

**An Assessment of Peacebuilding Strategies in Kogi-Anambra Oil Conflict,  
Nigeria, 1991-2021**

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**Abstract**

*Since 1991 there have been violent contestations over access to, control and ownership of the oil rich Kogi-Anambra borderland communities of Ibaji and Aguleri. These wars led to loss of lives of several hundreds of people properties and deepened inter-ethnic hostilities. In prosecuting the wars, ethnic militia groups were mobilized by both communities. For instance, the Ibaji (Kogi) Youth Frontier Force (IYFF) with support from politicians and socio-cultural association like the Ibaji Development Association (IDA) and Ibaji Oil and Gas Committees were established to help fight the Aguleri people. On the other hand, the Aguleri (Anambra) communities formed the Aguleri Solidarity Movement (ASOM) to confront the Ibaji. Despite the precarious nature of the crisis and its debilitating consequences on Peacebuilding, there is a dearth of scholarly contributions noting the peace building strategies adopted by relevant stakeholders. Transcending the resource curse, greed and grievance theories, the researchers draw on the rational choice thesis of political economy, to assess the roles of internal and external actors in Peacebuilding in the Kogi-Anambra borderlands. The study further examined the roles played by actors in the evolution of the oil conflict, peace building strategies adopted by stakeholders. The study adopted primary and secondary sources. Primary sources includes oral interviews with ethnic militia groups, youth leaders and chiefs of communities, Orient's Petroleum executives, ethnographic surveys. While secondary data includes newspaper reports, dailies and published scholarly works. Collected data were qualitatively analysed. Findings reveal that after more than six decades of ethnic wars between Kogi-Anambra borderline communities, in addition to series of fracas at the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, stalled efforts of National Boundary Commission (NBC) at amicably resolving the conflict. However, to reduce the destructive tendencies of the crisis, the Federal Government weighed into the crisis and declared Kogi and Anambra states as part of oil producing states. The declaration ended many years of war and hostilities between the communities. The study recommends prompt government attention in dealing with ethnic wars pertaining to resource conflict; and concludes that resources in itself, does not cause wars, but lack of proper resource governance.*



*There is therefore, the need for proper resource governance and economic diversification.*

**Keywords:** Kogi, Anambra, Oil, Conflict, Peacebuilding

### Introduction

Africa is the continent with the most ethnically divided societies. The number of ethnic groups range from two in countries like Rwanda and Burundi to more than 250 in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the European colonial enterprise created artificial states in Africa by fusing together disparate ethnic groups, it did nothing to create effective state institutions that would mediate the resulting conflict between these divergent groups forced together into fragile political systems.<sup>2</sup> The mobilization of ethnic groups for socio-economic and political gains have triggered conflicts, wars and genocide in Africa.<sup>3</sup> In fact, inter-ethnic struggles have led to the formation of ethnic armies or militia groups in different parts of Africa such as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDvF), Movement for the emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in Nigeria, Lord's Resistance Army and M23 Rebels in Uganda among others with devastating consequences on post-conflict peace building.<sup>4-5</sup> At the roots of most ethnic militia movements in Nigeria is the quest for natural resource control, fear of domination and self-determinism.<sup>6</sup> With over 250 ethnic groups forced together in a disaggregated and dysfunctional federal system, the struggle over land resources and its associated rents and politics in Nigeria in most cases, continue to fuel inter-ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements championed through ethnic militias.<sup>7-8</sup>

A number of studies have demonstrated how democratization and decentralization have intensified conflicts over belongings in West Africa.<sup>9-10</sup> Also, some pieces of literature have shown how resource conflict especially petro-violence in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta have undermined

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<sup>1</sup>Wanjala S. Nasongó ,ed, *The Root of Ethnic Conflict in Africa, From Grievance to Violence*, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Ukeje, C. *Oil and Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta*, Ife: OAU, 2003.

<sup>3</sup>Osaghe, E. E. *Ethnicity and Its Management in Africa: The Democratization Link*. Lagos: Malt House Press Ltd 1994.

<sup>4</sup>Ikelegbe, A. State, ethnic militias and conflict in Nigeria, in Sindjoun, L (ed) *The coming African Hour*, Ibadan: Impact Publishers, 2010.

<sup>5</sup>Danladi, A. &Hembe O. Ethnic Militia and Security In Contemporary Nigeria: A Reflection on Ombatse in Nasarawa State *Police Academy Journal of Humanities and Security Studies*, Kano, 2015.1(1) PP1-16

<sup>6</sup>Ikelegbe A. *the Economy of Conflict in the oil Rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria*, *Nordic Journal of African studies*, 2005.

<sup>7</sup>Agbu O. *Ethnic Militias and the threat to democracy in post-transition Nigeria*, Uppsala, Nordick African Institute, 2004.

<sup>8</sup>Danladi, A. &Hembe O. Ethnic Militia and Security In Contemporary Nigeria: A Reflection on Ombatse in Nasarawa State *Police Academy Journal of Humanities and Security Studies*, Kano, 2015. 1(1) PP1-16

<sup>9</sup>Lloyd, P. *Yoruba Land Law*, Oxford: University Press, 1962.

<sup>10</sup>Carola, L. *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013.

national security and community peace,<sup>11-12</sup> but none has focused on the 'Assessment of the peacebuilding strategies adopted by relevant stakeholders in the Kogi-Anambra oil conflict. A key dimension to Kogi-Anambra land and oil conflict not covered in the literature is colonial distortions of boundaries, state fragility and militia build-ups.<sup>13-14-15</sup> Carola demonstrates how rural populations have secured, contested and negotiated access to land and how they have organized and stabilized their communities while on the move as mobile farmers or labour migrants.<sup>16</sup> Missing in Carola's study is how actions on colonial boundaries, colonial rule through chiefs and post-colonial land politics affects autochthonous communities access to resources, social relations and political rights especially in oil-rich borderlands like in the Kogi-Anambra areas. That conflict over land rights invariably entails disputes about customs but also about ability of state institutions to arbitrate such has been discussed by Michael Lund.<sup>17</sup>

Though land and oil do not cause wars; people make wars over interests on land and oil. In fact, "while it is easy to think that people hold interests in land, anthropologists hold that interest are, in reality held against other people and not on land as such"<sup>18</sup> Since the mid-1990s, particularly after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and return of democracy in Nigeria, there has been a surge of ethnic militia groups, established and funded by local communities, influential politicians as a means of contesting for access to, control and claims to ownership. Enlistment into militia groups have been driven by fear of extinction, domination, poverty, nationalism and protection.<sup>19-</sup>  
<sup>20</sup> Post-conflict peace building is the systematic design and implementation, by state or non-state actors, of strategies and programmes that ensure the restoration of positive peace after the end of conflict.<sup>21</sup> However, studies have shown that post conflict peace building strategies tend to fail due to several

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<sup>11</sup>Omeje K. *High Stakes and Stakeholders: Oil Conflicts and Security in Nigeria*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2006.

<sup>12</sup>Ibeanu O. & Luckham R. *Niger Delta: Political Violence, Governance and Corporate Responsibility in a Petro-State*, Abuja: Center for Democracy and Development, 2006.

<sup>13</sup>Paul John Anambra/Kogi oil wells-Ownership Still Unresolved, *Leadership Newspaper*, Nigeria, September, 06 2012.

<sup>14</sup>Mayorof (2014), Middle Belt, Not Anambra Owns Ibaji Oil Wells, Daily Independent Newspaper, <https://dailyindependentnig.com/2012/10/middle-belt-not-anambra-owns-ibaji-oil-wells> August 05

<sup>15</sup>Galaticus O. Kogi-Anambra Oil Dispute: Emerging Facts on Ibaji Oil Well Crisis, <https://kogireports.com> Nov. 14, 2016, 11:12 am

<sup>16</sup>Carola, L. *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013.

<sup>17</sup>Lund, Christian. *Land rights and Citizenship in Africa*, Discussion Paper 65, Uppsala: Nordic Africa, 2011.

<sup>18</sup>Lloyd, P., *Yoruba Land Law*, Oxford: University Press, 1962.

<sup>19</sup>Agbu O. *Ethnic Militias and the threat to democracy in post-transition Nigeria*, Uppsala, Nordick African Institute, 2004.

<sup>20</sup>Danladi, A. & Hembé O. Ethnic Militia and Security in Contemporary Nigeria: A Reflection on Ombatse in Nasarawa State *Police Academy Journal of Humanities and Security Studies*, Kano, 2015. 1(1) Pp1-16

<sup>21</sup>Lederach, J. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.

factors such as economic gains from wars, absence of international support, inconsistencies in policies, presence of conflict entrepreneurs or spoilers and elite manipulations.<sup>22-23</sup>

Scholars like Collier and Hoeffler,<sup>24</sup> Ibeanu & Luckham,<sup>25</sup> and Omeje<sup>26</sup> Obi & Rustad,<sup>27</sup> for instance, have argued that the incidence of primary export commodity especially mineral wealth in states have been responsible for conflict and the occurrence and long duration of civil war. The scholars all argue that acute struggle over the control of mineral resources increases vulnerability to conflict, violence and war such as in Nigeria. Greed for economic gains or what is termed economics of war is the primary drive or motivation for resistance and war. It accounts for why militancy, rebellion and violence have become formidable instrument deployed (by militant, rebel, gang or criminal gang leaders) to accumulate or create opportunities for economic gains or profits in illegal trade in primary commodities or minerals.

The availability of oil in the Kogi-Anambra borderlands of Nigeria have thrown the communities into theatre of wars, leading to wanton destruction of lives and properties; with the communities having their militia youth wings that specializes in employing destructive weapons against their perceived enemies. The fear of the people is that without the militia groups, they would be left unprotected and vulnerable to attacks by the other group.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, as bad as the militias have turned out to be, they are considered a necessity for the survival of the people. To the people, "a bad child has his own day"<sup>29</sup> and "it is because of a mad man outside that you need a mad man in your house."<sup>30</sup> This mutual distrust and suspicion reflected in the above rationalizations raise some questions which have direct implications for post-conflict peace building.

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<sup>22</sup>Stedman. S. J. Spoiler problems in peace processes, *International Security*, 1997, 22(2)

<sup>23</sup>Andres Du Toit 'Social Exclusion' Discourse and Chronic Poverty: A South African Case Study. *Development and Change*. 2004, Vol. 35, Issue 5. P.987-1010.

<sup>24</sup>Collier, P. & Hoeffler, A. *Greed and Grievances in Civil War*. Washington D.C: World Bank Research Group, 1998.

<sup>25</sup>Ibeanu O. & Luckham R. *Niger Delta: Political Violence, Governance and Corporate Responsibility in a Petro-State*, Abuja: Center for Democracy and Development, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>Omeje K. *High Stakes and Stakeholders: Oil Conflicts and Security in Nigeria*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2006.

<sup>27</sup>Obi C. & Siri Aas Rustad (eds). *Oil Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complexities of Petro-Violence*. Uppsala: Nordic African Institute/ London: ZED, 2011.

<sup>28</sup>Personal Communications, at Aguleri, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> This quotation from people interviewed during preliminary field work is from an Igala adage that says "omaekpabiecheeneojoeyenwu" meaning that one day, a child considered bad will have some usefulness.

<sup>30</sup> This is a direct quotation from Igala adage expressed by many people interviewed in both Kogi and Anambra communities. The madman here means a trouble maker. It means that only a troublesome guy inside will defend the house against another trouble coming from outside.

The continuous mayhem the communities employ against one another therefore, leaves the government and other relevant stakeholders with no option, but to set up structures for conflict management and Peacebuilding; however, there is a paucity of empirical studies detailing the tangential contributions of stakeholders in Peacebuilding processes in Kogi-Anambra Oil Conflict. It is against this background that this paper examines 'An Assessment of the Peacebuilding Strategies in the Kogi-Anambra borderlands Oil Conflicts, from 2012-2021. The specific objectives of the study are to examine (i) the evolution Kogi-Anambra land related oil conflict(ii) The nature and assessment of peace building strategies in the Kogi-Anambra area oil conflict; and (iii) recommendations

**Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Clarification:** Transcending the resource curse, greed and grievance theories, the researcher draw on the rational choice thesis of political economy, which argues that individuals make decisions based on rational calculations and that these decisions are driven by self-interest. In a simpler term, the core idea is that individuals are utility maximizers who weigh the costs and benefits of different options and choose the one that captures their personal interests and wellbeing.<sup>31-32-33</sup> The author draws insights into the politics of natural resource governance and contestations to analyse the interests of existing internal and external actors and their diverse roles, power relations, and the underlying vested interests that influence the nature of peace building in the Kogi-Anambra borderland communities. Through this approach, this study expands our understanding of the nexus between resources, power play between political and powerful elites, community chiefs and leaders, whose influences through the years determined the evolution of the oil conflict. It also analyses how issues of ethnic identities rooted in legacies of colonial rule have enervated the protracted oil related land. Galaticus argues that the genesis of the Kogi-Anambra conflict can be located in the colonial boundary adjustment in Nigeria by the British colonial authorities, which led to the arbitrary division of the oil bearing communities into Northern and Southern protectorates.<sup>34</sup> Other issues at the centre of this conflict include land disputes and the barrage of contradictory judicial pronouncements between autochthonous communities.<sup>35-36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Arrow, Kenneth J. Social Choice and Individual Values. Yale University Press, 2012. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nqb90>.

<sup>32</sup>Riker, W. H. Fourteen years of scientific explanation. American Political Science Review, 65(4), 997-1008. Chicago Press, 1971.

<sup>33</sup>Shepsle, K. A. Rational Choice theory: Career of Concept. In J. F. Padget (Ed), Pragmatic Capitalism: What every global capitalist need to know (pp. 39-65). University of Chicago Press, 2001.

<sup>34</sup>Galaticus O. Kogi-Anambra Oil Dispute: Emerging Facts on Ibaji Oil Well Crisis, <https://kogireports.com> Nov. 14, 2016, 11:12 am

<sup>35</sup>Usman A. Bello. Fight over oil: Ibaji community count losses, 2013 Daily Trust Newspaper, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/fight-over-oil-ibaji-community-count-losses.html>

<sup>36</sup>AgbrokoRuona Nigeria: three states claim new oil field, Financial Times, available at <https://amp.ft.com>, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

**Conflict:** Conflict maybe defined as the incompatibility of interests, goals, values, needs and expectations, and/or social cosmologies (or ideologies). Ideological conflicts especially have a tendency to become malicious.<sup>37</sup> According to McEnery<sup>38</sup> he defined conflict as “the interaction or any two or three value systems”, he went further to state that conflict is either malignant or benign depending on whether the particular interaction of the value systems tends to destructive disruptive or creative progress. In all of these discussions of what conflict is, and what it is not, the most apt definition for this study is the one by Coser<sup>39</sup> in which he defined social conflict as a “struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opposition is to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals”. The definition by Coser is most apt because, it best describes the crisis in the Kogi-Anambra borderland areas, where the people are out to totally eliminate their rivals, in order to fully lay claims to the Oil deposits in the land.

**Resource Conflict:** This can be regarded as disagreements and disputes over access to, and control and use of natural resources. These conflicts can emerge because people have different uses for resources, such as forests, water, pastures and lands, or want to manage them in different ways. Disagreements also arises when these interests and needs are not considered in policies, programmes and projects. Such conflicts of interests are an inevitable features of all human societies.<sup>40</sup> Like it has been mentioned, inability to adequate manage natural resources such as minerals, hydrocarbons, water, land, etc; could lead to brutal genocide or even civil wars, as seen in Kogi-Anambra borderlands, the battle has been over access to, ownership and control of the oil rich portions of the lands across the border. This fight and contestation over these natural resources is in this paper regarded as resource conflict.

**Peacebuilding:** Peacebuilding is a highly contested concept, with definitions ranging from “negative peace”, or absence of war, to the expensive positive peace”, which encapsulates the need to redress root causes and deliver social and political goods, including justice, equity and reconciliation.<sup>41-42</sup> In Kogi-Anambra, the study will focus on post conflict peace building and defined as the actions taken by Nigerian government and all critical stakeholders to institutionalize peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict (‘negative peace’) and a modicum of participatory politics as a component of positive

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<sup>37</sup> Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Doubleday & Company, New York, 1996.

<sup>38</sup> McEnery, J.H. “Towards a Concept of Conflict Evaluation”, *Conflict: All Welfare Short of War*. Vol.6, No. 1. New York: Crane, Russak, 1985.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis A. Coser. *The Functions of Social Conflict*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, 1956.

<sup>40</sup> McNeish, John-Andrew, and Jon HaraldSande Lie. ‘Security and Development. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berghahn Books, 2006. <https://www.perlego.com/book/540861/security-and-development-pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Romita, Paul. “The UN Security Council and Conflict Prevention: A Primer.” *International Peace Institute*, 2011. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09518>.

<sup>42</sup> International Peace Institute ‘Conflict Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect: Task Forces on Strengthening Multilateral Security Capacity, No.7. 2009.

peace and can be sustained in the absence of national peace operations, which requires that the territories of warring parties be occupied, until relative peace is achieved.

**Research Methodology:** Data for this study will be collected in eight (8) communities in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State and Aguleri East Local Government of Anambra State representing four (4) communities in each state. The study will combine historical, descriptive and analytical methods of data collection and analysis. Also, primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study. Primary data will be generated through interviews and open ended questionnaires. Secondary data will be sourced from relevant journals, published books, magazines, newspapers, archival materials, declassified security reports, unpublished thesis, dissertations and internet materials.

In terms of procedures of data collection based on in-depth interviews and FGDs, five categories of people are targeted as respondents, namely; (a) Leaders of militia groups from both Anambra and Kogi states, (b) members of the public including traditional rulers, beaded chiefs, clan heads, women leaders, elderly and the youth.(c) Government officials, for instance, the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation(NNPC) (d) Security Operatives in the area such as the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), Nigeria Army and; (e) Civil Society Organization and Multinational Oil Company. Collected data would be critically scrutinized and analysed qualitatively.

**Scope of Study:** Oil-bearing communities inhabiting the border areas between two states of Kogi and Anambra constitute the geographical scope of this study. As mentioned earlier, eight (8) communities shall be selected (that is, four communities (4) in each state). In Kogi state, the central focus will be all the oil-bearing communities in Ibaji Local Government Area including Odeke, Echeno, Ihile and Ujeh. In Anambra state, the following oil-bearing villages would be covered: EziAguluOtu, Enugu Otu, Onueke and Ogbuoka, in Anambra East and West Local Government Areas. In terms of periodization, this study would cover the year 1992 when the conflict started while the terminal date is 2021, when the issues were amicably settled by the Buhari led government, bringing the two states to the status of oil producing states in Nigeria.

#### **Evolution of the Kogi-Anambra Oil Conflict**

The history of ethnic militias in this region dates back to 1991. In 1991, when a brutal war broke out between Ibaji (Kogi) and Aguleri (Anambra) communities still over issues related to claims over ownership of oil-rich portion of land containing two oil wells and fishponds( Usman, 2013, Vanguard 2014). For instance, the Ibaji (Kogi) Youth Frontier Force (IYFF) with support from politicians and socio-cultural association like the Ibaji Development Association (IDA) and Ibaji Oil and Gas Committees were established to help fight the Aguleri people.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the Aguleri (Anambra) communities

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<sup>43</sup>AgberokoRuona. Nigeria: three states claim new oil field, Financial Times, available at <https://amp.ft.com>, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

formed the Aguleri Solidarity Movement (ASOM) to confront the Ibaji. ASOM and IYFF members cut across the youth and elderly and they continue to violently champion the movement for the restoration and reclamation of the disputed land. Both militia groups received huge material and financial supports from diverse sources, which are illegally used to buy arms and ammunitions.<sup>44</sup>

Tension was further heightened when the then President GoodluckEbele Jonathan on the 30th August, 2012 commissioned a refinery built by Orient Petroleum at AguleriOut in Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State. Indeed, while the commissioning was taking place, youth groups across Kogi borders with Enugu and Anambra, where the disputed oil wells were located, were mobilizing their members for a meeting on the matter. According to *Onu* (King) of Odeke, "What I can refer to as presidential endorsement, ceding our land to Anambra state, has further heightened tension in Odeke and some parts of Ibaji land where Orient Petroleum Resources Plc. are prospecting crude oil. I have prevailed on the youths to be patient in the past, but I do not know how far I can rein them now with this pronouncement", Chief Dominic Uname, the *Onu* of Odeke, 31st August, 2012.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the tension, that suggest negative peace among the borderland communities, the Federal Government commenced oil exploration through the indigenous oil company known as Orient Petroleum Resources Plc. (Paul 2012). It was hoped that oil exploration will increase government revenues and promote rapid socio-economic development and security of the oil bearing communities. Sadly, due to issues bothering on ownership, and the activities of the ethnic militia groups, the oil bearing communities have become, mainly, a theatre of war and a cauldron of poverty; while the tension yet lingered, Orient's petroleum was given license to operate two oil fields known as Oil Prospecting Licenses (OPL) 915 and 916.<sup>46</sup> These two oil fields have an estimated reserve of over one billion barrels of oil and thirty (30) trillion cubic feet of Gas and output of 55,000 barrels per day.<sup>47</sup> The search for oil in this region began during British colonial rule over six decades ago.<sup>48</sup> Though oil was discovered in commercial quantity, exploration started sparingly in the year

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<sup>44</sup> Usman A. Bello. Fight over oil: Ibaji community count losses, Daily Trust Newspaper, 18 May, 2013. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/fight-over-oil-ibaji-community-count-losses.html>

<sup>45</sup> Ahmed Tahir & Usman A. Bello 'Controversy Trails Anambra Oil Producing State Status-We Own Oil Wells, Kogi Say'. Daily Trust, 1 September, 2012. Available at <http://dailytrust.com/controversy-trails-anambra-oil-producing-state-status-we-own-oil-wells-kogi-says/>

<sup>46</sup> Galaticus O. Kogi-Anambra Oil Dispute: Emerging Facts on Ibaji Oil Well Crisis, <https://kogireports.com> Nov. 14, 2016, 11:12 am

<sup>47</sup> Paul John. Anambra/Kogi oil wells-Ownership Still Unresolved, *Leadership Newspaper*, Nigeria, September, 06 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Usman A. Bello. Fight over oil: Ibaji community count losses, Daily Trust Newspaper, 18 May, 2013. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/fight-over-oil-ibaji-community-count-losses.html>



2012, due to conflict over ownership, boundary and barrage of conflicting judicial litigations.<sup>49</sup>

Research revealed that several wells were discovered in an area referred to as Anambra Basin, which includes the expanse of land accommodating the present Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi State. The place has a river at its boundary with part of Anambra North-West and Enugu State. The four oil wells, according to Orient Petroleum in 2012, were said to be at the exploration stage, and further noting that the bulk of the deposit are in Anambra state, Committee on Oil and Gas Exploration in Ibaji land contended that the area the company is referring to as part of Anambra, is indeed Kogi state. In the words of the Orient Petroleum chairman, Emeka Anyaoku, in the ceremony kick-starting his company's oil refinery operations in Anambra state on the 31st August, 2012, noted that the controversy over ownership of the oil deposits has been resolved and that the 'bulk' of the deposits are within Anambra territory. He however, added that any state where oil was found and drilled by Orient's Petroleum would be accorded due recognition. The Chief Executive of Orient's Petroleum further averred that there was a misconception that the oil well was not entirely in Anambra, that, according to him has been resolved through the map of Nigeria. Let me quickly state that the two oil blocks encompassed parts of Enugu, Kogi and Delta and Edo states, but bulk of it, is in Anambra state; in addition to the private shareholders, other bodies that have shares in the company include Anambra, Rivers, Kogi and the 21 local government areas of the state.<sup>50-51</sup>

However, in a swift reaction, the Enugu state commissioner for Information, Chuks Ugwoke refuted claims by the Management of Orient Petroleum (OPR) that the lingering contention between it and the company over some oil wells located in the state, has been resolved. Although, the state government will continue to encourage Orient Petroleum Resources Plc. This was also inclusive of other private sectors investing in the state and elsewhere in the country, it has become necessary to correct the wrong impression created by the Managing Director of the company that the lingering issues between it and the government had been resolved. Aside the fact that the states, Kogi and Anambra are up against themselves with arms, the disputes also revolves around the continued refusal of the company to acknowledge that it has oil wells in Enugu state, and not in Anambra state alone, and the need to reflect the existence of oil wells in the three communities in its communications and instruments.<sup>52</sup>

In an opposing contention also, Engineer Daniel Omotola, the Oil and Gas Committee Chairman in Ibaji had accused Orient Petroleum of merely trying to re-draw the boundary between the affected states by alleging that two of the oil

<sup>49</sup>AgbrokoRuona. Nigeria: three states claim new oil field, Financial Times, available at <https://amp.ft.com>, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

<sup>50</sup>Personal Communications with Ibaji and Aguleri community leaders, 2021.

<sup>51</sup>Ahmed Tahir & Usman A. Bello. 'Controversy Trails Anambra Oil Producing State Status- We Own Oil Wells, Kogi Say'. Daily Trust, 1 September, 2012. Available at <http://dailytrust.com/controversy-trails-anambra-oil-producing-state-status-we-own-oil-wells-kogi-says/>

<sup>52</sup>Bello & Tahir, 2012.

wells are in Anambra and Enugu states. According to Daniel, “On our visit to these oil wells, it was discovered that the location one (1) purported to be in Anambra state is traditionally owned by Odeke community in Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi state. It should also be noted that Anambra River (which is also known as Imabolo River in Igalaland) takes its course from Ankpa in Kogi state and run through Igalaland before running into River Niger in Onono.<sup>53-54</sup>

Attention was further drawn to the communique issued jointly “by His Royal Majesty, the Attah Igala, Late Alhaji Dr. Aliyu O. Obaje, the Eze of Aguleri, Ezelgwe Chukwudi Madukai, the Igwe of Ogurugu, Igwe Chukwuemeka Ogbasi in respect of the Obale/Aguleri crisis on 13th April 1994, at the Atta Igala’s Palace, Idah, which the Eze of Aguleri categorically admitted that the areas in dispute is Atta Igala’s territory. Paragraph five (5) of the communique, it said, further that “the Forest Reserve which is one of the areas that were then in dispute is shared amongst Obale, Igah, Ojoh, Ogurugu and Odeke. No mention is made of any community belonging to Anambra State”.<sup>55-56</sup> This view obviously contradicts the stand of the Orient Petroleum Management, and also continue to fuel the pathological bitterness and anger the neighbours have against themselves.

In the midst of the chaos that continue to lead to massive loss of lives and threaten social harmony and peaceful engineering, the then Kogi state Governor in a meeting held at his office in Lokoja noted that “the state government is doing everything humanly possible to resolve issues surrounding the location of the oil wells with the contending states”. It was gathered that Orient had obtained license for blocks it referred to as OPLs 915 and 916, which includes a “small portion of Kogi state,” in a letter to the former Governor of the State, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris dated August 8, 2011, the company intimated the state of its intention to commence the production testing of already drilled wells and acquisition of about 640 square kilometres of high resolution 3D seismic data in its oil blocks within the period. It further urged the government to “Kindly inform the local government authorities and the communities at the border of Anambra and Kogi States that as stakeholders, they are expected to establish and maintain warm and cordial relationship with the seismic surveyor contractor throughout the survey” the company also requested for large expanse of land from the state government where it will establish a depot that will serve the northern part of the country, the state government has since allocated the land for the proposed depot in Lokoja, the Kogi state capital.<sup>57</sup>

Oral accounts from both communities reveal arguments and counter-arguments laying claims to the oil rich field. The parties, Kogi-Anambra borderland communities of Odeke and Aguleri communities respectively, claim that they are the exclusive owners of the disputed lands, containing the oil deposit. This led to ferocious disputes, leading to the establishment of community militia groups as a means for defence and offence. This distrust led to massive loss of

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<sup>53</sup>Oral Interviews at Ibaji, 2019.

<sup>54</sup>Bello & Tahir, 2012.

<sup>55</sup>Oral interviews, 2021.

<sup>56</sup>Bello & Tahir, 2012.

<sup>57</sup>Bello & Tahir, 2012.

lives and properties. Second, the management team of the oil exploration company that is involved in oil drilling in the area are from Anambra state, and this led to the wrong belief that the land and the oil therein belong exclusively to the Anambra state; (iii) Another cause of the claim is that Anambra state has invested 4 billion Naira into the exploration of the Ibaji oil; not knowing that it was Orient Petroleum, a private company contracted by the Federal Government that has been involved. This does not in any way bestow the legal right of ownership of the Oil wells in Ibaji to Anambra state; Fourthly, another cause of the crisis was Orient Petroleum inability to clearly state the *modules operandi* through which they operate; and also noting the areas that they were meant to cover and why. The crisis also left cataclysmic effect on Orient Oil as several of their expatriates were kidnapped and even killed. This has been mentioned above.<sup>58</sup>

In another oral account, a former chairman of the Ibaji Local Government Area, reported that "During the exploration activities, which includes other things like cutting of trees, shot hole drilling and exploration wells.... Compensations were paid to the people of Odeke, Echonohile in Ibaji local government area of Kogi State for damages caused on their land, economic trees, fish ponds and shrines in the areas. This is a mark of ownership of the land and we must do everything possible to reclaim our land from Anambra people".<sup>59</sup>In another development, *Indigbo* representing the views of the position of Aguleri was quoted by in a press conference report in which he stated that "the disputed land is clearly identified in the map of Nigeria as Eastern Forest Reserve in an old Anambra state which is currently in the present Anambra state (it) belong (s) to our people... both Igga and Ibaji communities of Enugu and Kogi has (sic) in the past instituted litigations against us over the disputed forest and each lost in the case... we were declared winner that shows the forest belongs to Anambra state... we are people of justice and cannot allow anybody to trespass our land or claim our inheritance without fighting back".<sup>60</sup>

In addition, the Surveyor general of Kogi state, Abolarin Michael Biodun, says the contention over the ownership of the oil wells along the Kogi-Anambra boundary is largely due to political interference and the failure of the National Boundary Commission to adopt the right procedures to determine the boundary between both states.... The problem is that Anambra wanted to define what is below the surface of the surface and claim it to be boundary. Anywhere oil is around the corridor of Aguleri they claim it is their land whereas oil is like a flow of river, you cannot say the river flows in one particular place within your corridor. That has been a major contention between Kogi and Anambra.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Oral Interviews, 2019.

<sup>59</sup>Adum. N. A. et' al 'Communication and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Aguleri-Kogi Feud over Ownership of the Crude Oil Finds. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*. Vol.56. 2019.

<sup>60</sup>Adum. N. A. et' al, 2019.

<sup>61</sup>Blueprint 'Politicians behind Kogi, Anambra oil well conflict-Survey-General', Blueprint Publications, December 22, 2020. Available at <https://blueprint.ng/politicians-behind-kogi-anambra-oil-well-conflict-surveyor-general/>

The National Boundary Commission (NBC) has insisted that they will use the legal instrument of 1954 as the instrument by which they would delimit the boundary between Kogi and Anambra state. The legal instrument of 1954 was the boundary delineation done by the colonial government. But we have objected to that because a ground-to-paper approach would have been the best approach. The result of the ethnographic data collected in 2017 would have been the best because even NBC has agreed that the legal instrument of 1954 is flawed with a lot of irregularities. We have appealed against it. However, the major contention of the NBC is that they cannot be using the legal instrument of 1954 from Cross River coming North only to jettison it when it gets to Kogi and start with the legal notice of 1936.<sup>62</sup>

In talking about the difference between the legal notice of 1936 and the legal instrument of 1954; the major differences are basically the tripartite points. For example, the legal notice of 1936 ceded Odeke and Lakitolu to Kogi state, but if you know Odeke very well, Lakitolu is just beside Odeke and the Odeke people have been the one exercising the authority over Lakitolu and everyone knows that it is their fishing lake, they fish there. It is Odeke pond, but the legal notice of 1954 unfortunately ceded Itolo to Anambra state and that is the contention. It is contentious because, the distance between them is insignificant and, in fact, Odeke has even encircled Lekitolu itself. It would therefore mean that if you cede Itolo to Anambra state, part of Odeke will be in Anambra state, yet the people have one king, one chief, one house of assembly, have one local government council chairman, I mean the Ibaji Local Government Area of Kogi state. That is the contention and the reason the ownership of the oil found there has remained unresolved.<sup>63</sup>

The clear way to deal with the conflict of interest, is to adopt and work with the ground-to-paper approach. Let the authorities conduct the ethnographic survey, yes interview the indigenous people of the area whereby the people will be called upon to point out the natural and physical features of the boundary lines between them. Ordinarily, were the government not involved with the issue, especially the elites and politicians, were not for politics with the issue, the indigenous people around the area do not have problems with each other, they share same source of water, socialize easily and readily, cross over to celebrate marriages and unreservedly intermarry without hesitation. So basically, the reason why there is conflict over ownership is both elitist and political. Had the elites and politicians not showed undue interests as well as brought in political interpretations to simple boundary issue between ordinary people who normally go about their business without giving consideration to political prance, there would not have been any contention in the first place.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Nature of Peacebuilding Strategies adopted in the Management of Kogi-Anambra Oil Conflict**

In this section, we will take a swift look at the nature of Peacebuilding mechanisms employed by Kogi and Anambra states, as well as the interventions

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<sup>62</sup>Blueprint 2020.

<sup>63</sup>Blueprint, 2022.

<sup>64</sup>Blueprint, 2022.

of the members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Peacebuilding. It was observed that both communities employed armed conflict, through the mobilization of ethnic militia. The fear is that although employing ethnic militia was wrong as noted by respondents for this study selected from the communities, however, without establishing and financially mobilizing the ethnic militia, they stand the risk of losing everything; their peace and security will never be guaranteed, as the community they are at loggerheads with have also employed the ethnic militia mechanism; there were also the interventions of the Senate and the House of Representatives which were confrontational mostly ended counter-productively; also, there was also the failed statutory interventions of National Boundary Commission (NBS), which was not yielding the desired outcome; the last stage of the peace building mechanisms that eventually established relative peace was the intervention of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2021 among others.

**Armed Conflict, Ethnic Militias and Confrontations:** Both communities in the borderland, Odeke and Aguleri relied heavily on both physical and armed confrontation in dealing with the issues, with no one willing to bend or reach a compromise. The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Boundary Commission (NBC) set up a buffer zone and militarized the area to forestall further violent conflicts among the feuding communities;<sup>65</sup> even Kogi and Anambra state governments did set up several high level joint panels and commissions of enquiry leading to recommendations of several post-conflict peace building strategies.<sup>66</sup> Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes were undertaken by government for the militants. But, in spite of these government approaches to peace building, there still exist deep-seated mutual mistrust, contestations, divisions and violent conflicts among the Anambra-Kogi oil-bearing communities.<sup>67</sup> Violent ethnic youth militant groups with sophisticated weapons emerged as major instruments in the agitation for the reclamation of the contested land along with oil wells (Usman 2013). In May 2013 for instance, 40 people were killed and over twenty thousand people displaced and property worth billions of Naira destroyed (Usman, 2013). Between 2012 and 2016, over one thousand three hundred people were reportedly killed and ten thousand displaced in both Kogi-Anambra border communities in conflicts led by ethnic militia groups.<sup>68</sup>

In fact, in August 2015, three(3) oil workers were beheaded while cars, houses and oil installations were destroyed by militia groups (The Citizen, 20 August, 2015) but, despite the notoriety of these militia groups, members of these

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<sup>65</sup>Paul John. 'Anambra/Kogi oil wells-Ownership Still Unresolved', *Leadership Newspaper*, Nigeria, September, 06 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Usman A. Bello. Fight over oil: Ibaji community count losses, *Daily Trust Newspaper*, 18 May, 2013. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/fight-over-oil-ibaji-community-count-losses.html>

<sup>67</sup>Galaticus O. Kogi-Anambra Oil Dispute: Emerging Facts on Ibaji Oil Well Crisis, <https://kogireports.com> Nov. 14, 2016, 11:12 am

<sup>68</sup>Idoko Jimmy. Kogi State Lay Claim to Anambra's Oil Well: the Battle Begins, <https://todaysgist.blogspot.com/2012/08/kogi-state-lays-claim-to-anambra-oil.html> August, 31 2012.

communities still prefer to have them around. Previous attempts at demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of militants have failed (Usman 2013; The Citizen 2013). Strangely, both Ibaji Youth Frontier Force (IYFF) and Aguleri Solidarity Movement (ASOM) and other rural based militant groups continue to increase in size and lethality (Emmanuel 2018, Personal Interview 2018). During elections, these militant groups are used and manipulated by politicians to intimidate opponents. They have been implicated in kidnapping and armed robbery in these communities (Usman 2013; Galaticus 2016). Guns, bombs, bows and arrows and charms are used by these militia groups to unleash mayhem on the people.<sup>69</sup>

The mobilizations of militia groups as a peace building mechanism in these oil bearing communities continue to undermine peaceful inter-ethnic relations and sustainable post-conflict peace building. The brutal confrontational measures adopted by both communities in resolving their differences did not end in the streets and creeks, law makers also took turns in hitting themselves on the issue, in a bid to claim ownership to the oil rich region. A clear example of the pathological hatred that exist between the communities was seen on the floor of the Nigerian legislative chambers of the Federal House of Representatives and the Senate. <sup>70</sup>From the above illustrations, we can establish that the confrontational means of the peace building strategies adopted by both communities, in which they both employed ethnic militias was mutually destructive.

**National Boundary Commission (NBS) Failures and the Federal Government of Nigeria Intervention of 2021:** It was recorded that previous efforts by the National Boundary Commission (NBC) to carry out its statutory functions of demarcating boundary lines between contesting states were repeatedly frustrated by politicians and states with vested interests, who would rather want the contentions than allow it to be technically and professionally resolved. Following the futile efforts by the National Boundary Commission (NBS) and various Senate and the House of Representatives Committees, due to lack of cooperation from the states and parties involved, the federal Government through the Office of Vice President Yemi Osinbajo decided to put final end to the blood thirsty conflict.

The Federal directly mandated the Chairman of the National Boundary Commission Board, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, to as a matter of national priority; engage all stakeholders from the contending states with a view to halting further crisis and in the interest of national security and peace, unity and social economic stability. It was further relayed that any failure to cooperate and ensure the NBC has unhindered access to appraise boundary lines and demarcate them based on statutory instruction for doing so, would be met with severe response from the federal government. It was further stated

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<sup>69</sup>Usman A. Bello. Fight over oil: Ibaji community count losses, Daily Trust Newspaper, 18 May, 2013. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/fight-over-oil-ibaji-community-count-losses.html>

<sup>70</sup>Adum. N. A. et' al' Communication and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Aguleri-Kogi Feud over Ownership of the Crude Oil Finds. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*. Vol.56. 2019

that the federal government would no longer tolerate unnecessary and politically motivated resort to resource location-litigation from any state, non-governmental organization or individual which could stall the NBC's efforts to demarcate boundaries and ensure cordial relationships between borders across the country.<sup>71</sup>

After series of closed door meetings with parties and stakeholders in the conflict, the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) had in a letter signed by its secretary, M. B. Shehu, and dated August 24, 2021, with reference RMC/O&G/48/VOL/1/55 addressed to Anambra state Governor, Willie Obiano, conveyed the approval of the attribution of eleven (11) oil wells wholly to the state. In the letter, RMAFC also approved the attribution of Anambra River one, two, and three oil wells to be shared on fifty percent basis between Anambra and Kogi pending the final delineation of boundaries between the two states.

I wish to refer to your letter dated 24th March 2021 on the above subject and to inform you that the commission at its 139<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session held on 27th July 2021 approved the attribution of the following oil wells to Anambra state: "Nzam-1 oil well, Alo-1 oil well, Ogbu-1 oil well, Ameshi 1, 2, 3 and 4 oil wells, Enyie 1, 2, 3, and 4 oil wells", the letter read. Furthermore, the Commission also approved the attribution of Anambra River 1, 2 and 3 oil wells on a 50:50 percentage basis between Anambra and Kogi states pending the final delineation of the boundary between the two states".<sup>72</sup>

In a similar letter to Kogi state Governor Yahaya Bello, dated August 24, 2021, and actually signed by the Secretary, M. B. Shehu, the Commission attributed Oda River oil well-1 to Kogi state. The letter added that the commission also approved the attribution of Anambra River 1, 2, and 3 oil wells to be shared on a 50:50 percentage basis between Anambra and Kogi states pending on the final delineation of boundaries between the two states. Accordingly, both states will start to benefit from the 13% Derivation Fund as soon as proceeds from the oil wells begin to contribute revenue into the federation account.<sup>73</sup> In the words of Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State when he paid a 'Thank You' visit to President Muhammadu Buhari, Governor Bello said with the recognition of the two states, the age long oil wells dispute that has resulted in unwarranted killings and destruction of properties has been brought to an end. In his words "President Buhari's decision has brought peaceful resolution of the dispute."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Patrick Andrew 'Resource location-disputes: Osinbajo broker truce among Kogi.

Anambra, Rivers, others', December 29, 2021. Available at <https://blueprint.ng/resource-location-disputes-osinbajo-to-to-broker-truce-among-kogi-anambra-rivers-others/>

<sup>72</sup>WasilatAzeez'Like Anambra, Kogi to benefit from 13% oil derivation fund', The Cable, September 8, 2021. Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/like-anambra-kogi-to-benefit-from-13-oil-derivation-fund>

<sup>73</sup>Azeez, 2021

<sup>74</sup>Jesupemi Are 'Yahaya Bello hails Buhari over Kogi's recognition as oil producing state', The Cable, September 8, 2021. Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/yahaya-bello-hails-buhari-over-kogis-recognition-as-oil-producing-state/amp>

**Recommendations:** The declaration of Kogi and Anambra as oil producing states by the President Muhammadu Buhari, was received with great joy by both states. However, there are legal and institutional infrastructures that are supposed to be put in place to enhance a long lasting peace.

- (i) First, the government should set up adequate early warning and early response systems that does accurate conflict sensitivity studies, in order to avoid destructive resource based conflict. The conflict sensitivity studies will allow for conflict hotspot mapping and analysis, in a sense that it receives timely attention. The delayed action of government and critical stakeholders in the Kogi-Anambra borderland led to cataclysmic destructions.
- (ii) In addition, the government and high net worth individuals should embark on economic diversification, by focusing on developing non-resource sectors through investing in infrastructure, education and technology. This help reduces dependency on resource exports and enhances sustainable economic growth. In the Kogi-Anambra borderlands, the people felt that the crude oil in their land is a major source of survival, however, a diversified economy reduces poverty and also drastically reduces the tendency for people to be engaged in brutal wars.
- (iii) In addition, the inability of the National Boundary Commission to effectively resolve the issues speaks volumes about Nigeria weak institutions, and the need to strengthen them through strong legal and institutional frame works. As it stands, there are underlining issues concerning boundary delineation in the Kogi-Anambra borderland communities that are pending. In fact, the declaration of Kogi, Anambra as oil producing states were temporary measures taken, pending on when the NBC is able to understudy the communities through rigorous scientific and ethnographic surveys, as well as ground-to-paper investigations before there can be a permanent declaration. Between now and then, there is need to build strong institutional and legal frame work that will grant the authorities of NBC to carryout its statutory responsibilities of boundary demarcation or delineation without altercation from relevant stakeholders, and powerful individuals with opposing interests.
- (iv) This studies, further establishes that resources itself does not cause wars. It is the humans who are seeking access to, control and ownership of the resources that cause wars. It was seen that for years, arguments and counter arguments, in addition to barrages of litigations and counter litigations as regards claims and counter claims to the oil rich field have caused a stalemate and pathological hatred between actors until government fully weighed in. In contrast to the argument of Paul Collier, natural resources do not in themselves cause wars, but failure of state institutions in its governance does. This as has been seen clearly in the mechanisms that led to relative peace in the Kogi-Anambra borderland. The paper recommends effective resource governance; as it was clear that governance failure, powerful actors and clashing interests left the region in chaos.



Conclusion: The problem of most plural societies is not resources per say, but the ability of the government to create an institution through which the wills and yearnings of the people are captured in terms of access to, control and ownership of the resources. For many decades the Kogi-Anambra region were in tumour. The people were not starting a war for the love of it, but the desire to avoid being marginalized in a nation where the government depend fully on crude oil. From the contours of political economy, this study analysed the positionality of the actors contesting for the ownership of the oil rich field, the evolutionary trend of the wars, especially since 1991, to 2021 when the conflict was amicably resolved pending on when the National Boundary Commission (NBS) is able to fully investigate all the claims and counter claims and carryout a permanent boundary demarcation. Natural resource is not the problem, but its governance.