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Revisiting the Jukun-Tiv Inter-Ethnic Crisis in Wukari, Taraba State Nigeria

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Abstract:

The Jukun-Tiv relation has increasingly gone through troubling stages over the years, especially as from the late 1950s. Every revolving point seems to revise the level of co-operation between the two ethnic groups in the present day Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. This recounting trend gives the imprint that the two ethnic groups never enjoyed peaceful interaction. However, this assumption has been studied and proved to be wrong. An in-depth assessment of the available sources about the Jukun-Tiv interaction and collaboration shows that the phenomenon has not always been dominated by crises. There are strong socio-economic and cultural bonds that bind the two ethnic groups together. Thus, much of the inter-communal crises that have categorized the relationship between the two ethnic groups developed during the colonial era, which are attributed to factors such as issue of boundary demarcation, competition over land usage and ownership, fear of political domination, chieftaincy and rulership, indigenes-settlers question, and struggle for political positions and economic resources among others. This paper by employing the conflict trap theory argues that the promotion of the interest of conflict entrepreneurs account for the persistent crisis between the two ethnic groups. The paper relies on documentary method of data collection and utilizes secondary sources. The study is essentially descriptive, qualitative and historical. This paper recommended among other things the conversion of militant groups that foment and fuel crisis for economic and political profits into parties or other political actors that will still use mobilizational tools such as appeals to ethnic and religious solidarity in a non-violent way.

Keywords: Jukun, Tiv, Inter-Ethnic, Crisis and Wukari

1. Introduction

The international system has continued to experience persistence outbreak of ethno-religious and intra-state crises especially in the last three decades which have threatened global peace and security. In Africa, and particularly Nigeria, inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic and intra-state communal crises are some of the carried over legacies of colonialism to post-colonial period because colonialism did not only exploited and intensified inter-ethnic inimical relations, but also created artificial boundaries and left the African continent and Nigeria in particular at the effect of bringing together several diverse ethnic groups into a nation that does not reflect nor has the capacity to accommodate or provide for the cultural and ethnic diversity (Ekpekurede, 2004 in Agah & Ikenga, 2008). The Jukun-Tiv crisis in wukari local government area of Taraba state, has a long history of occurrence and reoccurrence over decades due to unwillingness of the two parties to dialogue and negotiate a common position to proffering lasting solutions to their differences; but most importantly, the interest of conflict entrepreneurs who foment and fuel crisis by mobilizing individuals through appeal to ethnic, religious, and ideological solidarity for political and economic gain or profit. The Jukun-Tiv crisis is one of the prolonged inter-ethnic crises in Nigeria that have repeatedly reoccurred since late 1950s to date amid Zangon-Kataf in kaduna, Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra state; Mango-Bokkos in Plateau state; the Ife-Modakeke in Oyo, the Urhobo's, Itsekiri and the Ijaw in Delta state (Joshua, 2017). Ethnic crisis is the crises between and among ethnic groups which could be intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic, and is mostly caused by factors such as struggle for power or authority, chieftaincy, land or boundary, dominance, exclusion or marginalization as well as superiority and recognition (Joshua, 2017). Intra-ethnic crisis is that type of conflict that exists between members of the same ethnic group which Tonah (2004 in Joshua, 2017) described as a war of emancipation or secession, while inter-ethnic crisis exists between and among different ethnic groups. Adebayo (2006) defines inter-ethnic crisis as a conflict that occur between two different ethnic groups living within the same geo-political boundary or different boundaries. He also identifies various issues such as citing of local government headquarters, religion and marginalization as reasons for inter-ethnic crisis. This paper therefore, analyzes how the interests of conflict entrepreneur lead to the resurgence of Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis in wukari local government area of Taraba state.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has been bedeviled with inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic communal crises due to its multicultural and multi-ethnic differences as well as the inability of the Nigerian state to accommodate or provide for the cultural and ethnic diversity. Peaceful relations between the Jukun and Tiv ethnic group dates back to centuries. However, the Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis appears to be more disastrous that, the occurrence of open crises between the two ethnic groups, particularly from 1959, and their persistence since then, have prompted Nnoli (1995) to described it as the deadliest inter-ethnic clashes (cited in Aluaigba, 2008). The persistence killings and destruction of property and the apparent aspiration by the two ethnic groups to push each other to extinction is not only worrisome but is also against the spirit of Nigeria's ethnic and religion diversity. The Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis in Wukari local government area of Taraba state that has continue unabated is focus on struggle over land, control over economic resources and political positions. However, the struggle over land for farming by both Jukuns and Tivs who are predominantly farmers has been the major factor responsible for the persistent crisis between the two ethnic groups in Wukari local government area. Scholars such as Otite and Albert (1999), identified the causes of Jukun-Tiv crisis in Wukari local government to include competition over land, traditional rulership, political authority, and fear of domination and marginalization. Cordell and Wolff (2009) enumerated factors such as feelings of superiority by one ethnic group (mostly the indigenes) over others, issue of land ownership, chieftaincy succession, competition over land usage or location of institutions and services as reasons for inter-ethnic crisis. Ciboh (2014), on his part, listed struggle for land ownership, the question of indigenes-settlers, political participation and fear of domination as causes of Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis. Therefore, the resurgence of Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis is better appreciated when the promotion of the interests of conflict entrepreneurs who foment and fuel conflict for profit is exposed. This could be attributed to the quest to acquire political and economic benefits. Therefore, it is based on this observed problem that the paper poses: Does the promotion of the interest of conflict entrepreneurs account for the resurgence of Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis in Wukari in 2019?

3. Literature Review

In this paper, the review of the extant literature is centered on issues surrounding the promotion of the interest of conflict entrepreneurs that lead to resurgence of the Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis. To achieve this, the review of extant literature is based on the theme:

4. Promotion of Interests of Conflict Entrepreneurs and Inter-Ethnic Crisis

Conflict entrepreneur is a group or individual that exists inside or outside a government and promote violent conflict for profit. This means that a conflict entrepreneur usually engages in or directly benefit from illegal economic activity that promotes violent conflict or undermines government efforts for good governance and economic development. Lyons (2002) argues that conflict entrepreneurs are economic and political actors who incite and inflame violent conflict as a route for attaining economic and political power. He also posited that conflict entrepreneurs often mobilized individuals through three general tactics, namely; appeal to ethnic, religious and ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security. Several scholars such as Nnoli, (1995); Best et al (1999); Avav, (2002); Hagher (2002); Obioha (2005); Alubo (2006); Genyi (2007); Shut (2007); and Okpeh, (2008) among others, highlighted the causes of inter-ethnic crisis to include competition over land, fear of political domination and the indigene-settler question. However, they do not look at the issue of traditional rulership or chieftaincy as reason for inter-ethnic crisis. Salawu (2010) argues that ethnic crisis is caused by claim of language, cultural self-government and religious control to request for local political autonomy and self-determination. But Salawu (2010) to his tent did not see the issue of indigene-settler as factor responsible for inter-ethnic crisis. For Joshua (2017), land disputes, discrimination, belief and value difference, and socio-cultural disposition are factors responsible for ethnic crisis. Joshua (2017) on her study of 'ethnic conflicts in Nigeria: tiv-jukun socio-economic perspective', also found out that fear of domination, citizenship and struggle for political positions are factors responsible for inter-ethnic crisis. Nevertheless, Joshua (2017) failed to explain how the issue of chieftaincy succession and rulership lead to inter-ethnic crisis. Ajayi (2014) on his part identified factors such as educational, employment and political inequalities, district politics conveyed in tribal consciousness, division and fear of domination as reasons for inter-ethnic crisis. Nonetheless, Ajayi (2014) did not look at issue of chieftaincy succession as a reason for inter-ethnic crisis. Cordell and Wolff (2009) submit that inter-ethnic crises are mostly caused by feelings of superiority by one ethnic group (mostly the indigenes) over others, chieftaincy succession, competition over land usage or location of institutions and services. However, Cordell and Wolff (2009) do not look at educational, employment and political inequalities as factors responsible for inter-ethnic crisis. Otite and Albert (1999), argued that competition over land, traditional rulership, political authority, and fear of domination and marginalization are causes of inter-ethnic crisis. Nevertheless, Otite and Albert (1999) failed to describe how educational and employment inequalities lead to inter-ethnic crisis. Ciboh (2014), identifies struggle for land ownership, the question of indigenes-settlers, political participation and fear of domination as causes of inter-ethnic crisis. But Ciboh (2014), did not view the issue of unequal employment opportunities as reason for inter-ethnic crisis. Otite (1990) on his part, enumerated competition over land resources, issue of rulership, location of local government headquarters, struggle for political positions and economic resources, population growth and expansionist tendencies, and disregard to other cultural practices as factors that lead to inter-ethnic crisis. However, Otite (1990) to his tent, failed to analyze how the question of indigenes-settlers accounts for inter-ethnic crisis. For Adebayo (2006), in his work titled 'Ethnic Conflicts and Nigerian Democracy Development', argues that issue of land ownership, the strangers element, emergence of new majority tribes among minority tribes, population growth and expansionist tendencies, fear of Marginalization, and the question of paramount chief are causes of inter-

ethnic crisis. Though Adebayo (2006) did not expose how the struggle for political positions and unequal educational opportunities as reasons for inter-ethnic crisis.

5. Gap in Literature

From the review of the extant literature on revisiting the Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crises in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, it is clear that scholars did not make a connection to the promotion of the interest of conflict entrepreneurs and the Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis that has characterized Wukari from the late 1950s. The promotion of the interest of conflict entrepreneurs has induced inter-ethnic crisis in Wukari local government area which resulted to loss of lives and property worth millions of naira, and has also undermined the stability of Taraba state at large. This and other issues constitute our point of departure.

6. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework consists of concepts, together with their definitions and existing theory that is used for a particular study, and must demonstrate an understanding of the theory and concepts that are relevant to the topic or study (Mbah 2014, p. 130). Consequently, this paper is anchored on Conflict Trap Theory developed by Paul Collier et al in 2003 (Sunday & Aluforo, 2011). The theory assumes that once a conflict has erupted, it tends to develop a momentum of its own, peace seemingly becomes elusive and hard to restore; and that even when peace is restored it often does not endure (Collier et. al 2003). The exponents of conflict trap theory ascribed the lengthy pattern of a typical conflict to a number of interlocking factors and argued that conflicts in multiethnic societies are enduring possibly on account of their ready vulnerability to the rallying, massaging and mobilization of ethnic sentiments for both the warring groups and the government. The theory also submits that in a plural society, particularly where the population has significant grievances, conflict usually becomes an effective political strategy for pursuit of the interests and goals of conflict entrepreneurs. Exponents of this theory further argued that, even if the custodians of power and authority in the society are willing to concede to the demands of the parties in conflict, they are usually neither trusted nor believed to have credible means of committing the warring factions to agreement because the warring parties might be afraid that once they hold the olive branch the custodians of power and authority would renege on any agreement (Collier *et al.* 2003).

Furthermore, the conflict trap theory contended that it is even difficult for the custodians of power and authority to concede to demands of the warring parties because such could encourage the flowering, proliferation, mushrooming and radicalization of other groups, which often have opposing objectives. To this theory, what is important to the lengthy pattern of conflict is that once a conflict has occurred a template is raised, and therefore, it becomes difficult to return to status quo. Exponents of the conflict trap theory also posited that conflict reinforces hatred, and may shift the balance of influential interests in favour of continued conflict. For them, the conflict entrepreneurs that profit from the conflict would do anything including sabotaging peace process for it to continue and that conflict entrepreneurs, whether primarily political or primarily commercial, may gain from conflict to such an extent that they cannot credibly be compensated sufficiently to accept peace (Collier et. al 2003 in Sunday & Aluforo, 2011). Therefore, what this means is that those who see themselves as political leaders benefit from conflict because they can run their organizations in hierarchical, military style with power concentrated in their own hands, something much more difficult to justify in peacetime, and those who see themselves as extortionists benefit from the absence of the rule of law in the areas they control (Sunday & Aluforo, 2011).

6.1. Application of the Theory

From the foregoing assumptions, the conflict trap theory is apt and relevant for the appreciation of revisiting the Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis in Wukari local government area of Taraba state as it offers insights to the interlocking factors that sustain conflict. Again, it presupposes that once conflict has occurred, it lengthens and becomes challenging to restore peace on account of a number of factors such as ethnic pluralism, proliferation of arms, existence of income disparities, existence of expansive republic of hoodlums and the activities of conflict entrepreneurs.

6.2. Historical Account of the Jukun-Tiv Ethnic Crisis in Wukari Area of Taraba State

Taraba State has had a plethora of ethnic, religious, communal and environmental-scarcity induced crises since its inception in 1991. The Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis is one of such that have crossed various ages. The crisis has been described as one of the most violent and controversial crises in central Nigeria because of the cordial relationship that had existed between the two ethnic groups even before colonialism. The Tiv-Jukun crisis is one of the numerous recurring ethnic crises that have threatened the continuous existence of Taraba as a state and the Nigerian state at large. The Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups have had relationship for centuries that predates colonialism and was particularly cordial until socio-economic and political changes in the Wukari area turned that amiable coexistence sour (Avav, 2002 & Shut, 2007). The crises have occurred in 1959, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1990-1993, 2001 and 2019. The First crisis which occurred in 1959 heralded the Federal Elections in Nigeria that demonstrated Tiv grievances against the colonial authorities, their policies, the Northern People's Congress and Northern oligarchy which the Jukun mainly identified with and which the Tiv, as Hagher (2002), argues was the sign of their oppression and domination. However, the first event in the politics of Wukari that triggered the crisis between the Jukuns and the Tivs was the election victory of Mr. Charles Tangur Gaza, a Tiv man of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), over Mallam Ibrahim Sangari, a Jukun man of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) as a representative of the Wukari Federal constituency in the House of Representatives during the 1956 Federal Elections (Best *et al.*, 1999; Shut, 2007). The Jukuns feared that the Tiv, they consider as settlers and foreigners would dominate them politically in the future (Avav, 2002). This fear of political domination by the Jukuns fueled and fomented

the 1959 ethnic crisis between the Jukuns and Tives that resulted to death of over hundreds of people and destruction of property worth millions of naira (Avav, 2002).

The 1980 to 1983 Jukun-Tiv crisis occurred following the political appointments made during the Second Republic from 1979 to 1983 in Wukari (Avav, 2002). For instance, the Alhaji Abubakar Barde led cabinet from 1979-1983 appointed Iyortyer Tor Musa and Dr Samuel Tor Agbidye both of Tiv extraction as the chairman of Wukari local government and commissioner for health respectively (Best *et al*, 1999). Similarly, in 1983, another Tiv man, Mr. Emmanuel Yawe was also appointed as Chief Press Secretary by Alhaji Bamaga Tukur, and was re-appointed by group captain Jonah D. Jang in 1987 (Okocha, 2001). These appointments, made the period between 1979 and 1983 to be seen as the golden age of the Tiv in Wukari because of their wider participation in the local political process (Avav, 2001). Consequently, these political developments turned the Jukuns against the Tivs and triggered a kind of cold war between the two ethnic groups which resulted to the physical assault of the then Chairman, Mr. Iyortyer Tor Musa by the Jukuns in 1982 until the military coup of General Buhari terminated the Second Republic on December 31, 1983 (Avav, 2002). Another Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis occurred between 1990 and 1993 as a result of competition over land usage and struggle for land ownership (Alubo, 2006).

There were several explanations of how the 1990-93 crises began. For instance, Ubwa cited in Alubo (2006, p. 103) posited that the Jukuns were on a piece of land to cultivate it when the Tivs who claimed its ownership, confronted them. Another account as cited in Avav (2002, p.133), stated that on October 17, 1991, the Jukuns shot and killed three Tiv farmers and wounded several others at the Taju village. Subsequent hostilities left the villages of Ibua, Toho Banyo, Gbor Ucha and Ikyaior destroyed, and on December 31, 1991, the Tiv launched an attack on Wukari which was contained by Jukuns (Avav, 2002 & Alubo, 2006). Similarly, on January 10, 1992 the crisis continued and many villages including those of Mku, Tor sonityo, Mbaakaa and Abako were burnt down and over 20 people were also murdered (Avav, 2002). All efforts to restore law and order in Wukari and its localities by the Nigerian security agencies proved abortive as the crisis lingered to January 24, 1993, during which the village of Tse Choku was burnt and successive, destruction of villages and killings took place on numerous dates. For instance, among the villages destroyed were: Mbishu, Dooshima and Anyam (January 27, 1993); Garaboughol and Jibu (January 28-29, 1993); Igbogodo (February 19, 1993); Meeme (February 27, 1993); Zapine and Luku Iji (March 19, 1993) and Ikperen (August 13, 1993) cited in Avav (Avav, 2002, pp.133-134). The 1990-1993 Jukun-Tiv ethnic crises have been labelled as longer since they have stressed over a significant period of three years (Alubo, 2006). As for the level of destruction caused by the crises of the early 1990s, Maier cited in Alubo (2006, p. 105), argues that the 1990-1993 crises recorded widespread devastation; burnt out villages, littered corpses in various stages of decomposition and household items thrown all over. Efforts, such as the meeting of Tiv elders in Abako on October 19 1991, the Dr Yusuf Magaji-led Committee set up by the then Gongola State Military Administrator Navy Captain Ambrose Afolahan and the Anthony Jellason-led 8-man Assessment Committee set up by the defunct governor Jolly T. Nyame to end the crises did not yield any substantive result. This partly explains why the crisis, like never before, re-invented itself and bounced back in 2001, after a decade of non-violence with disastrous magnitudes.

The 2001 episode of the Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis just as the 1990-93 episode, is one of the most violent and bloodiest strands in the history of the Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis (Asuni, 1999). The causes of the crisis which started in a village called Tse Ikyambe on June 13, 2001, and escalated to Tsokundi and other localities in Wukari was attributed to the struggle over land usage and ownership involving a Tiv farmer, Mr. Iortimin Umande, Fulani cattle pastoralists and a Jukun man (Alubo, 2006). The Jukun-Tiv crisis of 2001 was peculiar because when it erupted, the federal government under former president Olusegun Obasanjo intervened to restore peace, law and order by deploying a contingent of the army to Taraba and Benue states. However, following the abduction and murder of 19 soldiers by the Tiv militia on October 10, 2001, the effort by the government turned out to be disastrous for reprisal attacks by soldiers on the civilian population in Zaki-Biam of Benue state that were destructive in terms of lives and property which resulted in the death of thousands people, over 30,000 persons displaced and 1000 houses destroyed (Amnesty International, 2002; Human rights watch, 2001; Hagher 2002; Alubo, 2006). The 2019 Jukun-Tiv crisis is the most recent in the sequence of crises that have befallen the two ethnic groups. The renewed Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis which started on April 1, 2019 in Kente village of Wukari local government over a dispute arising from use of land resources, agitation for traditional and political recognition and claim of land ownership, escalated to other localities such as Tsokundi, Tor- Musa, Tar- Orshi, Ikyaan gbaki, and Kasuan shanu among others (Gbaoron, 2019). The crisis which led to the death of over 600 people, thousands displaced and destruction of over 15 settlements, also affected the neighboring local government of Donga and Takum (Mac-Leva et al, 2019).

S/N	Year	Nature of the Crisis	Casualties/Damages
1	1959	Fear of political domination e.g. election of Mr. Charles Tangur Gaza, a Tiv man over Mallam Ibrahim Sangari, a Jukun man	Hundreds of people lost their lives and property worth millions of naira were destroyed
2	1980-83	Issue of political appointments, e.g. appointment of Mr. Iyortyer Tor Musa, and Dr Samuel Tor Agbidye both of Tiv extraction as chairman and commissioner respectively	Over 20 people were killed and villages destroyed
3	1990-93	Struggle over land usage and ownership	About 20,000 people lost their lives and 53 villages razed
4	2001-2003	Competition over use of land resources and ownership	Thousands of people were killed including 19 soldiers, about 30,000 people were displaced and 1000 houses destroyed
5	2019	Issue of Chieftaincy, traditional rulership, usage of land resources, struggle over land ownership and marginalization	Over 600 people lost their lives, thousands displaced, about 15 villages were razed down including Tor Musa, Tar-Orshi, ikyaan gbaki and properties worth millions of naira destroyed

Table 1: Showing Account of Jukun-Tiv Ethnic Crisis

Source: Authors' Compilation with Data Generated From Gbaoron (2019)

7. Conclusion

Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis has increasingly gone through troubling stages over the years, especially as from the late 1950s. Every turning point seems to revise the level of co-operation between the two ethnic groups in the present day Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. This recounting trend gives the signal that the two ethnic groups never enjoyed peaceful interaction. However, this assumption has been studied and proved to be wrong. From the foregoing analysis, this paper reiterated that the Jukuns have endured frosty relationship with their neighbours especially the Tivs. This scenario has conditioned the relations of the Jukuns with migrants who have settled in Wukari over the ages. However, it is the view of this paper that the remote cause of the continuous Jukun-Tiv crisis in Wukari between 1959 and 2019 was as a consequence of individuality crisis that underlies citizenship, indigeneship contestation. This is because individuality plays a crucial role in one's capacity or opportunity to access and distribute scarce communal resources. Indeed, we noted that there has been no sufficient effort by government to end this violence. The presence of soldiers is not enough. It has not even prevented the recurrence of the conflicts.

The implication is that government needs to look beyond deployment of troops. Solving this problem is largely dependent on the capacity of the Nigerian state to evolve adequate strategy to deal with identity challenge that seems to have created what is popular described as the "national question" which borders on citizenship in Nigeria. In fact, addressing Wukari crisis is a challenge that demands a collaborative effort. It is based on this that we recommend all inclusive peace initiative that will involve government at all level, institutions, interest groups, religious and traditional institutions, town union leaders and other stakeholders from various segments of the community towards ensuring sustainable peace in Wukari.

8. Recommendations

From the foregoing conclusion, to manage the issue of re-occurrence of Jukun-Tiv inter-ethnic crisis in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, the paper recommended that:

- The issue of state boundary demarcation between Benue and Taraba States requires urgent attention. The Federal Government through the National Boundary Commission should ensure that there is clearly marked boundary between the two states of Benue and Taraba which will guide the conduct of citizens along the border and solve the problem of accusations of encroachment on land by indigene of either of the states.
- There must be respect for cultural and traditional values of the two ethnic groups in Taraba state. As a matter of courtesy, both the Tiv and Jukun in Wukari and Taraba state should be encouraged to imbibe the spirit of respect for each other's cultural and traditional values. Particularly, the Tiv, who are the minority group in the area, should respect the way of life and traditional institutions of their neighbours. This should be complimented by the Jukun who should shun the attitude of characterizing others as 'visitors', 'settlers' and 'non-indigene'.
- Continued dialogue and encouragement of confidence-building social practices among the Jukuns and Tivs in Taraba state should be undertaken in other to accelerate the pace of recreating trust and confidence building among the two ethnic groups.
- The issue of citizenship rights in Nigeria should be addressed by the Federal Government by confronting the problem of citizenship rights which has been the causal factor in most of the inter-ethnic crises in Nigeria.

- There should be conversion of militant groups into parties or other political actors that will still use mobilizational tools such as appeals to ethnic solidarity in a non-violent way.

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