

## **INTER-COMMUNAL WAR AND HUMAN SECURITY IN EFFIUM AND EZZA-EFFIUM, EBONYI STATE**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the inter-communal war and human security in Effium and Ezza-Effium, Ebonyi State. Effium and Ezza-Effium has been living in peace decades of years past. The peaceful coexistence between Effium and Ezza-Effium was shattered in 2021 due to inter-communal war that destroyed lives, valuables and properties in the community. On methodology, the study used interview and consulted secondary source of information. Group Theory of Conflict was relevant for this study and was used. Effects of Effium and Ezza-Effium inter-communal war were examined under the following sub-headings: Personal security, political security, community security, economic security, food security and health security. Peace and security measures applied by Ebonyi State Government to stop the war were identified. The study discovered the outcome of the inter-communal war between Effium and Ezza-Effium to include increase in urban migration and over-flocking of neighbouring communities, market for sale of arms and ammunitions, loss of life and properties, shortage of food production, living in fear, abuse of fundamental human rights, distrust and so on. The implication of the outcome of the inter-communal war is that peace, security and sustainable development existing in Effium and Ezza-Effium community had been disintegrated. From the findings, it was recommended that major stakeholders should tackle remote causes of conflict once it is identified to avoid such conflict escalating beyond control, Nigeria Security Agents should intensify action toward stoppage of proliferation of arms and ammunition in the country, and group interest should be handled in such a way that it does not bring harm and suffering to all concerned.

**Keywords:**Peace, Inter-communal war, human security, Effium and Ezza-Effium, Ebonyi State

### **Introduction**

War is an armed conflict that occurs between two or more groups. War has been a significant problem of the world as no generation has ever ended without war. War also can be regarded as an intense armed conflict between tribes, groups, states or nation. Causes of war can be attributable to nationalism, imperialism, political and religious difference, struggle over natural resources, quest for independence and so on. War is beyond mere conflict due to its application of sophisticated weapons to dispel the opponent. War destroys peace existing among the people, truncate security in place and dispel sustainable development especially in the area where the war is taking place. War is characterized by attack, ambush, violent, destruction, killing, abduction, kidnapping and fetish patronage.

Security involves protection against internal and external threats. The focus of this paper is to examine the effect of tampered peaceful co-existence of Effium and Ezza-Effium, their security vis-à-vis sustainable development. The opposite of security is insecurity. Gambo and Adebajo (2021) sees insecurity as human vulnerability to security threat, inadequate protection, state of being unsafe and

state of uncertainty. Insecurity can be caused by political factors, leadership factors, unemployment factors and inability of security agents to control.

### **Meaning of Peace**

Peace has varied meaning depending on the context of usage. Peace is derived from Latin word ‘*pax*’ meaning pact, control or agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people. Peace is linked with development. In Military term peace ordinarily means absence of war. Kin (2008) sees true peace as not only the absence of tension, rather, it encourages presence of justice. Mustapha, Jamshed, Nawaz, Arslan and Ahmad (2023) define peace as the absence of violent conflict and the presence of respect and understanding between people and communities. They added that the advancement of human rights, social justices and sustainable development are all dependent on the pursuit of peace. However, to achieve permanent peace is difficult. Peace can be classified into internal or inner peace and external peace. Internal peace has to do with the tranquility of mind, External peace has to do with the happy and normal co-existence of society or nation.

### **Inter-Communal War**

Inter-communal war existed long ago, even before the coming of colonial masters in Nigeria. At that time, war was used to acquire land mass and to express excess power over one another. In the pre-colonial era, many communities engaged in inter-communal war or feuds among inter-kingdom dynasty. There is no continent, nation or state that is free of this inter-communal war which may be caused as a result of land dispute, chieftaincy or political tussle, boundary cases, victimization or fight against mining of mineral resources. Consequences of inter-communal war ranges from massive loss of lives, destruction of properties, displacement of people, to breakdown of economic activities, etc. In Ebonyi State, there are series of inter/intra-communal war such as war between Igbeagu community in Ebonyi State and Ukelle people in Cross River State, Enyigba Izzi and EnyibuchiriIkwo people, Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo people in Ishielu Local Government Area, Effium and Ezza-Effium in Ohaukwu Local Government Area, Ishinkwo and Abaomege in OnichaIgboeze, Amagulkwo in Ebonyi State and Adadama in Cross River State, Ngbo in Ohaukwu LGA and Agala in Benue State, Okpuitomo in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and Osopong clan in Obubra Local Government of Cross River State, Azuofia-Edda in Abakaliki Local Government Area in Ebonyi State and Ogurude/Ofomana/Ofenakum in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, etc. Worried by the prevalent incidence of communal crisis Nweze and Etamesor (2021) advocated for public relations as the most effective means of communal conflict resolution.

### **Human Security**

Human security according to UNDP (1994) means that people should be able to exercise their choices safely and freely while being relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not lost tomorrow. The seven principles of human security are: economic security, health security, food security, environmental security, community security, political security and personal security. Human security according to Annan (2001), embraces more than the absence of violent conflict and encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choice to fulfil one’s potential. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Report of 1994 stated that the world can never be at peace unless people have security in their lives. Human insecurity is affected by war, flood, drought, plague, famine and enslavement.

## **Co-habitation and Root cause of feud between Effium and Ezza-Effium People**

Effium and Ezza-Effium had been co-habiting peacefully for a long time in history in the days of Eastern Region, Anambra State, Enugu State and down to Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is one of the states in Nigeria created under the military rule led by Major General Sunny Abacha in 1976. The Effium people originally called Uffiom is traced to come from Ukelle Kingdom in Cross River State, Nigeria. Ukelle belong to Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State. Effium community is located in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Ezza-Effium is the Ezza people co-habiting with the Effium people. Ezza-Effium people were warriors who came from Ezza to assist Effium people in war against their rivals - Izzi and Ngbo people. Ezza people in Ebonyi State dominantly has two Local Government Areas – Ezza North and Ezza South. According to Mbah and Nwangwu (2014), Ezza people cut across States such as Enugu, Benue, Kogi and even Cross River States. In years past, Ezza on invitation obliged to assist Effium people dispel their enemies on an agreement that an irrevocable part of Effium land would be given to them if they conquer their enemies. This agreement was entered into at Ngamgbo Amnaberu Ezza Ogbu where ‘ogbu’ tree was planted, signifying everlasting peace between Effium and Ezza-Effium people.

However, this agreement entered into by Effium and Ezza-Effium people was truncated by the Effium motor park leadership tussle of 2021. Before that, there had been misunderstanding of the owner of Effium/Ezza-Effium land. Whereas Effium people claimed that Ezza people encroached on their land, Ezza people claimed that Effium people are intruder in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

## **Effects of Effium and Ezza-Effium Inter Communal War**

The effect of Effium and Ezza-Effium war was examined under the following security sub-headings:

### **Personal Security**

The safety of individuals in war areas is in doubt. War destroyed family bond. This refers to a situation whereby family members are separated, scattered, displaced or lost in the war. Men are killed or arrested, tortured or jailed by security agents. Women and girls are waylaid, raped or sexually harassed by both parties in the war or by security personnels deployed to restore peace in the area. Looting of personal and community properties are carried out openly without resistance.

Akam and Ojen (2020) observed that one of the adverse effect of communal war is that most people have been rendered homeless while effort to return back to their society of ancestry has been ruined.

### **Political Security**

Human rights and freedom are violated during war. The Effium and Ezza-Effium war broke out because of misunderstanding that erupted between two parties during the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Branch election at Effium. Oji, Eme and Nwoba (2014) affirmed that political factor is one of the causes of communal war and that politics interfaces all aspects of social life, justice, basic human rights, citizenship and identity.

### **Community Security**

Culture, norms, values, integrity, tradition and custom are tampered with during war. The Effium and Ezza-Effium tradition and custom such as traditional marriage, new yam festival and other community's cultures were abandoned during the war. A place where communal war took place always witnessed insecurity during and after the war. This insecurity ranges from revenge, missing of

human beings without trace, as well as living in fear day and night. Amalu (2017) discovered that conflict regarding inter-communal relations threatens persistently, the security of people.

### **Economic Security**

Some traders, farmers, apprentice, artisans in Effium and Ezza-Effium, during the war lost their jobs as they fled to other places for safety. This affects the economic activities in the area and economic earnings to Ohaukwu Local government Area, Ebonyi State and Nigeria at large. It creates poverty and low standard of living among Effium and Ezza-Effium people who are refugees in neighbouring towns/villages. The Effium and Ezza-Effium war claimed many lives, displaced many and threatened the entire community of economic activities. Itumo and Nwobashi (2017) observed that communal conflict causes untold hardship to both parties in the conflict and innocent citizens as it disrupts socio-economic activities within the economy and its environs.

### **Food Security**

Effium and Ezza-Effium are known in Ebonyi State as people who engage in agriculture. Different kinds of Agric products prior to the outbreak of the war were sold at Effium markets from where they are being transported to various parts of Nigeria. The war makes those markets inaccessible and unavailability of food as these markets were closed down. Farm land, harvested crops and food reserve or storage in the area were destroyed, shops burnt, livestock abandoned and this increased the problem of food security, scarcity and malnutrition due to the fact that the peasant farmers in the area fled for safety. In Ebonyi State today, prices of food commodities are hyper-inflated and it is attributable to inter-communal wars in the state.

Nwangbo, Ukeje, Njoku and Ololo (2023) discovered that the quest to ensure food security in Ebonyi State, Nigeria has been jeopardized by social conflict and crisis between Effium and Ezza-Effium people which affected food production and local sustainable development.

### **Healthy Security**

During inter-communal war, development of new infrastructure is ceased while existing infrastructure are destroyed and at the end of the war, money is needed to rebuild destroyed infrastructure. The sound of gun alone worsens the health condition of diabetic patients. Health Workers in health centres and hospitals are stressed up due to overcrowding of health centres and hospitals by injured Effium and Ezza-Effium people. Outbreak of war leads to miscarriage in female gender, depression, fear and anxiety.

### **Outcome of Effium and Ezza-Effium Inter Communal War**

The outcome of Effium and Ezza-Effium inter communal war can be summarized as follows:

1. Increase in urban migration.
2. Increased refugees to neighbouring communities.
3. Creation of market for sale of arms and ammunitions.
4. Loss of lives and properties.
5. Shortage of food production.
6. Fear and everlasting hatred.
7. Flagrant abuse of fundamental human rights.
8. Destruction of peace and privileges.
9. Abuse of Agreement sealed with 'ogbu' tree.
10. Distrust.

### **Peace and Security Measures Adopted for Sustainable Development in Effium and Ezza-Effium**

Adum, Odogwu, Umeh and Ezeanyanwu (2019) identified that the key factors that influence the success or failure of communication in resolving crisis in a particular area depends on the techniques or strategies adopted by the communicators. The government of Ebonyi State applied several measures trying to restore peace and sustainable development in Effium and Ezza-Effium by applying the following measures:

1. **Government Invitations**

Ebonyi State Government on several occasions invited stakeholders from both Effium and Ezza-Effium for peace talk in a Peace and Reconciliation meeting where the stakeholders from both sides were charged to embrace peace.

2. **Use of Dialogue**

Ebonyi State Government assured the people of Effium and Ezza-Effium of its determination to use dialogue to restore the lingering Effium and Ezza-Effium inter communal war.

3. **Arrest and rearrest of Stakeholders**

Another measure adopted by Ebonyi State Government during Effium and Ezza-Effium inter communal war was to arrest and rearrest stakeholders in the community to forestall peace, and put fear to those who wish the war should continue.

4. **Signing of Ceasefire Agreement**

The people of Effium and Ezza-Effium communities in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State signed ceasefire agreement before the Peace and Reconciliation Committee led by the Bishop Emeritus of Abakaliki Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Michael Nnachi Okoro in Abakaliki, after several meetings with the Committee and Security Chiefs in the State.

However, Ezza people rejected the White Paper submitted by the Peace and Reconciliation Committee, maintaining that the peace pack infringed on their fundamental human rights. The Ezza-Effium Consultative Assembly alleged that some of her stakeholders were compelled by the State Government to sign the agreement. The argued that the 1999 Nigerian constitution gave them right to live anywhere in the country and that the White Paper tend to deprive them of the rights and privileges in Effium community.

On the contrary, Effium people welcomed the Peace Pact Agreement and urged the Ebonyi State Government to implement the White Paper holistically.

5. **Grant of Amnesty**

Ebonyi State Government promised to grant amnesty and de-radicalize armed fighters involved in Effium and Ezza-Effium inter- communal war.

6. **Appointment of Peace Committee**

Ebonyi State Government on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2024 inaugurated Peace Committee to lay to rest, the persistent reoccurrences of Effium and Ezza-Effium crisis to enable both parties co-exist. Some of the terms of reference of the Peace Committee headed by Amb. Fraklin NchitaOgbueware: to read the White Paper to the warring communities (Effium and Ezza-Effium), to implement the contents of the White Paper, and so on.

## Methodology

The researcher orally interviewed some indigenes of Effium and Ezza-Effium. Other printed materials and Ministry of Boarder and Conflict Resolution were consulted. In order words, the researcher used both primary and secondary source. Content Analysis design was used to analyze the paper.

## Theory

This study is anchored on Group Theory of Conflict. Group Theory of Conflict is propounded by Truman in 1951. The theory believes that each group has interest to protect and that crisis is bound to occur on any breach of group's interest. The assumption of the theory is that our society exists in group and interacts as such. The war that broke out on 21<sup>st</sup>January, 2021 between Effium and Ezza-Effium over park leadership tussle manifested in Group Theory, as each of the group in the park leadership tussle was trying to project interest of its group. This theory is significant because it portrays that group interest in any society has to be recognized and respected. It is based on the above views that Group Theory of Conflict is considered relevant for this study.

## Conclusion

Inter-communal war is an uncontrol provocative approach to conflict that brought harmful and ugly experience to parties involved. Inter-communal war creates permanent enemy and hatred to the warring communities. The inability to control NURTW election crisis in Effium and Ezza-Effium as soon as the leadership tussle erupted led to a full-blown war between Effium and Ezza-Effium community which started in 2021 and ended in 2023.

## Recommendations

1. Major stakeholders in every community should tackle remote causes of conflict immediately it is identified to avoid the conflict escalating into a full-blown war mostly sponsored by external actors.
2. Nigerian Security Agents should intensify action towards stoppage of proliferation of arms and ammunitions including recovering of arms from warring communities.
3. Group interest should be handled in such a way that it does not bring harm and suffering to all concerned.

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