to return to the troubled zone and do the needful, then that is when the security agencies can be deployed to enforce compliance and obedience. In the same vein, the era of name calling, and ascribing blames by the communities and concerned states are over. Instead of accusing or blaming any party to the conflict, there is a dire need for the states (without vested interests) to come together to chat a common course of action on how the boundary conflict could be managed, resolved or mitigated; possibly through conciliation, mediation, and arbitration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was an attempt to examine the Nigerian state and the management of the border conflict between Amagu and Adadama of Ebonyi and Cross River states respectively. Ferocious conflict is likened to wind that blows no one any good. When it comes, it leaves behind tears, sorrows, pains and blood. Boundary and land-related conflicts is an obstacle to the education, peace, progress and happiness of the inhabitants. It is a threat to humans and socio-cultural continuity. Therefore, efforts should be made prevent the outbreak of boundary and land-related conflicts so as to checkmate its impacts on the people.

Agreeing with the existing literature on the causes of border/boundary conflicts, the study also affirms that the interminable border conflict between Amagu and Adadama, is hinged on the claim of the ownership of the two communities on the stretched piece of land and the resources therein. Based on the postulations of the theoretical framework (fragile state theory), the study adduced that the intermittent eruption of conflict in Amagu/Adadama communities is premised on the failure the federal, and the state governments (Ebonyi and Cross River) to manage and/or proffer lasting solution to the dispute; as the state governments of the duo communities have continued join issues, accusing one another on the continues spate of the conflict.

Mitigating and/or reducing the incessant eruption of border conflicts and the negative impacts of violent boundary and land-related conflicts against the Adadama and Amagu communities in Cross River and Ebonyi states respectively, and elsewhere in Nigeria, the study therefore proffer the following recommendations and/or suggestions:

- The federal government and the government of both states should whole-heartedly work out measures to manage and forestall border conflict in these communities.
- Government, Non-governmental organizations, and traditional rulers should organize and support campaigns, seminars and workshop to sensitize people against using violence to settle scores.
- The Government of the duo communities should seek legal interpretation of the documents and other evidences on the real owner of the stretched piece of land.
- The National Boundary Commission (NBC) should be requested to retrace and re-erect the shute boundary; as this would be a measure towards a lasting solution to the interminable border conflicts between Amagu and Adadama communities.
- Government through the relevant agencies should ensure that conflicts are not allowed to degenerate into violent confrontations.
- A devoted military force should be positioned at the Adadama-Ikwo boundary area.

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