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Interrogating Governments' Interventions in Communal Clashes: The Erin-Ile/Offa Conflicts in Perspective

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Abstract- Offa is an ancient town and Headquarter of Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Offa is the second largest town in Kwara State after the state headquarters- Ilorin. The town is located in central Nigeria with geographic coordinate of 8'9N 4'4 3E.

Offa was founded by Olalomi Olofa-gangan a crown prince from Oyo kingdom, and a direct descendant of king Oranmiyan in Ile- Ife, he founded the town around 1395 AD. Olalomi was a renowned hunter reputed for his dexterity as an archer. Offa according to oral history in the traditional headquarters of Obolo dialect of the Yoruba speaking people of Kwara and Osun States. History has it that Offa town was a satellite of the old Oyo kingdom which paid her tributes to the old Oyo kingdom. Subsequent, due to the North-West war (Yoruba-Fulani war), Offa fell out through a defeat from Ilorin which now placed Offa under the authority of Ilorin., Some historians revealed that when the war ended in 1887, the town was badly ravaged by the Northern forces as the people and animals in Offa were killed by the Ilorin forces thereby making the inhabitants of Offa to flee further Westward and build other town like Ofatedo, Ilofa, Oke-Offa in Ibadan among others.

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Interrogating Governments' Interventions in Communal Clashes: The Erin-Ile/Offa Conflicts in Perspective

Ayodele Dele Akinnusi [α], Oladimeji David Alao [σ] & Ayuba Gimba Mavalla [ρ]

I. Historical Fact of Erin-ile/Offa Conflict

a) *Historical Facts of Offa*

Offa is an ancient town and Headquarter of Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Offa is the second largest town in Kwara State after the state headquarters- Ilorin. The town is located in central Nigeria with geographic coordinate of 8'9N 4'4 3E.

Offa was founded by Olalomi Olofa-gangan a crown prince from Oyo kingdom, and a direct descendant of king Oranmiyan in Ile- Ife, he founded the town around 1395 AD. Olalomi was a renowned hunter reputed for his dexterity as an archer. Offa according to oral history in the traditional headquarters of Obolo dialect of the Yoruba speaking people of Kwara and Osun States. History has it that Offa town was a satellite of the old Oyo kingdom which paid her tributes to the old Oyo kingdom. Subsequent, due to the North-West war (Yoruba-Fulani war), Offa fell out through a defeat from Ilorin which now placed Offa under the authority of Ilorin., Some historians revealed that when the war ended in 1887, the town was badly ravaged by the Northern forces as the people and animals in Offa were killed by the Ilorin forces thereby making the inhabitants of Offa to flee further Westward and build other town like Ofatedo, Ilofa, Oke-Offa in Ibadan among others.

However, the Fulani/Yoruba war affected the Offa settlement greatly leading it to settle in many places as dictated by the war trend until they got to their present site (the new Offa). Olafimihan in Banwo (2001) explains that the Offa people suffered great movement due to the wars that were fought.

Oral history has it that "the Nupe wars drove the inhabitants of Offa to a place called IdoOsun (Ofatedo), this was during the reign of Oba Olumorin Anilelerin. There are oral testimonies corroborating this assertion, but the exact date of the war is not known for sure. The war was probably fought around the later part of the eighteen or part of the nineteen century when it was assumed Oba Olumorin Anilelerin, the eleventh Olofa was on throne. However, records abound of series of raids on Offa by the Nupe forces led by their famous warrior, Majia, during the reign of the fourth and fifth rulers, OlofaOluwole and Okunmolu respectively. The persistence of the Nupe raids which lasted for about fifty years forced the people of Offa to change settlements intermittently during the period.

Banwo (2001) also revealed that population movements were a major feature of the nineteenth century Yoruba wars largely brought about by the destruction of settlements and the need for security and protection. Another key reason for movements was trade, the people of Offa settled in towns like Iwo, Olupona, Osogbo, Ikirun, Ogbomoso, Ikoyi and Ido-Osun. There is also a large area in Ibadan known as Oke-Offa which is believed to have been occupied by the Offa people since the nineteenth century.

Both Erin-Ile and Offa were victims of the war as both of them fell to the North with Erin-Ile as the boundary between Northern and western Nigeria. Erin-Ile had a large parcel of land with boundaries with other villages including the 'New Offa' subsequently they settled and related well because they were both Ibolo speaking communities. Presently, both communities have different versions of their history which shows an earlier settlement before the other. Offa holds its claim to the land as being the first Ibolo speaking town in the area that was founded by a descendant of Oduduwa; Olofagangan. Subsequently, his successors imbibed the 'Isakole tradition from Ile-Ife and Oyo which allowed then to lease out parcels of land to neighboring towns and settlement in exchange for annual payment known as Isakole which was paid during the Onimeka festival.

Salawu (2006) listed some of the rulers given parcels to include: The Oloponda of Oponda, Bale of Asapate, Akosin of Ekosin, Onijagbo of Ijagbo, Onipee of Ipee, Onira of Ira, Bale of Ilemona amongst others. Consequently, the Erin-Ile community was purportedly to settle in their present location by the sixth Olofa of Offa who granted the present site of Erin-Ile to ElerinArebiope. This area given was said to be founded by Olowu stream on Offa road, by Awore stream on the left and the right by a footpath leading to Ilemona.

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Erin-Ile on her own side holds claim to the land through the fact that they reached the present location long before Offa. Erin-Ile claims the present Offa settlement originally belonged to Erin-Ile and Ipee with Abata stream as mutual boundary. The present Offa land was purportedly given to the second Olofa by the fifth Elerin.

However, oral history showed that the Offa people through western education, trading activities and presence of major railway stations in the north experienced rapid growth and a large parcel of land. It started making incursions into other lands having exhausted its own as developments progressed, the value of land increased and issues started brewing from Offa's incursion into Erin-Ile lands. These skirmishes were initially mild before they escalated to violent ones. In 1970, controversy over the construction of Erin-Ile Grammar school led to the first set of open confrontation. Subsequently an alleged blockade of a main road by the Erin-Ile people led to the subsequent harassment of Offa Chiefs and the destruction of the vehicle of the paramount ruler of Offa, the Olofa of Offa. The provincial figure for the population of Offa Local Government Area by the National population Commission (FRN official Gazette no24 of May, 2007 Government Notice) is 89, 674 comprising of 46, 266 males and 43,428 females. Offa has the reputation of being the home of sweet potatoes.

Offa town has always provided a safe haven for all, irrespective of the tribe, place of origin or religion. The liberal, peace loving and hospitable nature of the indigenes accounts for the tremendous growth in the population of the immigrants in the town over time. Offa people are highly enterprising and the people engage in farming and commerce.

Education is the main industry of Offa people. Tertiary institutions in the town include the Federal Polytechnic, Kwara State College of Health Technology and Nigeria Navy School of Health Science, School of Basic Studies, and National Teachers Institute. There are also two upcoming private universities and two Private Polytechnics.

b) The History of Erin-Ile

Erin-Ile, an ancient Yoruba town was founded around 1225 AD which is almost 790 years ago, History has it that Erin-Ile dates back to the episodic return of Oranmiyan from Edo country after his fiery military expedition against the Igbos who were then harassing that part Oduduwa's kingdom (Oral history).

Erin-Ile is one of the oldest towns in the old Oyun local Government Area, including Offa, Erin-Ile town was founded about the same time as Ipee and the boundary between these two towns was said to be before the advent of Offa town. Reliable oral tradition and intensive research carried out suggested that the town was founded by royal prince of Ife called Odumosa. He was known to be a renowned hunter and marksman; hence his cognomen "Apaayan", Odumosa was also a devoted religionist, and a leader of substance. He was an astute administrator and charismatic personality and the grandson of king Obalufon of Ife. Obalufon is the contracted form of Oba-Ilu Ife (the king of Ile- Ife), and Olufon is a shortened word meaning Olu-Ife and Yoruba kingdom is still being revered. Obalufon was on the throne when his nephew Prince Oranmiyan led his series military expedition and invasion of Benin. Whenever Oranmiyan visited Ile-Ife, panic gripped everyone for fear of what would and could be the reaction of such a ferocious military hero to his life ambition being so dashed by his conscious ascension to the throne which he (Oranmiyan) had always in such an unsettled and uncertainly situation, Odumosa who was the direct son of king Akiyamore considered to leave Ile-Ife in order to escape Oranmiyan hostility. He quickly decided to quit Ile-Ife in order to escape the possible wrath of Oranmiyan. It was everyone's belief that whoever provoked Oranmiyan invited fiery war. Odumosa set-off with a large contingent of followers including his son Alawode Arebiope and his half-brother, prince Alapa. He carried with him enough supplies of basic needs and precious treasures from the palace among such were beaded crowns, regal attires, royal scepter (Edan Obalufon), Obalufon's festival silver crown, set of threaded coral beads, the cultures of Obalufon, Ifa oracle, war equipments, arms and armaments (for games and self-defense) and a mysterious clarion horn for assembling his followers whenever they scattered in search of games and food or were stranded. He relied very much on the horn which he also used to give war or peace signals and directions of next movements to his followers (Oral History).

Like patriarch Abraham of the Jewish history who on divine order left his parents in the land of Haran to an unknown destination. He was a man of faith, indeed a man of indomitable courage, never scared of hills or jungles, dry land and flooded planes to move away from a possible chase by Oranmiyan. He commanded his people E RIN RIN, E RIN, meaning walk fast. The name was later suffixed with the word "ILE" which denotes the terminal end of the track on Ifa oracle's direction, to form the compound name ERIN-ILE. After a long spell of roaming and rambling before they reached that destination, they halted and rested in number of places, like: ERINMO or ERINTADOGUN which means a junction place where they rested, hence ERINMO. A big market was established at the junction by settlers. When Odumosa, left some of his followers remained behind and settled permanently in ERINMO. Other places of sojourn include ERIN-OKE, and ERIN-IJESHA all of which are now notable towns in Osun-state. ERIN Odumosa met three great hunters in his adventural expedition: He met Olowe, Afolumodi and

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Gbaagba, who adopted him as their first king when they knew of his princely status.

At a last stop-over before Erin-Ile, Odumosa forgot his clarion horn. By the time they went back for it, it had sunk and sparkling water or spring like river flows from it. It is presently called river owo. It was at this junction that his half brother, Prince Akpa separated from him, while Odumosa moved westward, Akpa moved eastward. Akpa now established a town called EKU-APA in Irepodun local Government of Kwara State.

II. Historical Perspective of Erin-ile/Offa Boundary Dispute and Conflict

Since the dawn of human civilization, people have felt a fundamental need to divide the world into territorial areas. The original divisions were often based upon the extent of available agricultural land, or on the influence of a central group or city over a surrounding area. Gradually, as groups organized into empires and expanded their territories, they encounter other settlements where wars were often fought and eventually peace brokered. These results as long as one empire did not completely take over another, the territories in that area are turned to the buffer zone.

The importance of borders was not fully realized until the advent of the Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries. As European powers claimed new lands in the Americas, Africa and Asia, they had to make a clear record of their territory and its resources. The record often took the form of maps created by skilled surveyors and cartographers who were part of the original expedition or who were later sent to the newly explored lands.

One of the major reasons for territorial disputes in Nigeria has been identified as frequent change of territorial boundaries without much consultation. A report of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in 2003 asserts that territorial boundaries are frequently changed and often without proper reasons and consultations which may result directly in conflict or it may produce a situation of deep grievance that may simmer for many years. The state of a community in Akwa-Ibom state in Nigeria exemplifies this. Thousands of people from a particular ethnic group associated with Cross River state found themselves suddenly as part of Akwa-Ibom state or Owena and Owode-Owena in Ondo state and Osun state boundary as example. For eighteen months they were displaced to cross river and were living as refugees with little state or local government support. Thus, paving way for a high likelihood of retaliation or result to violence.

The arbitral creation of Local Government Areas (LGAs) has in no small measures contributed to the increment of conflict in Nigeria. The creation of the Jos North Local Government in 1991 which further intensified the animosities between conflicting parties in Plateau state is a worthy example.

Another typical example is the crisis between Jukun-Chamba and Kuteb in Taraba state which was attributed mainly to the killing of a Kuteb Chief and the dispute over the boundary of a newly created local government area in Ussa in 1991, this new L.G.A comprises majorly Kuteb communities. However, there are significant numbers of Kuteb in three communities about 5 kilometre from Takun which have been told to join the Ussa LGA, these communities have refused to join the Ussa LGA as the Takun LGA is much closer to them but pose a serious problem in the area.

Similarly, relationship between Erin-Ile/Offa communities turned sour after both communities were separated during the 1954/1956 Local Government Administrative reforms and Erin-Ile/Offa was made the headquarter of Odo-Ogun district. The history of the Erin-Ile/Offa boundary dispute started with LGA reforms but dated back to the nineteenth century territorial wars that were fought predominantly between the Yorubas and the Hausa/Fulani. History shows that Offa town was satellite of the old Oyo kingdom which paid her tribute to the old Oyo kingdom. Subsequently, due to the North West wars, Offa fell through a defeat from Ilorin which placed Offa under the authority of Ilorin. Some reports revealed that Offa was badly ravaged by the northern forces as the people of Offa were reportedly killed and butchered like animals by the Ilorin forces. The military siege over Offa made the people to flee and built other towns like Ofatedo, Ilofa, Oke-Offa in Ibadan among others.

However, there are evidences that show that the Erin-Ile people got to their site or present town even before the war as Danmole et al (1993) disputes reports that Erin-Ile was founded as an aftermath of the war. They explain that there were ample evidences that suggest that Erin-Ile was long in existence before the war of 1887 and that Erin-Ile was much older than the first Offa which was destroyed by the Ilorin forces. Another version disputed this that Moremi, the wife of Oranmiyan was from Offa and when Oranmiyan left Bini with his wife Moremi to Ile-Ife, Obalufon that was holding fort for AROLE (ORANMIYAN)fled the palace in fear that Oranmiyan might kill him and left Ile-Ife to the present Erin-Ile. The Fulani/Yoruba war affected the Offa settlement greatly leading it to settle in many places as dictated by the war trends until they got to their present site. Banwo (2001) explains that the Offa people suffered movements due to the wars that were ravaging them.

The Nupe wars drove the inhabitants of Offa to a place called Ido-Osun, this was during the reign of Oba Olumorin Anilelerin. There are oral testimonies corroborating this assertion, but the exact dating of the war is not known for sure. The war was probably fought around the latter part of the eighteenth or early part of

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the nineteenth centuries when it was assumed Oba Olumorin Anilelerin, the eleventh Olofa of Offa was on the throne. Hermon-Hodge, however recorded a series of raids on Offa by the Nupe forces led by their famous warrior Majia, during the reign of the fourth and fifth rulers, Olofa Oluwole and Okunmolu respectively. The persistence of the Nupe raids, which lasted for about fifty years forced the people of Offa to change settlement intermittently during this period.

Banwo (2001) also revealed that population movements were a major feature of the nineteenth century of Yoruba and was largely brought about by the destruction of settlements and the need for security and protection. Another key reason for movements was trade, the people of Offa settled in towns like Iwo, Olupona, Osogbo, Ikirun, Ogbomosho, Ikoyi and Ido-Osun. They even founded Ilofa, Ofatedo, Oke-Offa among others. There is also a large area in Ibadan known as Oke-Offa which is believed to have been occupied by the Offa people since the nineteenth century.

Both Erin-Ile/Offas were victims of the war as both of them fell to the north with Erin-Ile as the boundary between Northern and Western Nigeria. Erin-Ile had a large parcel of land with boundaries with other villages including the "New Offa", subsequently they settled and related well because they were both Ibolo speaking communities. Presently, both communities have different versions of their history which shows an earlier settlement before the other. Offa holds its claims to the land as being the first Ibolo speaking town in the area that was founded by descendant of Oduduwa; Olofagangan. Subsequently, his successors imbibed the "Isakole" tradition from Ile-Ife and Oyo allowed them to lease out parcels of land to neighboring towns and settlement in exchange for annual payment known as Isakole which was paid during the Onimeka festival.

Salawu (2006) listed some of the rulers given parcels of land to include: the Oloponda of Oponda, Bale of Asapate, Akosin of Ekosin, Onijagbo of Ijagbo, Onipee of Ipee, Onira of Ira, and Bale of Ilemona amongst others. Consequently, the Erin-Ile community was purportedly allowed to settle in their present location by the sixth Olofa of Offa who granted the present site of Erin-Ile to Elerin Arebiope. This area given was said to be bounded by Oluwo stream on Offa road, by Awora stream on the left and on the right by a footpath leading to Ilemona. Erin-Ile on her own side holds that they reached the present location long before Offa. Erin-Ile the present Offa settlement originally belonged to Erin-Ile and Ipee with Abata stream as their mutual boundary. The present Offa land was purportedly given to the second Olofa by the fifth Elerin.

However, oral evidences showed that the Offa people through western education, trading activities and the presence of major railway stations experienced rapid growth and with large parcel of land. It started making incursions into other lands having exhausted its own via developmental projects. As these developments progressed, the value of land increased and issues started causing disagreement between the two communities. These skirmishes were initially mild before they escalated to violent conflict. In 1970, there was a controversy over the construction of Erin-Ile Grammar school which led to the first set of open confrontation. Subsequently an alleged blocked of main road by the Erin-Ile people led to the subsequent harassment of Offa Chiefs and the destruction of the vehicle of the paramount ruler of Offa, the Olofa of Offa.

Erin-Ile/Offa communities were formerly closely knit group with many of their things done in common. This cordial relationship turned sour after the separation of the communities during the 1954/1956 Local Government Administration Reforms which saw both communities separated with Erin-Ile as the headquarter of Odo-Ogun District (Kwara State Gazette, 2008). Again, Erin-Ile/Offa were under the same Local Government Administration called Oyun Local Government Area and Offa became the headquarters. This arrangement did not go down well with Erin-Ile. This situation ushered in the beginning of a great enmity between Erin-Ile/Offa. Erin-Ile and the other communities felt cheated, because the arrangement reduced their status while it elevated the status of Offa. At a point in time, Offa used the advantage it had over Erin-Ile when it imposed jurisdiction and authority it did not possess. In reaction, Erin-Ile people made sure that any farmer from Offa who wanted to farm on Erin-Ile land paid tribute and royalty to Erin-Ile land owner from time to time according to Jatto (1991). Also, Adeeye (1992) reported that when Oyun division was carved out as a political or administrative unit in Kwara State, Offa was made the Headquarter, which brought Erin-Ile under the governance from Offa. This arrangement was not satisfactory to Erin-Ile community who saw it as being subordinated to Offa in the on-going rivalry. Subsequently, Erin-Ile vented their dissatisfaction through confrontation which escalated to violent conflict between the two communities, Adekeye (1992). After this incident the State Government of Kwara State decided to create a buffer zone between the two communities. Fatile (2011) also pointed it out that while new Offa Local Government was carved out of Old Oyun Local Government, but Ilemona, a small remote village was made the new headquarter of Oyun Local Government. Ilemona, the new headquarter is a small and remote village when compared to Erin-Ile, but it was politically chosen as headquarter. This development also, did not go well with the Erin-Ile community who saw it as affront because at the time of creation of the Local Government, an Offa indigene was the political adviser to the government of General Ibrahim Babangida who created the local government.

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The first battle over the same portion of land according to history happened in 1961. The dispute started following the expansion of Offa towards Erin-Ile. Offa built a model market (Owode International Market) on the disputed boundary land and consequently, due to the expansion it extends towards Erin-Ile land, the expansion resulted into violent conflict between the two communities before the project was later abandoned. The crisis extended toward neighbouring communities like Ijagbo, Ipee, and Igosun. The casualty was higher, building were razed, innocent lives were lost, forcing the administration of Brigadier General David Bamigboye to set up a panel of inquiry in 1977 which among others, recommended that the controversial boundary area be made a buffer zone between the two communities, meaning that none of the contending communities could lay claim to the disputed land.

There was a flashed conflict in 1970 by an alleged blockade of a main road by Erin-Ile people led to the subsequent harassment of Offa Chiefs and the destruction of the vehicle of the paramount ruler of Offa, the Olofa of Offa Salawu (2007). Earliest peacekeeping attempts made include the Boundary Settlement Commission headed by Dr. Funsho Adaramola in 1972. However, the peace process did not triumph as it was marred by refusal of stakeholders to attend meetings and subsequent rejection of Boundary Commissioner's verdict. Other factors that contributed to the failure include the accusation of inherent selfish interest among the mediating committee.

Subsequent dissatisfaction with 1972 pronouncement which has been attributed as one of the remote causes of the conflict. The 1972 pronouncement which awarded the disputed land to Erin-Ile was criticized as easily capable of destroying any avenue for the desired unity necessary for orderliness, good neighbourliness and good administration between Erin-Ile/Offa as the pronouncement had allotted Erin-Ile boundary of 2000 ft to 5000 ft inside the Old Offa town hall (Offa Descendant Union building).

A lack of consensus on the boundary line has also been responsible for the reawakening of hostilities between the two communities, while Erin-Ile holds onto the Adaramola decision on the boundary line, which put the boundary between the communities before the location of the present Federal Polytechnic, Offa, the Offa community holds onto the boundary as per the Taiwo Peace Accord which puts the boundary at "KereIpinle", an equidistance point between the two communities.

Erin-Ile community believes they hold a strong historical inheritance to the land in question because they believe they settled in the location long before Offa. While the Offa community holds a similar opinion as both towns have historical accounts that affirms a superior claim to the land. There was another outbreak of violent conflict between the two communities in 1982 and 1983. The Erin-Osun people (otherwise known as Erin Oun, meaning Erin over there) joined forces with Erin-Ile to fight Offa. This solidarity was necessary because they share the same historical origin with the Erin-Ile people. This explains why the chieftaincy titles in the two communities are still the same till date. During this crisis, charms and other dangerous weapons were freely used. Erin-Ile women who were married to Offa people and their children were killed during the conflict. However, there were more casualties on both part of Erin-Ile/Offa and this was attributed to dangerous weapons and the potency of the charms. It was this development that led to ceasefire before the matter was taken to court.

On June 20, 2006, another crisis erupted: an indigene of Offa, according to reports, initiated a building project around the disputed boundary. The labourers were busy working when some indigenes of Erin-Ile sacked them from the site and pulled down the structure, including a part of the wall fence of the Federal Polytechnic Offa, which was also said to fall within the buffer zone. Another report claimed that the erection of a Christian picnic facility by the Erin-Ile community near the buffer zone was considered an affront, a breach of agreement by the Offa community. The then chairman of Offa local government was said to have mobilized Offa youth to chase away the labourer working at the picnic site. The Erin-Ile people in a reprisal attack were said to have mobilized and fought back. Simple as the incident was, the propensity of the tragedy that followed showed that one or even the two warring communities had a long term plan for the war and the strategy of the war that follows manifested this plan. The people of Offa, while the war lasted, apparently suffered heavy casualty than probably anybody could imagine. The multi-Billion naira sawmill that fell within the area was razed by Erin-Ile youth, the Sawmill along with the plank market which is the biggest in the whole of Kwara state was reduced to ashes. The surrounding buildings stretches along the buffer zone and the uncompleted ones too were razed down. Offa is the second largest town after Ilorin, the state capital, in terms of urbanization with heavy and large investment and business enterprise located there. Big business like; Okin foam, Noble Breweries, Olalomi Carpets (Rug manufacturing firm), Avalon Hotel, Awrab suites, omega-Green Resorts, Taces Club and Metro suite Hotels. There are higher institute of learning, e.g. the Federal Polytechnic Offa, Len's Polytechnic (Private), Graceland Polytechnic (Private), Kwara State College of Health Technology, newly approved Summit University, proposed University of Offa, Pan-African College of Education – newly established College of Education and renowned school like Adesoye College. Offa equally fall within investment haven to some banks, e.g. Zenith Bank Plc, GTB Plc, Mainstreet Bank Plc (Just acquired by Skye Bank Plc), Skye Bank Plc, Union Bank Plc, UBA

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Plc, Eco Bank Plc, and First Bank plc. And at least four Microfinance Banks operating with efficiency in this emerging city called Offa.

Erin-Ile on the other hand, is a sleepy town (low economic activities) with little or no investment potential aside from the Moribund Demosco International Company (Tissue and paper firm), Technical College and few unpatronised Guest houses. Akinyemi, (2006) and Adebusuyi (2006) claimed that one person was confirmed dead and six others seriously injured on June 21, 2006, over boundary dispute between the two communities. Also properties were damaged by rampaging youths who allegedly invaded the disputed areas. Youths armed with dangerous weapons including cutlasses, axes, guns, explosives and charms were mobilized from both sides.

The magnitude of destruction in Offa, according to Akinyemi (2006) resulted in the hiring of war fighters from Modakeke, Iseyin, Ikoyi and Ogbomoso, an action that was replicated in Erin-Ile, too. At both ends, the wealthy sons and daughters allegedly provided millions of naira for the purchase of the weapons and ammunitions to prosecute the war by the touts, irate youths and mercenaries to fight the unending war. The native of Erin-Ile who had business in Offa had such business razed down, many families were displaced and quick divorces were common factor at both communities during these disputes. A known school proprietor of GOODNESS GROUP OF SCHOOLS located in Offa but married to an Erin-Ile woman quickly relocated his wife and children to a safehaven, hewas confronted to produce his wife for possible killing but was unable to produce his wife and children, he had his school razed down not minding that he is their kinsmen but because he is married to an Erin-Ile woman. Many families are yet to re-unite after the conflict which has affected social activities and family togetherness of the two communities.

Soldiers had to be deployed to this troubled areas from Lokoja zone 8 to complement the efforts of the men of Kwara Police Command already on ground. At the end of the war, properties worth billions of naira were reported to have been destroyed, while scores of people were killed on both sides. Interestingly, the two council chairmen, Alhaji Tajudeen Aro of Offa Local Government and Mrs. Helen Popoola Oyun (PDP) are PDP Stalwarts in PDP controlled state. The chairman and the chairperson incited their kinsmen against themselves and even mobilized for logistics while the crises lasted. However, the then Olofa of Offa, accused the State Government of taking sides and the irate youths vandalized the official car of the State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Buba Maina because it was alleged the police failed to respond in good time to the crisis. The police were said not to have responded early enough when the crisis broke out due to lack of logistic to contain it Akinyemi (2006). In order to further manage the conflict situation, the Kwara State Government imposed a dusk to dawn curfew from 6 pm to 6am which lasted for about a month. After this incident, the State Government set up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the conflict. In addition, the government created a buffer zone between the two communities. The conflict situation was managed by the government with the creation of UNITY ROAD which serves as a boundary between the two communities. Although, the conflict management efforts of the government have led to relative peace in the two communities, the conflict management strategy has not effectively resolved the communal conflict. The ensuing peace can be described as hot peace. This is because the two communities still have deep rooted hatred for each other. So, any little provocation from either of the two communities can trigger another phase of crises with possibility of great implications for national security. Hence, there was the need to analyze the communal conflicts between Erin-Ile/Offa communities in order to proffer means of genuinely resolving the destructive conflict and ensuring durable peace and thereby addressing the security implications of the conflict to the Nigerian State. It is instructive to note that five months after the bloody boundary clash between the two communities, the Erin-Ile people raised the alarm that the Offa people had begun to flout the peace accord brokered by the state government. The Erin-Ile people alleged that the Offa people had started operating at a stretch of the disputed land. According to the spokesman of the Erin-Ile community, Mr. Jimoh Raji, the Offa indigenes have resumed activities at the plank market, which is situated on the disputed land. It was a warning that a major crisis was in the offing if Offa indigenes were not stopped. The Erin-Ile community retracted that their claim is for the stretch of land up to and including the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (IBEDC) former PHCN (Power Holding Company of Nigeria), High Tension Transmission station on the South of Offa, which explained that non-adherence to government's directive which forbade members of the communities from observing the Eld-el-Fitri prayers on the disputed ground, was in deference to the peace agreement to constituted authority.

The 2006 violent conflict between both communities could be attributed to the lack of surveillance on the buffer zone to prevent encroachments. A report of the State Government's Judicial Commission of Inquiry in 2008 revealed that the lukewarm attitude of successive administration in Kwara State dating back to the time of the land dispute contributed largely and greatly to the crisis. In order to strengthen the relationship between them, the state government took up the initiative to construct a Unity Road on the Buffer zone to further facilitate the resolution of the conflict between Erin-Ile/Offa.

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In January, 2013, violence erupted between Erin-Ile/Offa not because of the disputed land but due to the fragile nature of the peace that exist between the two communities. Although the panel of inquiry recommended that the controversial boundary area be made a buffer zone between the two communities, meaning that none of the contending communities could lay claim to the land. But the 2013 violence occurred due to the activities of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) of the two communities. The hot peace existing between the two communities fueled the crisis with just little provocation. The incidence happened when a passenger was picked by NURTW, Erin-Ile bus branch at a close distance to NURTW, Offa branch at Federal Polytechnic Offa axis. The Offa branch sees it as an affront and the driver was pursued. He ran away to inform his Erin-ille colleagues, without much ado, there was a mass invasion to Offa community where properties valued more than one billion were destroyed and lives were equally lost. Two filling station along Erin-Ile road were razed down, the popular plank market was reduced to ashes, Shoku shopping complex was touched, Haji Allah motors lost all the cars and trucks displayed at their showroom (burnt down), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Cornerstone Parish) was touched and the Pastor's Nissan Pathfinder Jeep 2010 edition was burnt down, Tinu-ola Estate was touched, a hotelier was killed in his office and his hotel burnt down, cars at the mechanic workshop were all burnt down even Adeyemi furnishing, a furniture company office and the show room was razed and the delivery van also burnt down. According to an eye witness, the violence came unnoticed and within a very short time, great havoc was done. In order to further manage the conflict situation a dawn to dusk curfew was imposed by the Kwara State Government. The violence was like a flash and within two-three hours the show was over but damage has been done and lives and properties worth billions of naira has been lost, family displaced and social/ economic activities paralyzed among the communities.

Although there was an attempt from Offa during the flash violent to invade Erin-Ile. The shops located in Erin-Ile just along the buffer zone were razed down by Offa Irate youths. The Sawmill located beside Winner Chapel in Erin-Ile was burnt down and an attempt to normalize trade in transportation e.g. motor cycle popularly called Okada was restricted by the two communities. Inter-communal market was suspended by the two communities. There is an apparent mistrust; hatred and lack of confidence among the locals.

III. Interventions in the Erin-ile/Offa Boundary Dispute and Conflict

The Erin-Ile/Offa dispute is a longstanding conflict that is characterized with various interventions which have subsequently been pointed out as a major contributor to the protracted nature of the conflict. The various interventions by various governments are as follows:

1. Brig. General David Bamigboye instituted Dr. Funsho Adaramola Boundary Commission of 1971
2. Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo Peace Accord of 1975
3. Colonel Peter Ogar Intervention of 1997
4. Dr. BukolaSaraki Intervention of 2008.

The January 2013 conflict that claimed lives and properties worth billions of naira was intervened by DrAbdulfatah Ahmed (the present governor of Kwara state) but without a commission of enquiry). Brig. General David Bamigboye via Dr. Funsho Adaramola Boundary Commission of 1971. Dr. Funsho Adaramola Boundary commission has been noted as the first intervention by the state government of Kwara in the dispute between Erin-Ile/Offa, this commission was constituted in 1971 by the Kwara State Government in an attempt to settle the boundary disputes between Erin-Ile/Offa. The commission was made up of Dr. Funsho Adaramola, the boundary commissioner and other appointees include: Mr. Ayo Jonathan, state counsel and Mr. A.A. Rotimi – senior surveyor who were all appointed to assist the commissioner. Subsequently, after investigations, the commission came to a conclusion in April 1972 which put the boundary between Erin-Ile/Offa along the gates of Offa town. The commission described the boundary as a boundary that runs from west to east in direction; it was further simplified through lines, which includes:

1. The first line would start from a point at the head of the Oluwo-oso stream otherwise known as Atari stream which is located in the South-western part of Offa town, the line shall start and run due south-eastwards, till it reaches the point where the Offa/Ilemona foot-path crosses truncated footpath.
2. The second line would start from where the originating line stops and shall start and run in an easterly direction and pass by the northern fence of Electric Corporation of Nigeria (ECN) transformer till it reaches the Erin-Ile/Offa main road.
3. The third line would continue from where the second line stopped and shall start and run in a south-easterly direction and pass by the northern walls of the old Emirs' rest house till it reaches the footpath that leads from Offa town to Kajola camp.
4. While the fourth line shall start from where the preceding line ends and will run eastwards till it reaches the railway lines.
5. The fifth line shall start from where line four ends and go south-eastwards following the southern side of a footpath so as to put this footpath with an outer one.
6. Subsequently, line six will continue from where line five stops and shall run in a north-eastwards

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direction till it reaches the Offa-Igosun main road at a point approximately 2.45 kilometers from the eastern level crossing in Offa where it shall terminate.

The Adaramola boundary commission's findings was later challenged by Offa in the Northern states Appeal Court in 1972, before the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 1973 and 1974 where Offa lost in all occasions of the litigations.

a) Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo Peace Accord of 1975

In 1975, the then military governor of Kwara State Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo in a bid to settle the land dispute between Erin-Ile/Offa set up a committee of chiefs under the chairmanship of the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Sulu Gambari; member of this committee included traditional rulers like; the Orin Oyi of Igbira, Alhaji Muhammadu Sani Omolori, the Etsu of Pategi, MallamIdrisu Gana, the Olupo of Ajase-Ipo Oba Durojaiye Alao, the Olujumu of Ijumu Oba Jacob Owonibi, the Olubunu of Bunu Oba IKusemoro and the Ag. Senior Assistant Secretary to the state government Mr. W. Omoniwa. The committee facilitated peace meeting between both communities and an agreement was reached and signed by representatives from both sides, which put the boundary at a spot known as "KereOjomu". Subsequently, this boundary zone was accused of being vague with no lateral extension either east, west, south or north, the boundary zone was not officially recognized until 1982 when it was published in the government settlement amendment law no 16 of 1982. This decision was later challenged by Erin-Ile community before the High Court of Kwara state.

b) Colonel Peter Ogar Intervention of 1997

In 1997, there was another intervention by then military administrator of Kwara State; this intervention was necessitated by agitation from both sides. Colonel Peter Ogar promulgated the kere-Ipinle Buffer zone order which directed:

1. The creation of a buffer zone between Erin-Ile/Offa towns and declared the name as the Kere-Ipinle buffer zone.
2. The piece of land acquired should be used for industrial and commercial purposes;
3. The description of Erin-Ile/Offa boundaries lines shall be described as Kere-Ipinle buffer zone.

Kere-Ipinle land is described as a piece of land acquired by Kwara State Government for industrial and commercial purposes. It lies both to the north and south of Erin-Ile/Offa boundary and is about 4sq.km in size. The specifications starts from property beacon PBO 768 which is about 45 meters from Erin-Ile/Offa road, on the Erin-Ile side thence is a westerly direction from a distance of about ½ kilometer passing through property beacons 0.769, 0.770, 0.771 and crossing a stream to property beacons 0.772, thence is the same westerly direction for a distance of about 1 ½ passing through beacons 0.774, 0.775, 0.776 and 0.777 to 0.778; thence in a northerly direction for a distance of about 1km passing through beacon 0.785, 0.787, 0.788, 0.789, 0.790, 0.791, 0.792 and cutting a stream to 0.793; thence in the same easterly direction for a distance of about 1km passing through property beacons 0.74, 0.795, 0.796. 0.797 and cutting Erin-Ile/Offa road (on the other side) to beacon 0.798, thence in the same easterly direction for a distance of about 1.5km passing through beacons 0.799, 0.800, 0.802, 0.803, 0.804, and cutting a stream of 0.805 which is about 50m to Erin-Ile/Offa rail line (at Offa end); thence following the rail line towards Erin-Ile for a distance of about 1km and passing through beacons 0.806, 0.807, 0E36, 0.754, 0.755, 0.756 to 0.757 (which is about 40m from Erin-Ile/Offa rail line) at Erin-Ile end; thence in the westerly direction for a distance of about 1/2km cutting a stream and passing through beacons 0.758, 0.759 and 0.760 to 0.761; thence in the same westerly direction beacon 0.762, 0.764, 0.765, 0.766, 0.767 and cutting Erin-Ile /Offa road to 0.768 (the starting point). (Nature Gallery Geography)

c) Dr Bukola Saraki Intervention of 2008

Most of the disputes and conflict of these two communities attracted government attention but because of its sensitive nature and the failure of both parties to reach a consensus, most of the interventions ended in deadlock. In 2008, the Judicial Commission of Inquiry set-up by the Kwara State government under Governor Bukola Saraki to look into the 2006 disturbances came out with some recommendations which includes;

1. The local boundary settlement Edict No9 of 1970 vide Annexure
2. The local boundary settlement (amendment) Edict No 16 of 1975
3. Land use (revocation of customary or statutory right of occupancy) notice No 16 of 1987 vide annexure XXII
4. Kwara State legal notice No 1 and 4 of 1997 vide annexure XXIII and XIV

Government should revisit and implement to the later with immediate effect all existing laws and Edicts enacted in relation to other boundary issues in any part of the state. This is to forestall a reoccurrence of the crisis in Erin-Ile/Offa and elsewhere in the state.

Government should take the following decisive measures concerning the buffer zone;

a) Compensate all owners of existing structures on and within the buffer zone as at the time of declaration in 1997,
b) Exert its presence and authority over the buffer zone by demolishing all said existing structures having compensated its owners,

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c) Reprint and make available to the public all the above legal notices as well as other legislations touching on boundary issues for awareness purpose,
d) The government must make use of the buffer zone for the benefit of the two communities in particular and the state in general,
e) Place Bill-Board in prominent and strategic locations showing Offa and Oyun local government areas after the buffer zone on both sides of the two communities,
f) Reflect the names of the two communities Erin-Ile/Offa in whatever development is to be made in the buffer zone.

The state boundary committee should be further reinforced for effectiveness in order to keep in check on likely boundary problematic areas in the state. The committee should be given adequate and necessary logistics which includes functional vehicles, release of regular monthly allocation, a standing and capable staff ready to move and work in any area or part of the state when the need arises.

Government should deploy well-equipped and adequate security personnel to keep surveillance on the buffer zone from both ends to ensure that the re-established beacons are not removed by unauthorized persons.

Government should sensitize security agencies to be alert to their responsibilities particularly in regard to the surveillance of militia groups who may want to invade the peace and orderliness of the state at unguarded moments for ulterior motives.

While both chairman of the two local governments (Offa and Oyun Local Government respectively) were involved or were accused of contributing to the escalation of the conflict subsequently leading to their suspension, the government made specific direction in 2008 concerning the land in dispute. These include;

1. The parcels of land in the buffer zone measuring 1732.258 hectares be shared equally between the two communities which falls to 859.754 hectares each. The share of Offa should include the 428.218 hectares already developed by Offa community. The ministry of land and housing should handle properly.
2. The shared parcels of land between Erin-Ile/Offa should be properly demarcated with a boundary road to be named Kwara Unity Road that will use up the balance of 12.75 hectares of land arising from the division. The road should be surfaced dressed as a permanent demarcation with other boundary features, example trees on both sides of the road. It should equally be properly surveyed. The ministry of works and transport and housing and environment and tourism should handle it accordingly.
3. The construction of the road should be co-funded or jointly funded by the state and the two affected Local Governments Councils of Offa and Oyun LGA. The contract of the construction of road should be awarded and construction work on same should commence in earnest. The ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, ministry of works and transport should make provisions accordingly.
4. The buffer zone should be effectively manned by security operatives before the commencement of construction works on the boundary and for a minimum of four weeks after completion of construction works to avert any unforeseen circumstances. The special adviser, security should implement this in liaison with the security agents in the state.

However, as history of the peace process has shown that it has been frequently marred by feeling of dissatisfaction and favoritism against the other community. The latest government initiative to settle the long boundary row has been viewed as inadequate and political by some factions of the community particularly by Offa community. Some factions of Offa community known as the "Egbe Offa Messi (EOM)" have condemned the state government of bias in its implementation of the 500 meters buffer zone demarcation between the two communities as well as the construction of a unity Road which it claimed had been done only on Offa portion of the buffer zone contrary to the provisions of the government white paper. While there was a disclaimer by the Local Government Chairman on the claims, there are indications that the buffer zone has not given a final rest to the long disputed boundary conflict between Erin-Ile/Offa.

IV. Recommendations

As human beings co-exist, certainly conflict is inevitable but what is not acceptable in conflict is direct violence which has been manifested in various times of Erin-Ile/Offa communal conflict. The following recommendations are suggested for Erin-Ile/Offa communal conflict and by extension to other communities where boundary conflict and communal conflict are manifesting:

1. The study recommends a workable political arrangement for the peaceful co-existence of the two communities. This arrangement will enable each community to nominate a representation to house of assembly, house of representative and senate. The political arrangement of All Progressive Congress (APC) arrangement can foster peace. The arrangement was that a house of representative aspirate was nominated from Erin-Ile and House of senate from Offa. This is a win-win solution. But the

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people's Democratic Party nominated an Offa man as an aspirate thus put Offa at advantage in the voting pattern. If Offa people votes for senate under APC while vote for House of Representative under PDP. This consequence of this arrangement can snowball into future conflict. But the political gladiators in Offa are going from house to house to educate their people the needs to vote for an Erin-Ile candidate. Whether this arrangement will work, February 16, 2019 will decide. This inclusiveness in political arrangement can foster peace and verity between Erin-Ile and Offa and bring about unity and development.

2. This study calls for security surveillance in the two areas and the security agents notable Nigerian Police and civil Defence should engage in preventive measures rather than curative measure. After all both the Nigerian Police and Civil Defence have commands in the two communities. After the conflicts, most of the weapons used were in the hands of Irate Youth which later resulted into armed robbery cases in the two areas. As at now banks in the two communities operate skeletally between the hours of 9am to 1 pm.
3. The study recommends a regular cultural exchange between the two communities. This will go a long way to heal old wounds and enhance peaceful co-existence. Cultural exchange like Oba courtesy call, Egungun festival, Yam festival, marriages and social events (Erin-Ile Day, Offa Day).This will improve relationship and encourage co-existence.
4. The role of Catholic Church during the conflict is noticeable, but all other churches including Muslim brothers should be involved in joint prayers, honestly much can be achieved if God is invited. The role of Swedish nationals and minority Christians in Sudan brought peace to Mali up till date. The Imams, Alfas, Pastors, even Bishops are needed for a collective prayer session may be once per month or per week for God intervention in the conflict.
5. The study recommends peace education across the communities in Nigeria that are just emerging from conflict and violent. This peace education can be in the form of advocacy, seminars, workshops, film show – showing where violence occurred in a particular place and the implication on development, social interaction, communication and conferences that could be used to build lasting peace.
6. The study found that many people from Erin-Ile/Offa communities lost their loved ones, the destruction of the ancestry homes, the traumatic experiences which were traceable to either the communities or persons. The horrors experienced, the pains they went through, the displacement of family, the divorce that followed the conflict, the burning of properties running into Millions and so on requires forgiveness. Forgiveness is recommended to the two parties and this will ameliorate the pains, sufferings, loss of lives and properties. There is a need for Kwara State Government to set up Truth Commission as it was done in South Africa. Mere saying "I am sorry" can heal an Old wound.
7. The study noted that the political will on the part of Kwara State Government to implement the reports of committees set up to look into the remote and immediate causes of conflict is not there. In all the conflicts confronting Erin-Ile/Offa communities, no one was punished, no one was persecuted. This study therefore recommends that the actors in the conflicts including their sponsors should be fished out and prosecuted. The reason been that, if no one was punished in the previous ones, no one will be punished now, hence the conflict's resurgence and recurrence. If the actors are punished and serve as a deterrent to others, future actors will caution themselves.
8. The study also recommends inclusiveness in peacemaking, peace building and confidence building in Erin-Ile/Offa Conflict. Government should not rely on peace treaties, peace agreement signed and the report of commission of inquiry alone, the parties to the conflict should be involved in the peace process in order to achieve lasting peace in the two communities. This can be done through council of chiefs in the two communities and third parties like Odua People's congress, Yoruba Council of Elders, natural and traditional rulers in entire Yoruba State should be part of that peace process. The enduring peace presently enjoyed by the two communities can snowball into future conflict if this inclusiveness need is not evolved. And lastly, traditional model of conflict transformation should be the best option for this conflict to permanently ceased but most often than not the government ignored this aspect of transformation rather efforts and resources are placed on peace-keeping using security agents which at the end of the day cannot resolve the conflict.

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