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THE BOUNDARIES OF CONFLICT: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S HANDLING OF THE ADADAMA-NDIAGU AMAGU DISPUTE

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Abstract: Communal conflicts have been a recurring occurrence in Nigeria and have caused physical, economic, emotional imbalances and destruction of public infrastructure and properties. The National Boundary Commission was established to resolve boundary disputes, but it has reportedly failed to live up to its statutory responsibility and lacks effective conflict resolution strategies. This study examines the Commission's role in addressing the protracted land dispute between the Adadama and Ndiagu Amagu communities in Ebonyi State, which has continued for over 50 years, putting many lives and properties at risk. Using the Human Needs Theory, the study explores the socio-economic and cultural needs responsible for the conflict and offers recommendations to address these needs. The study recommends that the Commission, in partnership with the Office of the Surveyor-General, reviews all documents and proposes a common boundary between the two states to resolve the conflict. The study highlights the importance of problem-solving techniques and an integrated conflict management model, which include community stakeholders, in addressing conflicts and fostering lasting peace.

Keywords: Communal Conflict, Conflict Management, National Boundary Commission, Peace Building, Human Needs Theory.

Introduction:

Communal conflicts arise in society when different people residing in contiguous or separate territories with different goals have the potential to create situations of conflict. These conflicts could be caused by indigeneship, land ownership, cultural denigration, or competition for resources. In Nigeria, communal conflicts have been on the rise and have led to socio-economic and cultural imbalances and destruction of public infrastructure and private properties. This study examines the role of the National Boundary Commission in addressing the protracted land dispute between the Adadama and Ndiagu Amagu communities in Ebonyi state, which has continued for over 50 years, putting many lives and properties at risk. The National Boundary Commission was established with the mandate to intervene, determine, and resolve any boundary dispute that may arise among states, local government areas or communities in the Federation, and define and delimitate boundaries between Nigeria and its neighbors. However, it has reportedly failed to live up to its

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statutory responsibility and lacks effective conflict resolution strategies. The study employs qualitative research methods to explore the human needs responsible for the conflict and recommends an integrated conflict management model, including the collaboration of community stakeholders, to resolve the conflict and foster lasting peace.

1.1 Historical Synopsis of Adadama-Amagu Communal Conflict

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 Southeastern 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 (uwakwe, 2017).

The boundary conflict between Adadama community in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State and Amagu Community in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi state dates back to the 1920s. Prior to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 by Sir Fredrick Lugard, the people of Ikwo in the present Ebonyi State and the people of Agbo in the present Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, had lived together for several generations. Administratively, the Ikwo Clan and Agbo Clan were part of the old Ogoja Province and the old Afikpo County Council.

However, in 1926, following skirmishes of disputes over farmland between Amagu and Adadama natives, the District Officer of the then Afikpo District, Mr. G.G. Shute erected concrete pillars to demarcate the boundary between Agbo and Ikwo people; this was referred to as ‘the Shute Boundary Pillars’. However, consequent upon urbanization and expansionist drive in the 1980s, the communities began destroying the Shute boundary pillars with each accusing the other of encroachment. The aftermath of this was the protracted conflict and commencement of boundary crises which necessitated several dispute resolution meetings held at various times at the instance of the National Boundary Commission (NBC). Pursuant to these peace moves, Both Local Government Authorities 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 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 redemarcation of the boundary. However, this was vehemently rejected. Consequently, the boundary conflict has continued to “die and resurrect” (uwakwa, 2017).

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1 The Concept of Communal Conflict

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

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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 (Alimba, 2014).

Albert (2001) defined communal conflict as that kind of conflict propelled by host-stranger face-offs in which a section of the community accord itself as the host (the indigene of the community) and some other groups as strangers (those that migrated and settled into the community). Azuonwu (2002) opines that communal conflict as discord that occurs between two or more communities. Also, Oboh and Hyande (2006) perceived communal conflict as involving two or more communities engaging themselves in rivalry or act of violence as a result of claim and counter claims of land ownership, religious and political difference leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties. Dzurgba (2006) averred that communal conflict is that which occurs between two or more communities over territorial land farmland and territorial water for fishing.

2.2 Causes of Communal Conflict

The cause or causes of communal conflicts are not static but fluid, dynamic and varies in nature; the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the time could also propel communal conflict (Yecho, 2006). Hence, Causations of communal Conflict contrasts from one environment to another.

Onwudiwe (2004) mentioned population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government that actuate communal conflict. Varvar (2000) opined that quest for land for agriculture, unemployment, rural hunger, poverty and impoverishment are factors that fuels communal conflict. Doki (2006) observed that exploitation, deprivation, and hegemony of minority groups by major ethnic groups and leadership failure exert communal crisis. 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. Hembe (2000) indicated that political struggle and colonization, while Lyam (2000) 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.

Alimba (2014, p. 188) summarised the causes of communal conflict in Nigeria under the following headings; **Economic factor:** The factors manifest in the forms of competition for inadequate resources such land and its content; problems of distribution of available resources; unemployment and poverty.

Social factor: This has to do with issues that border on deprivation, envy, jealousy, marginalization and exploitation of people. In fact, fear of domination by major groups is equally a social factor that attracts communal conflict. **Political factor:** It involves the contest for available political positions in a community and leadership failure. Also added to this, is traditional chieftaincy tussle imminent in communities in the country.

Ecological factor: This factor manifests in the forms of encroachment problem, farming and pastoral problems, deforestation, flooding, soil erosion, and bush burning. Communal conflict creates room for people to drift from place to place as a survival mechanism and in search of livelihood.

Colonial factor: Colonialism is believed to be the background cause of communal conflict in Africa, and Nigeria inclusive. Most of the communal conflicts have direct attachment to colonial formation, while others manifesting in the post-colonial period have explanation in colonialism.

2.3 Conflict Management and Resolution

Though we do not have the option of staying out of conflicts as human beings, unless we stay out of relationship, family, work and community, all we need to do is to imbibe conflict management strategies and

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sharpen our conflict management skills so that we can interact meaningfully with one another (Alimba, 2010). Alabi (2010) equally note that Conflicts being part and parcel of human existence are seen at every stage of life; be it at Individual level, groups, associations, clubs, societies, local, national and even world community continue to experience conflicts and crises in one way or the other. Conflicts are features of life and they have been since the beginning of creation—conflicts between darkness and light and even between and among the first set of human beings created on earth. Therefore, its existence cannot be terminated in life unless we want to terminate life itself.

Nevertheless, effective conflicts management strategies that can help to nip conflict in the bud with a view to prevent it from brewing as well avert future occurrence should be evolved. The study comprehensively analysed conflicts resolution model adduced by Centre for Multiparty Democracy in 2015.

Major conflicts resolution model according to CMD (2015) are:

3. LOSE-LOSE MODEL: The Lose-Lose Model is that kind of approach where nobody really gets what he or she wants. The underlying reasons for the conflict remain unaffected. As a result, future conflicts of same or similar nature are likely to occur. This model often results from the following circumstances:

Avoidance: People pretend the conflict does not really exist and hope that it will gradually disappear.

Accommodation/Smoothing: People play down the differences among the conflicting parties, on one hand, and highlight similarities, on the other. e.g.

Compromise: Each party involved in the conflict gives up something of value to the other. In this case neither party gains in full what it desires, and seeds for future conflicts are sown. Although a conflict may appear to be settled for a while through compromise, it may still occur at a later point in future. e.g.

4. WIN-LOSE MODEL: This is when one party archives its desires at the expense and to the exclusion of other party's desires. This is a result of the following:

Competition: Victory is achieved through force, superior skills or domination.

Authoritative command: a formal authority dictates a solution and specifies what is gained and what is lost and by whom. Win-Lose fail to address the root causes of the conflict. It tends to suppress the desires, views, opinions of one of the conflicting parties. As a result, future conflicts over similar issues are likely to happen.

5. win-win model: This is a result of Collaboration between the interested parties to address real issues. It uses techniques of Problem –Solving to reconcile differences.

Collaboration: This is a direct and positive approach to conflict management. It involves recognition by all conflicting parties that something is wrong and needs attention.

Problem-Solving: This involves gathering and evaluating information in solving problems and making decisions.

It is worthy to note, that Win-Win Model eliminates reasons for the continuation of the conflict because nothing has been avoided or suppressed. All relevant issues are raised and openly discussed. The idea of “openness” is very critical. Real issues are not always on the surface. They might be either under the “table” or beneath the “carpet”. It is also essential to know the actors in the conflict. Sometimes real actors are behind the scene.

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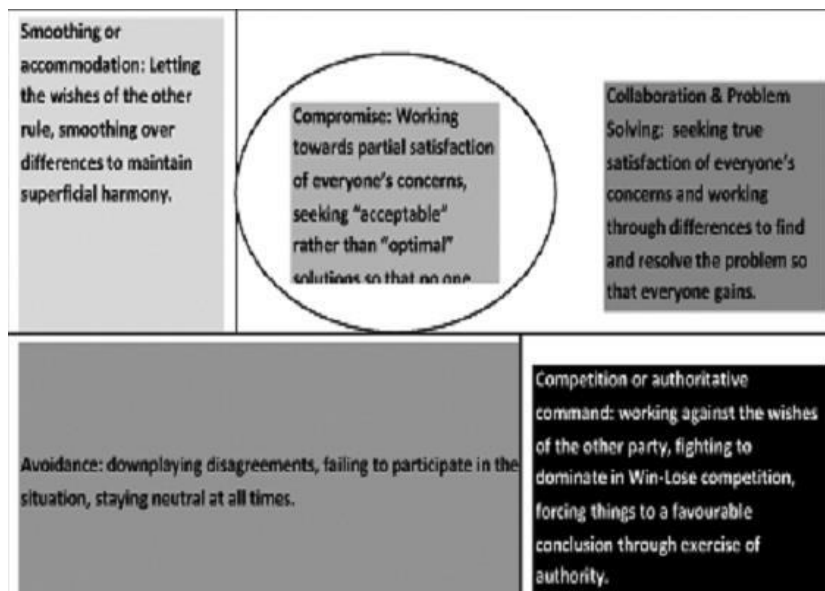


Figure1: below further summarised the outcome of each model of conflicts resolution and management strategies enunciated above

Source: Centre for Multiparty Democracy 2015

6. National Boundary Commission in Nigeria

The national boundary commission (NBC) was established in 1989 to address the myriads of internal and international boundary problems facing the country. In 2006 the National Assembly repealed the enabling Decree No. 38 of 1987, replacing it with the National Boundary Commission (Establishment) Act of 2006 (www.newsdayonline.com).

The Commission has as its Chairman the Vice President of the Federation with the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, the Ministers of Defence, Police Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Works, Co-operation and Integration in Africa, National Planning Commission, and Petroleum Resources as members. Other members are the National Security Adviser, the Inspector General of Police as well as the Director-General, of the Commission (www.thetidenewsonline.com).

6.1 The statutory Functions of the Commission (NBC)

The Commission shall- (a) intervene, and deal with any boundary dispute that may arise between Nigeria and any of her neighbours with a view to settling the dispute; (b) intervene, determine and resolve any boundary dispute that may arise among States, Local Government areas or communities in the Federation with a view to settling the disputes; (c) define, and delimitate boundaries between States, Local Government Areas or communities in the Federation and between Nigeria and her neighbours in accordance with delimitation instrument or document established for that purpose; (d) monitor transborder relations between Nigeria and her neighbours with a view to detecting areas of tension and possible conflict; (e) promote trans-border co-operation and border region development; (f) encourage negotiated settlement of border disputes in preference to litigation; (g) facilitate equitable utilisation of shared border resources of land, water, games, forest resources, etc.; (h) co-ordinate all activities on international boundaries; (i) formulate policies and programmes on internal and international boundaries including land and maritime; (j) liaise with other international boundary related bodies; (k) advise the Federal Government on matters affecting Nigeria's border with any neighbouring country; (l) consider recommendations from the technical committees or any other committee

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set up by the Commission and advise the Federal Government on such recommendations; (m) take all necessary steps towards the implementation of resolutions on internal boundary disputes; (n) disseminate information to educate the general public on the functions of the Commission under this Act; (o) organise, run, operate, conduct and participate in such training courses, lectures, seminars, conferences, symposia and similar study groups which may enhance the activities of the Commission or the efficiency of any of its officers and employees; (p) carry out such duties related to boundary and border matters as the President may, from time to time, direct; and (q) do such other things as may be considered by the Commission to be necessary, desirable, expedient, supplementary or incidental to the performance of the functions or the exercise of the powers conferred on the Commission under this Act (www.lawyard.ng).

6.2 Empirical Review

Several studies have been carried out on communal conflicts in Nigeria. Some of these studies which are here reviewed empirically are Orji, Eme and Nwoba (2015) and Uwakwe (2017). Orji, Eme and Nwoba (2015) carried out a study on communal conflict in Nigeria: an examination of Ezillo and Ezza–Ezillo conflict of Ebonyi State. The study used qualitative methods in carrying out its investigation. As such the study employed documentary data for its investigation while content analysis is utilized for data analysis. The theoretical framework that anchored the study is the social Marxist theory of conflicts and the pluralism theory. Findings from the study showed that indigen ship, land ownership, cultural denigration, competition for resources and measures taken by the government in managing the conflicts were responsible for the conflict. The study recommended among other things that People driven management resolution mechanism (hybrid model) should be adopted. This should involve an integrated conflict management model - inclusive of broad spectrum of stakeholders- (the church, women, the youth and elder councils) as against the 30 Peaceman committee of persons made up of mainly traditional rulers and leaders of thought without regard to gender. Professional conflict mediators such as the Academic Associated Peace work AAPW, Institute of peace and conflict studies in the Universities should be engaged as better Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) organ. Also, Uwakwe (2017) carried out a study on Boundary and Land-related Conflicts and its Implication on the Education of the Female Child in Igboland using the Amagu-Adadama between Ebonyi and Cross River states and the Umuleri-Aguleri land. ccUmuleri-Aguleri and Adadma-Amagu communities was propelled by population growth and expansion, unbridle desire to acquire more territorial control by the communities under review among others. Uwakwe (2017) recommends that Government through the relevant agencies should ensure that conflicts are not allowed to degenerate into violent confrontations. On-governmental organizations, traditional rulers and government should organize and support campaigns, seminars and workshop to sensitize people against using violence to settle scores, etc.

7. Theoretical framework

The theory used for the explanation of this study is the Human Needs Theory. The origin of Human Needs Theory is traced to Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper titled ‘‘A Theory of Human Motivation’’. The proponents of the theory are John Burton, Frank DukesMarker, Rothman, Kelman, Simon Hertnon and many others.

The theory argues that there are certain essentials necessary for survival. They are not simply food, water, and shelter. These essentials include both physical and non-physical elements, importantly they also include those things humans are instinctively driven to attain. While there is no agreed list of these needs, they include: Safety/Security, Belongingness/Love, Self-esteem, Personal fulfilment, Identity, Cultural security, Freedom,

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Distributive justice, powerful collective needs, and the fears and concerns about survival associated with them, are often important casual factors in intergroup and intercommunal conflict. The frustration of these needs are the root cause of conflict. Building trust, deconstructing enemy images and fostering cooperation are therefore key elements in human needsbased conflict resolutions. Human needs theorists argue that conflicts and violent conflicts are caused by unmet human needs. Violence occurs when certain individuals or groups do not see any other way to meet their need, or when they need understanding, respect and consideration for their needs. Rosenberg states that violence is a tragic expression of unmet human needs, implying that all actions undertaken by human beings are attempts to satisfy their needs. If we are able to connect with our needs and those of others, we will therefore be able to look at other ways of meeting such needs, avoiding violence and destruction. Human needs theorists also argued that the appropriate institutions within a society can fulfil these needs for all parties and thus create a sustainable peace.

The theory is very apt for the study as it graphically captures the essence and focus of the study. The people of Amagu and Adadama communities are predominantly farmers. Farming being their mainstay, as the means of achieving a bumper harvest depends on the mass of arable land under their control. It is this supposed bumper harvest that will enable them meet their socio-economic needs that propelled the desire to acquire more arable land hence, the conflict. Surprisingly, the conflict sprawled other needs –security needs, cultural needs among others. Resolving these needs can be made possible when an equal platform that can connect the socio-economic needs of Adadama with those of Amagu in Abi Local Government of Cross River and Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi States.

8. Methodology

The study adopts qualitative method in carrying out its investigation and descriptive analysis as its research design. The data employed for the study were gathered from secondary sources wherein journal papers, newspapers, periodic papers, articles, documentary materials among others were carefully extracted.

9. Discussions and analysis

9.1 Causes of Communal Conflict in Adadma-Amagu

The causes of communal conflict generally could be predicated on population explosion, quest for arable land and the economic migration.

Uwakwe (2017), posits that the perennial inter border dispute between Amagu and Adadama communities was propelled by population explosion. That consequent upon urbanization and expansionist drive in the 1980s, the communities (Adadma and Amagu) began destroying the Shute boundary pillars with each accusing the other of encroachment. The aftermath of this was the protracted conflict and commencement of boundary crises. This agrees with Onwudiwe (2004) who posits that population explosion, and the anti-poor policies of the government that actuate communal conflict.

Also, Albert (2011) who opines that majority if not all the cases of communal conflicts in Nigeria were instigated by land related issues. As attempts by the residents to claim their communities' rights over certain pieces of land from others have resulted into communal conflicts between them and other discrete communities. That the perennial inter border dispute was caused by quest and desire for arable land. This is congruent with Alimba (2014) who averred that among other causes of inter border dispute manifests in the forms of encroachment problem, farming and pastoral problems, deforestation, flooding, soil erosion, and bush burning. Communal conflict creates room for people to drift from place to place as a survival mechanism and in search of livelihood.

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In an account on what triggered the conflict between Adadama and Amagu communities, watchdog news (2016) reported that the current bloodbath between the duo started when some community women went to harvest cassava on a land bordering the two villages. The women were chased from their farms. When some of these women fled home to report what happened, the youths went on rescue mission a fight broke out leading to the death of four of the youths and destructions of properties worth millions of naira.

More so, the seemingly intractable nature of conflict between Adadama and Ndiagu Amagu communities of Cross River and Ebonyi States of Nigeria, was propelled the desire to acquire more arable land with a view to meet their socio-economic needs hence, this agrees with Alimba (2014) who posits that communal conflicts manifest in the forms of competition for inadequate resources such land and its content; problems of distribution of available resources; unemployment and poverty. Also, this is accordant with Yecho (2006) who opines 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.

9.2 The Role of National Boundary Commission in Adadma-Ndiagu Amagu Inter Border Dispute

Shidia Okpara (2013), averred that the rising cases of inter border conflicts in Nigeria, questioned the relevance of the National Boundary Commission. That the National Boundary Commission lacks effective conflicts resolution strategies that can help to nip conflict in the bud with a view to prevent it from brewing as well avert future occurrence. In other words, the national boundary commission appears to have drifted from her statutory functions. This agrees with the National Boundary Commission (Establishment) Act of 2006 which states that NBC shall among other things; **(1)** intervene, determine and resolve any boundary dispute that may arise among States, Local Government areas or communities in the Federation with a view to settling the disputes; **(2)** define, and delimitate boundaries between States, Local Government Areas or communities in the Federation and between Nigeria and her neighbours in accordance with delimitation instrument or document established for that purpose; etc. Premium Times (2017) validates above position too, when it reports that the search for lasting solution to incessant cases of communal conflict across the country appears elusive, “not because of what they (NBC) are doing, but because of what they have not done”. The National Boundary Commission must seek the collaboration of the warring parties to address real issues. Employing techniques of Problem –Solving to reconcile differences may suffice in addressing the long-standing communal conflict. Problem-Solving techniques involves gathering and evaluating information in solving problems and making decisions. It is otherwise referred as Win-Win Model because it eliminates reasons for the continuation of the conflict since nothing has been avoided or suppressed.

All relevant issues are raised and openly discussed. The idea of “openness” is very critical. Real issues are not always on the surface. They might be either under the “table” or beneath the “carpet”.

Also, Egba (2014) opines that the persistent manifestation of bloodbath clash between the people of Ndiagu Amagu and Adadama was the inability to implement the outcome of several dispute resolution meetings held at various times at the instance of the National Boundary Commission (NBC). The understandings reached by the duo have been in abeyance. The agreement reached in those meeting includes; that the National Boundary Commission (NBC) should carry out a delineation study of the Ebonyi/Cross River interstate boundary, run a cultural and ethnographic studies with a view to determining rightful owner of the contested land. Unfortunately. None of these resolutions was religiously followed, creating impression of compromise and lack of appropriate knowledge that will permanently kill the conflict.

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10 Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigated the causes and role of national boundary commission in the case of Adadama and Ndiagu Amagu communities. It set out to unravel the extent to which the National Boundary Commission have lived up to her statutory mandate of intervene, determine and resolve any boundary dispute that may arise among States, Local Government areas or communities in the Federation with a view to settling the disputes; define, and delimitate boundaries between States, Local Government Areas or communities in the Federation and between Nigeria and her neighbours in accordance with delimitation instrument or document established for that purpose; etc.

The study adduced that the perennial communal conflict between Adadama and Amagu communities was precipitated by their desire to acquire more arable land with a view to meet their socio-economic needs, population explosion, and economic migration.

More so, the study finds out that NBC has failed to live up to her constitutional functions of intervening, determine and resolve any boundary dispute that may arise among States, Local Government areas or communities in the Federation with a view to settling the disputes; define, and delimitate boundaries between States, Local Government Areas or communities in the Federation and between Nigeria and her neighbours in accordance with delimitation instrument or document established for that purpose; etc. Also, the study discovered that the national boundary commission lacks effective conflicts resolution strategies that can help to nip conflict in the bud with a view to prevent it from brewing as well avert future occurrence.

- The study however, recommends that:
- The National Boundary Commission in collaboration with the Office of the Surveyor-General should review all documents including new ones to propose a common boundary between the two States.
- The use of history and professional expertise of surveyors to interpret provisions of delimitation instruments will suffice greatly in addressing the perennial conflict.
- The States and the Federal Government should search for and provide more documents that could be used to independently verify the boundary points.
- The federal government in collaboration with the states should establish community intelligent and security to work hand in glove with the security agents to fish out the perpetrators and/or sponsors of violent communal conflicts.
- The National Boundary Commission should employ Problem –Solving model of conflict management to reconcile differences that beclouds the long-standing communal conflict

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