AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS IN THE TIV-JUKUN LAND DISPUTE IN TARABA STATE

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Keywords

Land Dispute, Resource Conflict, Tiv-Jukun Conflict, Peace Building, Conflict Tree

Abstract

Research Problem: *This article examines the enduring land conflict between the Tiv and Jukun communities in Taraba State, Nigeria. The conflict centers on land as a resource essential to survival, identity, and political relevance. Despite multiple peace initiatives, the dispute recurs, highlighting the limitations of existing interventions and the neglect of deeper structural issues.*
Methods/Theory: *The article employs a qualitative approach, using documentary analysis and interpretive methods to explore the causes and peacebuilding responses. It is grounded in* Realistic Conflict Theory*, which links intergroup conflict to competition over scarce resources, and uses the* conflict tree *model to analyze immediate, underlying, and structural causes.*
Results: *Findings reveal that land represents more than a resource; it symbolizes power, belonging, and recognition. The conflict follows a cyclical pattern, re-emerging with heightened intensity despite efforts at resolution. Traditional mechanisms and state-led peacebuilding have proven inadequate, often failing to address the root causes or provide long-term stability.*
Conclusion: *The Tiv-Jukun conflict illustrates the failure of superficial interventions to resolve deeply embedded disputes. Structural inequalities and historical grievances must be addressed to achieve lasting peace.*
Key Contribution to Knowledge: *By applying* Realistic Conflict Theory *and the* conflict tree*, the article offers a fresh perspective on the persistence of ethnic land conflicts in Nigeria, emphasizing the roles of resource competition and identity.*
Recommendation: *The article advocates for inclusive, community-driven peacebuilding, and mobilization of social and intellectual resources to tackle structural causes and build trust.*

Introduction

Land resources are central to human survival as they provide food, shelter, raw materials, and a foundation for socio-economic activities (Alawode, 2013; Anyim&Odoemelam, 2017). However, unequal access to productive land often creates tensions, especially in agrarian societies where land is the main source of livelihood. Globally, land-related disputes have been identified as a major driver of conflict (Eliasson, 2015). In Africa, many of these conflicts can be traced to colonial legacies where European powers imposed arbitrary borders and deliberately sowed divisions among ethnic groups through "divide and rule" tactics (Najideeme, 2022). This approach institutionalized tribal rivalries, such as the Kikuyu-Luo tensions in Kenya, the Ashante-Fante rivalry in Ghana, and the Hutu-Tutsi war in Rwanda. Nigeria's Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa tensions also reflect this pattern, contributing to the perception of Africa as a conflict-prone continent (Taiwo, 2020).

The Tiv–Jukun conflict in Taraba State reflects this broader African experience. Historical records suggest that the Tiv and Jukun coexisted peacefully until British colonial intervention in the 19th century. The Tiv, being largely farmers without a centralized political structure, expanded their farmlands without major disputes. However, colonial policies disrupted this equilibrium. The British allocated Wukari to the Jukun and legitimized their traditional authority over land distribution, sidelining Tiv claims (Samuel, 1993). This sowed seeds of resentment as the Tiv increasingly resisted Jukun dominance. The conflict took a political dimension in 1959 when a Tiv candidate defeated a Jukun representative in national elections. Since then, competition over land and political power has fueled recurring violence, with major outbreaks in 1959, 1964, 1976, 1990–1992, and 2000–2001, leading to mass displacement, destruction of property, and loss of lives. Renewed violence has continued since 2019 (Fides, 2023).

Despite numerous government and stakeholder interventions, peacebuilding efforts have largely been inconsistent and ineffective. Scholars like Anthony (2014) and Bawa, Haruna, and Francis (2021) note that governmental responses to such conflicts are often reactive, poorly coordinated, and fail to address structural issues. This raises broader questions about unity in African nations where tribal divisions persist (Mbofu, 2024). Although previous studies have examined the Tiv–Jukun crisis from resource-based and socio-economic perspectives (Anum &Omofa, 2023), there remains limited focus on innovative approaches that unpack the complexities of such conflicts. This study, therefore, aims to fill that gap by analyzing the historical roots, causes, and consequences of the Tiv–Jukun land dispute, with special attention to colonialism, land tenure systems, and socio-economic factors. It also seeks to evaluate traditional peacebuilding methods and apply the Conflict Tree approach as a novel analytical tool to generate insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working toward sustainable peace in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The Tiv-Jukun land dispute in Taraba State remains one of the most protracted communal conflicts in Nigeria, rooted in historical contestations over land ownership, ethnic identity, political representation, and access to resources. Despite numerous peacebuilding interventions by government and non-governmental actors, the conflict has persisted in cycles of violence, leading to widespread displacement, destruction of property, and loss of lives. Existing studies often focus on the immediate triggers of the crisis or on broad ethnic relations in Nigeria but rarely provide an in-depth analysis of the interconnected causes, long-term consequences, and the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies specific to the Tiv-

Jukun context. This creates a critical gap in understanding the multidimensional nature of the conflict and the limitations of past approaches to its resolution.

Consequently, the problem this study seeks to address is the inadequate integration of historical, socio-economic, and political dimensions in analyzing the Tiv-Jukun land dispute and how this omission undermines effective peacebuilding. By exploring the root causes, the human and structural consequences, and the nature of peace initiatives undertaken, the study will contribute to a more holistic understanding of the conflict. This is necessary not only for filling a gap in existing literature but also for providing insights that could inform sustainable peacebuilding frameworks in Taraba State and other ethnically heterogeneous regions of Nigeria facing similar disputes.

Conceptual Clarification

This paper approaches these concepts with the view that conventional interpretations often oversimplify the Tiv–Jukun dispute by framing it either as an ethnic rivalry or as a contest for land. Such reductionist views neglect the complex interplay of history, political marginalization, and contestations over citizenship rights within Taraba State.

Conflict: conceptual review

Conflict is an inevitable and integral aspect of human interaction. It is a universal phenomenon that permeates every stratum of the human society (Ogbu et al, 2006). However, bearing in mind that it is a proper conceptualization of conflict that will enable a deep understanding of it, this research is therefore, concentrating on placing the conflict concept within the context of this study. Stagner (2001) conceptualizes conflict as a situation whereby two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other but not yet by both; each party mobilizing energy to obtain a goal, desire, objective or situation and each party perceives the other as a barrier or threat to such goal. Similarly, Dougherty and Ptalzgarff (1981), on the other hand, opine that the term conflict usually refers to a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings in a given environment (whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political among others) is engaged in conscious position to and/or more identifiable human groups because they are pursuing what appear to be incompatible goals. In contrast, Ross (2001) argues that conflict is not necessarily bad or dysfunctional. It should be understood in both its positive and negative connotations. Conflict can be a channel or mechanism for the articulation of human goals, aspirations and desire for social change. Conflict is a goal directed activity that can improve the position of one party at the expense of the other (Boulding, 1977). One critical defining element is the presence of two or more actors struggling to secure a thing adjudged to be valuable, which if gained by any actors, amounts to a loss or deprivation to the other actors (Anumve, Fada and Igah, 2020).In this study, conflict is defined as a struggle or dispute between individuals, groups or entities driven by competition for limited or valuable resources (for example water, land, minerals energy).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is about dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place and about supporting societies to manage their differences and conflicts without resorting to violence (Lancastar, 2025).The United Nations' An Agenda for Peace defines peacebuilding as a broad set of activities focused on capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation. It is a long-term process that takes place after violent conflict has diminished or ceased. Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping (Maiese, 2003).Another important thought leader on this is John Paul

Lederach, currently a Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, he affirmed that *peace building is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct"* (O'Connor, 2020). Although, Egbe's definition aligns within the context of this study, Peacebuilding seeks to address injustice nonviolently and transform the cultural and structural factors that fuel deadly or destructive conflict. It focuses on fostering positive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial divides. This process includes violence prevention: conflict management, resolution, or transformation; and post conflict reconciliation or trauma healing, that is, before, during, and after any given case of violence (Egbe, 2024).

Land dispute

Conflicts over land and resources are a significant cause of lethal disputes. They may stem from land grabs, boundary disputes, displacement as a result of man-made or natural disasters, government resettlement policies, climate change or other factors (IPAC, 2021). Lind and Naylor (1999) relates land disputes or conflicts to conflicting claims to the right of ownership over a given stretch of land or in part of it by two or more parties, and which could assume other forms such as easement. More broadly, Fiveable (2024) noted that land disputes refer to conflicts over the ownership, use, and rights associated with land, often involving different parties with competing claims. These disputes can arise from historical grievances, legal interpretations, or misunderstandings of land rights and treaties, especially in contexts involving Indigenous peoples and governments. Such conflicts can significantly impact tribal recognition processes, as unresolved land issues may hinder a tribe's ability to gain formal acknowledgment and rights According to this article, Land disputes in Nigeria refer to conflicts and disagreements that arise among individuals, communities, or entities over the ownership, possession, use, or boundaries of land and real property within the country's territory. Land disputes in Nigeria are not uncommon due to factors like population growth, urbanization, and unclear land ownership records. These disputes often involve issues related to land boundaries, land grabbing, inheritance, and more.

Tiv-Jukun: who are they?

The Tiv are a major ethnic group in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria (Nominsha, 2022). Although statistics vary due to inadequate records, the Tiv people have been reported to be the fourth largest tribe in Nigeria (MZUKT, 2025). Tiv are prosperous subsistence farmers and traders (MRG, 2018)."They all speak a common language known as Tiv language" (Torkula, 2001). They are present in significant numbers in Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Cross River States, and the Federal Capital Territory, but are predominantly found in Benue State, where they form the majority. Benue State as the 'food basket' of Nigeria produces a lot of food crops which include, yams, cassava, sweet potato, soya beans, sesame, barbara nuts, rice and groundnuts (Nda and Obande, 2022).

Research indicates that the Jukun people are traditionally dominant in Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Adamawa, and Gombe States in Nigeria, with some presence in northwestern Cameroon. They are often considered descendants of the Kwararafa kingdom. Like other Jukunoid groups, the Jukun-Kona refer to themselves as Jiba and speak the Jiba dialect. They trace their origins

to Yemen in the Middle East, from where they migrated to Egypt, then to the Chad Basin, settling at Ngazargamu in Borno State alongside the Kanuri. Disputes over dynastic succession caused a split with the Kanuri, leading to further migrations (Oyeniyi, 2022; Baya Dame, 2016; C.K Meek, 1931; Dinslage, S. &Storch, A.(2000). The Jukun people are primarily farmers, growing both food and cash crops. Additionally, particularly the JukunWanu living along the banks of the Benue and Niger Rivers, are fishermen (fatherland gazette, 2020).

Research methodology

This research utilized a qualitative approach, and secondary sources such as academic journals, books, media reports, government documents, and online resources.These materials are examined through the lenses of documentary and historical research methods.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the Tiv-Jukun land dispute through the perspective of Realistic Group Theory

Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT)was propounded by **Muzafer Sherif (1966)**, a social psychologist. Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) suggests that when groups compete for limited resources, it breeds stereotypes, hostility, and conflict between them. This competition results in conflicting goals, as one group's gain in securing resources blocks the other group's access. Such clashes of interest foster in-group norms that promote negative attitudes toward the out-group, reinforced by sanctions against in-group members who stray from these norms. Just as RGCT argues that *competition* for desired but limited resources creates intergroup conflict, it also argues that *cooperation* in pursuit of superordinate goals, mutually desired outcomes that are unobtainable without such cooperation, has the potential over time to reduce intergroup conflict and to create positive relations among members of cooperating groups (Levine and Hogg, 2010).Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) was named by anthropologist Robert LeVine and psychologist Donald Campbell, who developed and tested its propositions cross-culturally, drawing from psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies on ethnocentrism and group conflict. In their research, they categorized theories of ethnocentrism into several types, such as reference group theory and frustration-aggression displacement theory, with RGCT being one of the categories they identified. They coined the term to describe theories that attribute the ethnocentrism syndrome to the competitive struggles between groups with conflicting interests." (LeVine& Campbell, 1972, p. 72).It is therefore not surprising that, the clash between the Tiv and the Jukun hinge on the land factor which the two sides consider important for their existence (Vaase, 2010). Both the Tiv and Jukun communities have historically relied on land for agriculture and settlement. Understanding Group Dynamics through Realistic Conflict Theory"Some scholars doubt the universal applicability of Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) across all cultures, arguing that different societies may value distinct resources or employ unique strategies for handling intergroup relationships. However, this paper distinctively links RCT's assumptions about the *competition* for desired but limited resources that creates intergroup conflicts.

Historical context of the Tiv-Jukun conflicts: the role of colonialism

In the Literature of Asongo, et al (2020), "Interrogating the Political Solution to the Tiv/Jukun Conflict in Taraba State: The Participatory Communication Approach",He argued that the Tiv/Jukun conflict in Taraba, originating in the pre-independence era, is closely tied to colonial politics and the indirect

rule system used by colonial authorities to govern northern Nigeria. The Tiv, among the last groups to be colonized, lacked a formal traditional kingship until 1945, when the first Tor-Tiv was appointed. Prior to that, colonial administrators placed much of Tiv land under the authority of the AkuUka of Wukari to facilitate their indirect rule policy. In 1938, when Tiv Division was established, the Tiv in Katsina-Ala District were placed under the Tiv Native Authority in Gboko. Segments of Tiv clans namely; GaambeTiev, Shitile and Ukum who were in Wukari Division were left under the authority of the AkuUka of Wukari (MAKPROF/FED/4/1/4377, paragraph 5, page 2).The establishment of Tiv Division, following the 1923/24 boundary demarcation separating Tiv Native Authority Division from Wukari Native Authority (later Wukari Federation), split homogeneous Tiv villages such as Gbeji, Vaase, Abako, Sai, Chanchanji, and Kashimbila. This division separated members of the same families, with some placed in Tiv Division and others in Wukari Federation. Those Tiv who ended up in Wukari Federation, along with those who migrated there after the boundary was set, are now often labeled as settlers in Taraba by some, particularly the Jukun. According to Human Right Watch (2002) in Moti (2019), the Jukun people have always consider Benue as the home for all the Tiv and Taraba as theirs. Political polarization in Taraba has escalated into physical segregation, with intensifying violence. The Tiv claim they face persecution and accuse the Jukun and government authorities of orchestrating "ethnic cleansing." They allege security agency-backed operations are timed to give the Jukun a political edge in Taraba before elections. Despite the Tiv's numerical advantage, which has historically secured electoral victories in Wukari and Taraba, the Jukun reject this dominance, perpetuating a cycle of violence. The latest conflict erupted on April 1, 2019, in Kente, Wukari, after a dispute between a Jukun and a Tiv man at Kente market. The violence has since spread to Ibi, Donga, Takum, Bali, Gassol, and Jootar in Benue State, causing numerous deaths and displacing thousands from April 2019 to June 2020. Ongoing clashes, such as those between April 30th and May 5th, 2020, in Donga local government, highlight the conflict's persistence.

i. **Causes of the Tiv-Jukun Land Dispute**

The Tiv–Jukun conflict in Taraba State is one of Nigeria's most persistent and destructive communal clashes, rooted primarily in competition over land, political power, and the indigene–settler divide. According to Ambe-Uva (2011), land remains the central issue in understanding this conflict, as both Tiv and Jukun are predominantly farmers, with about 80% of the Tiv relying on agriculture for survival. Scholars such as Best, Idyorough, and Shehu (1999) have emphasized that although politics and other factors may act as catalysts, disputes over land ownership and usage form the foundation of the standoff. This competition for land is closely tied to identity politics in Nigeria, where questions of indigeneity, citizenship, and rights are highly contested. The Jukun claim to be the "sons of the soil" of Taraba State, branding the Tiv as "settlers" or "migrants," while the Tiv, pointing to their long-term presence in the region, reject this narrative as marginalization and exclusion. Interestingly, the Jukun minority in Benue State also face similar exclusion and insecurity, showing how indigene–settler tensions cut both ways.

The conflict's historical roots are evident in political developments. In the 1959 elections, Charles Tangur Gaza, a Tiv candidate under the UMBC, defeated the NPC candidate in Wukari, sparking tensions and minor clashes (Anumve, Fada &Igah, 2020). Since then, political elites have frequently exploited these ethnic divisions during elections, fanning tensions for personal gain. The major outbreaks of violence in

1991/92, 2001/2002, and 2019/2020 were all shaped, directly or indirectly, by elite manipulation of grievances. Conflicts of this scale typically require sponsors, especially given the sophisticated weapons involved, and such sponsors often operate covertly. Both sides accuse powerful figures of fueling the violence. The Tiv have pointed to prominent Jukun elites such as General T.Y. Danjuma, Group Captain Ibrahim Kephas, and former Governor Darius Ishaku for allegedly supporting Jukun militias. Ishaku's renaming of Tiv settlements in Taraba is often cited as evidence of institutionalized exclusion. Conversely, the Jukun accuse Tiv elites, including Generals Malu, Inienger, and Atom Kpera, as well as former governors Moses Adasu, George Akume, Gabriel Suswam, and Samuel Ortom, of aggravating the crisis. These mutual accusations illustrate how political and military elites on both sides are deeply entangled in perpetuating the conflict.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the multi-dimensional drivers of the Tiv–Jukun dispute. Maigida, Nwosu, Joshua, and Malami (2023) conducted a qualitative study involving interviews with both Tiv and Jukun participants to explore the conflict's underlying factors. Their findings revealed that land disputes and employment discrimination remain the primary sources of tension. These issues are further compounded by historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, ethno-religious divisions, and manipulative political dynamics. The study confirms that both economic and identity-related factors intersect in complex ways, fueling cycles of violence that continue to destabilize communities.

In essence, the Tiv–Jukun conflict reflects broader structural issues in Nigeria, particularly the problematic indigene–settler dichotomy, the politicization of ethnic identity, and uneven access to resources. Land remains the most contested and symbolic factor, but political manipulation and socio-economic inequalities ensure the conflict's persistence. Any sustainable peace effort will therefore need to address not just surface-level disputes but also the deeper structural and historical grievances that underpin this long-running crisis.

ii. Tiv-Jukun land tenure system

According to Vaase (2010), land is an important factor when considering conflicts involving the Jukun and the Tiv, and that the Tiv people are subsistence farmers who practice shifting cultivation hence the desire to acquire more land.During the colonial era, the growing demand for land to produce food and cash crops, coupled with no advancements in farming techniques or land restoration, intensified competition for land control. This shifted land ownership from communal systems in the pre-colonial period to individual ownership, deepening conflicts. It is therefore not surprising that, the clash between the Tiv and the Jukun hinge on the land factor which the two sides consider important for their existence (Nominshan, 2020).

iii. Understanding tiv-jukun land disputes through conflict tree analysis

According to Gwaleba&Silayo (2019), the conflict tree is a participatory tool adapted from the "problem tree approach". It involves stakeholders, guided by an expert, in identifying and analyzing conflicts. The tree diagram represents:

- Trunk: The core problem

- Roots: The underlying causes

- Branches: The resulting consequences

Source: Gwaleba&Silayo (2019).

This approach enables participants to collaboratively understand and address the conflict's complexities.

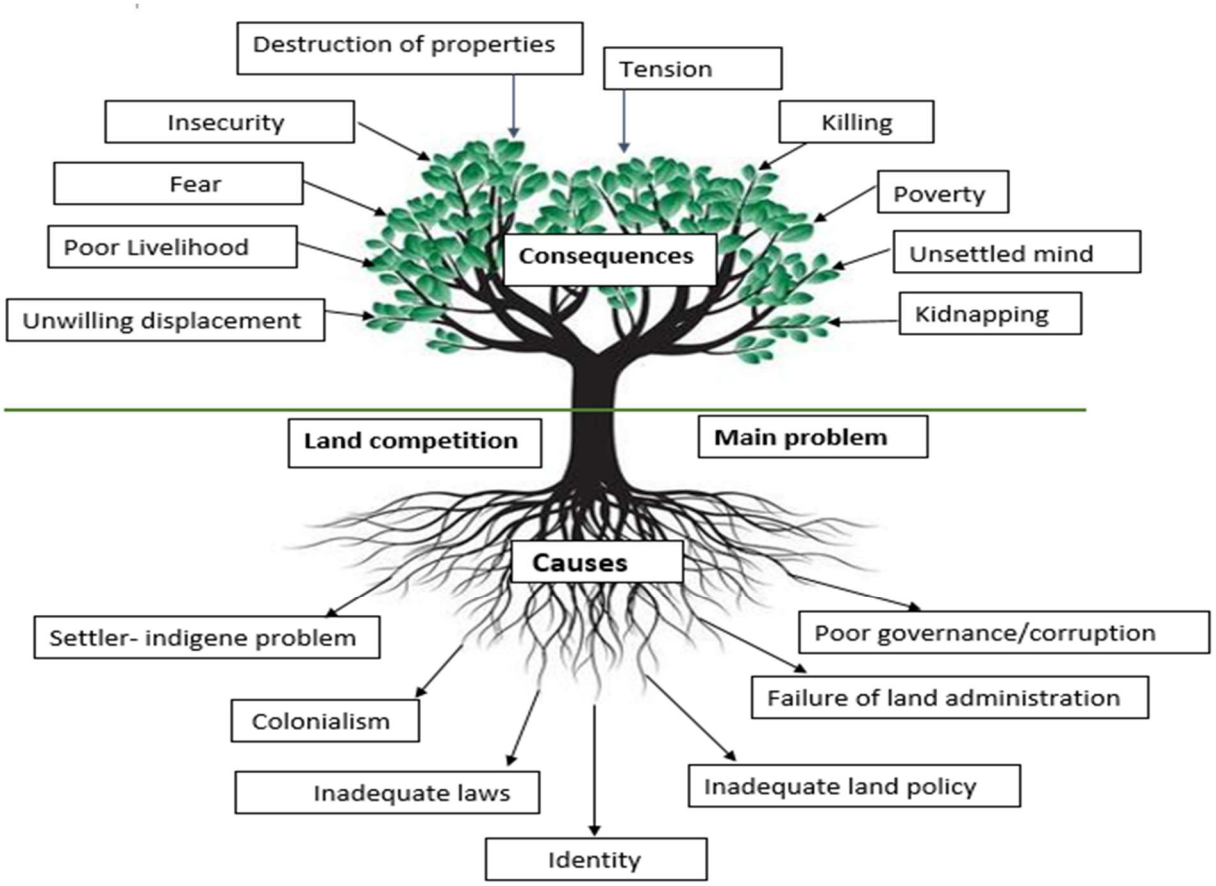


Figure 1. Illustrates the conflict analysis using conflict tree tool between Tiv- and Jukun. The core problem in this analysis is land competition which creates tension on both sides because every party is in the need of land.

iv. Impact and Consequences of the Conflict on Tiv-Jukun Communities

Tseer (2020), Noted that The Tiv-Jukun conflict has severely disrupted farming and trade, destroyed homes and food reserves, caused deaths and displacement, and increased incidents of kidnapping, abduction, and rape,

exacerbating food insecurity in the region. For those surviving on less than a dollar a day, the impact is particularly devastating. Taraba, one of Nigeria's poorest states, relies heavily on agriculture, with 83 percent of its population engaged in farming. The inability to farm safely due to fear of violence threatens catastrophic long-term economic consequences.

v. Role of the diaspora in peace building:the contribution of muta to the tiv-jukun conflict resolution

In the article of Ambe-Uva (2011) Looking Beyond Conflict:The Involvement of TivDiaspora in Peace building in Nigeria". He asserted that diaspora groups are clearly constituent elements of civil society and, as such, often take an interest in conflict and peace building efforts in their countries of birth. The argument here is that diaspora groups are a central component of civil society and should be included in any analysis of its contribution to peace building. One obvious example is the number of newspapers created to satisfy the appetite of diaspora communities for information about what is happening in their place of birth. These media outlets frequently comment, either positively or negatively, on the political processes linked to violent conflict in the homeland and efforts to end the violence

through dialogue and negotiation (Cochrane, 2007 p. 21). Members of the Tiv group are found in many areas across the globe, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany. In these countries they form unions, the strongest being the Mutual Union of the Tiv in America (MUTA). Other, smaller groups, include the Tiv Network and numerous Tiv-diaspora internet-based organizations (Ambe-Uva, 2011).

vi. Federal and state government peace building efforts

The age-long Tiv/Jukun conflict has continued to defy solutions probably because of lack of political will on the part of successive administrations in Taraba State. For instance, the 10-point agenda arrived at in 1992 by the Gen. Ibrahim BadamasiBabangida led Military administration was never implemented as the Jukun alleged that the resolutions were skewed in favour of the Tiv. The resolutions of the Obasanjo intervention in 2001 and other notable peace resolutions reached in the conflict have not being implemented and the conflict continued to rear its ugly head. Again, the State government convene a meeting on 12th May, 2020 which ended with a 9- point communique towards peace, yet pockets of attacks were reported after the meeting (Anongo, et al, 2020)

vii. Peace building efforts by the international and local community-based groups

Tivs and Jukuns tapped into the potential of peace building approaches and received climate financing designed explicitly for conflict-affected communities, thanks to the essential support from Irish Aid, guidance from International Alert and local community-based organization. Now, the two tribes are mastering sustainable agriculture and innovative farming techniques. They have also agreed on a shared plan for using limited resources and generating stable employment opportunities and income (International Alert, 2024). Tivs and Jukuns have also recently marked a significant milestone towards reaffirming lasting peace. Representatives of the various project implementation communities in Makurdi Benue State signed a peace accord to end violence over access to Natural Resource (Fish Pond). The peace agreement was signed on 5th September 2024 and was the result of dialogue and mediation initiatives facilitated by Kende-Avese Foundation (Tiv&Jukun in Fiidi Community), Community Links and Human Empowerment Initiative (Policy Engagements) with technical support from the Benue State Peace and Reconciliation Commission and financial support from International Alert and the Irish Aid. (CLHEI, 2024).

viii. The role of traditional instituions in tiv-jukun peacebuilding

The traditional institution particularly the AkuUka of Wukari during the reigns of ShakarauAngyu Masa-IbiKuvyon II and the Tor-Tiv Alfred AkaweTorkula made tremendous efforts to build peace between the two groups. However, the Tor-Tiv coming from Benue state to build peace in Taraba state between Tiv of Taraba and Jukun of Taraba state was always a setback. The Tor-Tiv and Chief of Abinsi (a Jukun settlement on the fringes of Makurdi) in Benue state have managed conflict and built peace between the Tiv and Jukun in Benue state without the involvement of the AkuUka of Wukari. Effective and time tested Peace building models in the Tiv-Jukun conflicts that have suffered neglect and deliberate compromise over the years include inter-ethnic marriages between the two groups, trade, religion, language and music (Tyovenda, 2024).

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the analysis of the Tiv–Jukun land dispute reveal that the **primary causes of the conflict are deeply rooted in historical contestations over land ownership, ethnic identity, and political representation**. Land serves not only as an economic resource but also as a symbol of heritage and belonging, making disputes over territorial boundaries particularly sensitive. Historical narratives of marginalization and exclusion—especially regarding citizenship rights within Taraba State have fueled recurrent clashes. Additionally, competition over political offices, access to state resources, and perceived domination by one group over the other further entrench animosities. These findings confirm Realistic Group Conflict Theory by**Muzafer Sherif (1966)**,, which argues that competition over scarce resources generates hostility and reinforces group boundaries.

The consequences of the conflict are both immediate and long-term. Recurrent violence has led to **loss of lives, destruction of property, and mass displacement**, creating humanitarian crises that overwhelm the capacity of local authorities. Beyond the physical impact, the dispute has deepened mistrust between Tiv and Jukun communities, eroding social cohesion and undermining inter-ethnic relations across Taraba State. The disruption of farming and trade has weakened the local economy, while the education of displaced children has suffered significantly. Insecurity in the region has also deterred investment and development, reinforcing a cycle of poverty and instability that sustains the conflict environment.

On peacebuilding efforts, findings indicate that while **government interventions, peacecommittees, and community dialogues**have been attempted, they often fail to address the structural causes of the conflict. Most initiatives are reactive, coming after violence has already escalated, and are limited to ceasefire agreements without genuine reconciliation. The absence of inclusive dialogue that involves both elites and grassroots actors weakens the legitimacy of such efforts. However, successful peacebuilding experiences in the region highlight the importance of **community-driven approaches**, trust-building initiatives, and joint economic projects that create interdependence between the Tiv and Jukun. These findings suggest that sustainable peace requires a shift from temporary conflict management to transformative peacebuilding that tackles historical grievances, promotes equitable governance, and fosters a culture of coexistence.

Conclusion

The Tiv–Jukun conflict demonstrates how competition over scarce resources, particularly land, fosters stereotypes, hostility, and recurring violence, as explained by Realistic Conflict Theory and further illuminated by the conflict tree approach. While political interests and identity struggles have exacerbated the crisis, land remains the central issue shaping its persistence. The conflict's devastating consequences ranging from displacement and loss of livelihoods to food insecurity and widespread human rights abuses highlight the urgent need for collective and inclusive peacebuilding. Sustainable resolution requires mobilizing social capital, intellectual resources, economic means, and community-driven initiatives to transform the conflict dynamics and foster long-term coexistence.

Recommendations

The author further recommends the following approaches to address the Tiv-Jukun Land disputes:

1. Land Reforms: the Nigerian government should implement land reforms that recognize and respect traditional land tenure, the communities should be

educated about their history and the impact of colonialism.

2. Economic Development: All hands must be on desk to promote economic development initiatives that benefit both communities

3. Capacity building: Provision of training and capacity-building programs for stakeholders on technology-based peace building

4. Monitoring: Establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of peace building efforts in these communities

5. Inter-ethnic marriages between the two groups, trade, religion, language and music

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