

## **JUKUN-TIV RELATIONS IN THE BENUE VALLEY REGION: THE 2019 SCUFFLES IN SOUTHERN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Conflict, in general, is an inevitable part of relationship within and between groups and societies. It is intrinsic and thus natural to human and is expressed in diverse forms, differences in opinion, views and sentiments etc. When conflict occurs, interests are always at stake. The values attached to these interests mostly define the nature and character of such conflict. The most disturbing is the violence that often leaves in its wake several loss of lives, destruction of valuable property and a general sense of insecurity. The 2019 Jukun-Tiv conflict in Wukari assumed such a character with the attendant consequences of violent conflict, fast becoming the “normal” reality of our time. This is not only dangerous and unacceptable, but has formed the basis on which this research work is dedicated to resolving. Through a multi-disciplinary approach, the research attempt an analysis of the nature and character of the 2019 Jukun-Tiv conflict within a broader context of relationship in the Benue Valley Region of Nigeria. At the end, practicable and justifiable processes and ways that would guarantee positive and viable relationship between the Jukun and Tiv are suggested.*

**KEYWORDS:** colonial, conflict, economic, policies, political, politics, pre-colonial, relationship, social,

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is on record that both the Jukun and Tiv have lived in the Benue Valley longed before the coming of colonial masters, notwithstanding which group settled first. It is therefore obvious that the two groups, who have been living side by side, must have established relationships

that have come a long way. These relationships have been manifesting in diverse forms, with both positives and negatives attributes. In as much as the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial inter-groups relations in the Benue Valley were replete with wars of conquest and expansion, even between Jukun and Tiv, records have it that there were also some form of cordial relations between the groups that have spanned a long period. The Jukun and Tiv had once combined forces to fight the Fulani expansionists; particularly the group led by one Dankaro (Jacobs, 2007) and expelled them from the Arufu, Akwana and Tsofa area. The ability of Jukun and Tiv to present a common front against the invading Fulani, typifies the extent of solidarity and shared interest that characterized the relationship amongst indigenous groups in the Benue Valley.

The Colonial period also had a profound effect on Jukun-Tiv relationship. With the arrival of Colonialism the relationship between the two groups, in some aspects became strained and sour due to introduction and enforcement of some Colonial policies that did not only created rift between the two, but benefitted the Colonial administration. This tart relationship between the two groups, in some aspects, extended right into the post-colonial period, where they experienced incessant communal conflicts, due to scarce resources and political intrigues among other reasons, leading to wanton destruction of lives and property.

Despite the period of tart relationship between Jukun and Tiv, the very long period of cordiality in relationship between the two groups practically translated into inter-marriages, exchange of trade items such as fish/salt to food items such as tubers. The post-2002 relations between the two is characterized by positive activities ranging from good friendship among them, supply of farm labour by the Tiv to the Jukun, selling their farm produce (yam) together in Wukari. Many Jukun families adopted Tiv children to stay with them in Wukari; some Jukun individuals going for studies in Benue State University and Federal University of Agriculture, all in Makurdi. Likewise, many Tiv individuals going for studies in Kwararafa University and Federal University Wukari, and some Tiv academics picking up appointments in Federal University Wukari and Kwararafa University, Wukari.

However, in April 2019, the monster, violence, reared up its horrible head amongst the two groups that had lived cordially between 2002 and 2019, leaving many people wondering what really went wrong that resulted to the scuffles. It is against this background and question raised that this research sets out as its objectives to analyze the nature and character of the Jukun-Tiv skirmishes of 2019 in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, and suggest possible lasting solutions for affable affairs among the Jukun and Tiv in not only Wukari Local Government Area, but the Southern Senatorial Zone of Taraba State, the State and Nigeria at large.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to achieve the set objectives of this research, a multi-disciplinary methodological approach was adopted. This involved the use of several sources of information which cut across the discipline of History and other related disciplines for the purpose of corroborating the information obtained. These are primary, secondary and tertiary sources. In the use of primary sources, extensive field work was carried out in the study area stretching over a

period of twelve (12) months which involved gathering, analyzing and interpreting the data collated. Oral interviews, (formal and informal) were conducted with a number of informants spread across the study area. This was for the purpose of arriving at more valid conclusion.

The sample population for the interviews were randomly selected among the peoples of the area of study made up of Jukun, Tiv, Christian leaders, Muslim leaders, traditional rulers, retired and serving public and private officers, retired and serving administrators, lecturers/teachers and students in the tertiary institutions, the youths (males and females), farmers and businessmen and women. The informants were of the age brackets of 18 to 100 years. There were also Open Group Discussions (OGD) with some of the informants. This article recognizes the significance of oral sources of information in historical reconstruction and used such data with utmost caution.

The research also benefitted from secondary sources which included published books, journal articles, seminar papers and unpublished materials. These materials proved useful in providing the necessary information on the subject matter. However, in as much as these materials were useful, they were not short of limitations, but used with utmost caution.

Finally, the multi-disciplinary approach has not been restricted to the methodology of information and data collection. It has also been extended to the methodology of analysis, interpretation and presentation of data, thus giving way to a presentation that is not only historical but also descriptive and analytical in nature.

## **Theoretical Frame Work**

### **Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory emphasizes conflict as the hallmark of the society. The theory is based upon the view that the fundamental causes of political violence are the social and economic forces that operates within society. Conflict theorists are of the view that there are groups in the society that have different interests. In this regard they believe that social arrangement will tend to benefit some groups at the expense of others. Because of existence of the different interests, the potentials and the likelihood of conflict is always present (see Aver, Nnorom & Targba 2013).

According to this theory, some groups come to dominate others and to win for themselves a disproportionate share of the society's political power, which includes wealth and privileges in the society at the expense of the less powerful ones. They also incriminate the activities of the less powerful while they protect that of the powerful persons such situations according to this theory creates violence. The theory is of the view that, the masses are not bound to society by their shared values, but by coercion at the hands of those in power. This perspective emphasizes social control, not consensus and conformity. Groups and individuals advance their own interests, struggling over control of societal resources. Those with the most resources exercise power over others with inequality and power struggles resulting. There is great attention paid to class, race, and gender in this perspective because they are seen as the grounds of the most pertinent and enduring struggles in society which often lead to political violence (Anderson & Taylor 2009).

According to the theory, the nature of politicking in Nigeria abridges the basic right of citizens as the various institutions of society such as the legal and political system are instruments of ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. However the activities of citizens aimed at maintaining the resistance leads to increased escalation of political violence in Nigeria (Alemika 2016).

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

Relative Deprivation Theory was propounded by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears (1939), as part of efforts to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to upheavals and mutinies. The relative deprivation theory argues that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, the collective frustration turns to anger and violence. This theory presents the idea of relative deprivation as a perceived disparity between value expectation and value capabilities. Or the lack of a need satisfaction defined as a gap between aspiration and achievement (Midlarsky 1975). The eruption of violence majorly between the so called 'indigenes' and 'settlers' in Nigeria, including the Jukun and Tiv conflicts are as a result of frustration being experienced by the so called 'settlers' in the hands of the so called 'indigenes'. Based on the foregoing major assumptions of the theories, the perspective has been adopted as the theoretical guide for this study.

### **Brief on Jukun and Tiv in the Benue Valley Region of Nigeria**

The Jukun speaking peoples of Nigeria occupy the Benue Valley which falls within the Middle Belt region of Central Nigeria. They are largely concentrated in Taraba State with their capital at Wukari, the seat of their paramount ruler, the Aku-Uka. They are found in the following Local Government Areas of Taraba State: Ardo-Kola, Bali, Donga, Gashaka, Gassol, Ibi, Jalingo, Karim-Lamido, Kurmi, Takum, Ussa and Wukari. However, a great number of them are found in the towns of Abinsi, Oga, Adi and Makurdi in Benue State; Pindiga in Gombe State; Awe and Akyekura in Nasarawa State and part of Plateau State.

According to Meek (1931, p.1) the Jukun speaking peoples of Nigeria occupied in scattered groups the part of the Benue basin which is bounded by Abinsi to the west and Kona to the east, Pindiga to the north and Donga to the south, a stretch of country which roughly represents the confines of the Jukun kingdom of Kororofa as it existed at the end of the eighteenth century. What is referred to as Jukunland covers the approximate area between latitude 7°N and 10½°N and latitude 8½°E and 12°E. (Atohinko 1991, p.19).

On the other hand, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tiv land comprised a substantial portion of the undulating plains of the Benue Valley, stretching from 6°30'N to 8°N and from 8°E to 10°E (Bohannan 1968, p3). Tiv land was bordered to the east by the Jukun, to the north by the Arago and the Gomei, to the west by the Idoma and to the south by a number ethnic groups of the Obudu plateau. Today, the Tiv are considered as the largest minority ethnic group in the central region of Nigeria, otherwise called the Middle Belt region. They are predominantly found in Benue State, numbering about 2 million (Ayangaor 2010, p.87) in the following Local Government Areas: Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Ushongo, Gboko, Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West, Buruku, Konshisha, Makurdi, Vandeikya, Ukum, Tarka and Logo

(Kwanga & Kerengu 2007, p4). Furthermore, about 2 million of them are found in surrounding States of Nasarawa, Taraba, Plateau and Cross River of Nigeria (Ayangaor 2010, p.87). Thus, the area covered by the Jukun and Tiv lies within the Guinea savannah region of Nigeria with its characteristic woodland vegetation and interesting degree of unity in terms of flora. There are two distinct seasons, the wet or rainy season which begins in March and ends in October. This period has much rain in June and July, with a break of a few days in August and then heavy down pour descend again in September and sometimes into October. There is the dry season which lasts from November to March. The geographical condition of the areas of the Jukun and Tiv have had far reaching consequences on their economic, political, social and cultural activities. Due to the fertility of the land, agriculture remains the most important economic activity of the two.

### **Overview of Relations between the Jukun and Tiv since Pre-Colonial Period.**

At the mention of relations between the Jukun and Tiv in the Benue Valley, any one acquainted with post-colonial events in Taraba and Benue States would undertake that there has never been any geniality between them, instead, rancour and violence. However, through the traditional historical approach of methodology, this study unearthed the fact that relations between the two groups has not always been characterized by viciousness, but they had also lived peacefully and cooperated with one another to have a better society for themselves and their future generations. There exist several sources indicating that relations between the Jukun and the Tiv was very genial during the Pre-Colonial period. Alubo (2006, p.97) note that before Colonialism, however, there were no accounts of conflicts between the Tiv and the Jukun. Akombo (2005, p.121) asserts that a very close look at the pre-colonial history of the relationship between the Tiv and the Jukun does not support a gloomy picture, while Best, Idyorough and Shehu (2004, p.90) say, “Interestingly, there were no records of wars fought between the Tiv and the Jukun in pre-colonial times. Rather both groups, being neighbours, often fought on the same side, as was the case when the notorious slave raider (Dankaro) raided both the Tiv and the Jukun for slaves. Even though one cannot totally say relationship between the two groups was one hundred percent (100%) genial during the pre-colonial period (see Ayangoar 2010, p.91), there were areas of positive cooperation between the two groups in the pre-colonial period. As far back as the 1850s, precisely in 1854, when the boat of the Royal Niger Company Expedition sailed up the Niger-Delta to Ibi, the mission leaders, Dr W.B Baikie and Samuel Crowder, asked someone to point out the boundary between the two ethnic groups in the area, the Tiv and the Jukun. Their informant, (a Jukun elder), intertwined his ten fingers to indicate that the two peoples lived as one (Maier 2010, p197 & Akombo 2005, p122). This implied a genial living.

### **Socio-Cultural and Political Relations**

There was a genial socio-political relation between the Jukun and Tiv before the inception of the colonial regime. In the political evolution of the Tiv, there emerged the “Drum Chief” known as Tor-Agbande which many sources ponder it was due to cultural contact between the two. Jibo (2009, p.78) state that there was ‘Culture-contact’ between Tiv and the Jukun in the pre-British era which had produced the Tor-Agbande as a structure of influence and authority in pre-colonial Tiv land. This confirms Akiga’s insight into the evolution of chieftainship among the Tiv. He demonstrates that the Tiv, who were traditionally Chiefless, developed the chieftaincy institution as a result of their contact with the Jukun from whom

they got their 'Tor-Agbande' or 'Drum Chiefs'. These were so styled because of the drumming which accompanied them on their return journey from Wukari where they went for recognition and investiture by the Jukun king, the Aku. These drum chiefs had influence rather than authority. They had prestige among their fellow Tiv people and thus brought with it. They could sometimes settle inter-personal disputes in society using their prestige (Jibo 2009, p.44). Jibo (2009, p.79) further asserts that the contact of Tiv people with the Jukun had also influenced the adoption of Jukun titles such as Kur by people in communities bordering the Jukun kingdom such as Ukum and Shitile. Kur was a title for a man of valour. This was only possible through genial relations between the two groups (Read Akombo 2005, p143 and Ikime 1985, p8).

Another aspect of social relation between the two groups was inter-marriages. Akombo (2005, p134) quoted David Mtuem as saying that there was an impressive degree of inter-marriages between the two groups. However, the rate of inter-marriages was higher between the Tiv and the Jukun in areas like Akwana, Kente and Sondi. Mtuem further observed that the Tiv were more generous in giving out their daughters in marriage to the Jukun than the later. But, Agbu (2019) note that both the Tiv and the Jukun were not that generous in giving out their daughters in marriage to each other. Nevertheless, many were involved in inter-marriages. To sum it up, Apenda (2006, p196) assert that mixed marriage across the Tiv and their inter-group ethnic communities were very common among the groups inhabiting the length and breadth of the region. In the South, inter-group marriages between the Udam (Cross River); the Duala (Cameroon) in the West; the Idoma and Iggede in the east (Benue State); the Jukun, Chamba and Alago in the North; and other kindred groups are said to have been as conventional before and during colonial period. This brought long-lasting unity between the two groups in the pre-colonial period.

Despite the Jukun's view of having different culture with the Tiv, the two related very well in the aspect of the consumption of the local brew called '*Tashi*' or '*Burukutu*' since the pre-colonial period. Ayangaor (2010, p91) note that, while the Tiv produced food grains, they depended on Jukun for their supplies of salt and *Tashi* (alcoholic drink). This, Agbe (2006, p288) made it clear that, right from the earliest times, local brewed beer (*Tashi*) formed the basis of Tiv-Jukun friendship. The brewing of *Tashi* was a major pre-occupation of Jukun women. As soon as Tiv farmers closed from work, they headed straight to the *Tashi* houses managed by Jukun women in such areas as Kente, Awe and Ketura (sic). By mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the brewing industry had a big boost from thirsty Tiv framers such that it became a profitable Jukun industry. In these *Tashi* houses, Tiv-Jukun friendship got perpetual bond. This bond existed into the post-colonial period.

### **Economic Relations**

Another area of geniality between the Jukun and the Tiv in the pre-colonial period was in the aspect of economic undertakings. According to Akombo (2005, p125), while the Tiv were better farmers, the Jukun and the Abakwariga were more specialized in textile works and salt production as well as fishing activity. This does not mean that the Jukun were not farmers during the pre-colonial period, but they had other economic activities they concentrated much on – salt production and fishing. Thus, Akombo (2005, p125) again asserts that on the whole, the economics of the two communities – Tiv and Jukun – were more diversified than

specialized in the strict sense of the word. There were significant areas of occupational cross-carpeting. For instance, farming and textile works were essential aspects of both the Tiv and the Jukun economics. Thus, the two communities relied upon one another to facilitate trade as well as to improve on their technologies. The Jukun were expert salt producers, with Akwana, Arufu and Awe their main salt mines and the Tiv provided expanded markets for them to sell their salt. Thus through trade, the Tiv on the eastern frontier were able to satisfy their salt needs from the Jukun. The Tiv needed salt just as the Jukun needed guinea-corn and millet to make *Tashi* (Agbe 2006, p292). Agbe (2006) further notes that in the absence of markets at the early stage, Jukun traders normally carried salt to Tiv villages or compounds to exchange for Tiv farm products including the much needed corn.

Furthermore, the Jukun, particularly the Wanu who were fishing communities along the river banks of River Benue had a genial relations with the Tiv through exchange of some of their fish for Tiv grains and the Tiv copied the technology of canoe building from the Jukun (Sargent 1975, p16). In the area of textile industry, both groups depended upon each other to advance their works. For instance, though the Tiv were already advanced in their textile works, they still needed some skills from both the Jukun and Abakwariga in order to improve on some aspects of their textile works like dyeing, while the Jukun adopted some weaving patterns from the Tiv textile industry (Akombo 2005, p126).

The Jukun and Tiv also cooperated and co-existed in the area of trade during pre-colonial period (see Doward 1976, Pp577-579 & Akombo, 2005 p130). Atohinko maintained that both communities interacted favourably well with one another in the course of trade. Therefore, the fact that Jukun and Tiv traders travelled freely in each other's communities without harassment or fear of being attacked indicated that relations between the two were not always antagonistic but genial. Thus, Akombo (2005, p131) note that invariably, trade was a very important integrative ingredient between the Tiv and the Jukun in the pre-colonial years. The atmosphere of trade resulted in the emergence of cross-cultural ideas between the two groups, which affected their socio-political and economic lives.

### **Military Relations**

The history of Jukun and Tiv relations in the pre-colonial period also witnessed military alliances in order to fight against external enemies. During the reign of Aku Agbumanu Agbu (1845-1860), the Jukun and Tiv joined military forces to challenge the Fulani jihadists at Wase and Misau, who were raging assaults on Wukari (Abraham 1940, p19). Furthermore, in the early years of the reign of Aku Awudumanu Abite (1871-1903), one Dankaro, a soldier of fortune, became a thorn in the side of both the Jukun and Tiv. However, after playing his intrigues against the Jukun king, Dankaro was attacked and driven out of Arufu by the Jukun, assisted by numerous groups of Tiv (Meek 1931, p59 & NAK/SNP17/8/K2441 Vol.1). Even into the colonial period, the Jukun and Tiv joined military forces in 1906 to crush a dispute between the Hausa and Jukun communities at Abinsi (Dusgate 1985, p237 & Agbe 2006, p287). From the foregoing, one has enough grounds to agree with Akombo (2005), that interactions between the Jukun and Tiv in the pre-colonial period was mutual and a certain level of peaceful co-existence was created and maintained, and this cut across areas of socio-cultural, political, economic and military activities.

### **Relations between the Jukun and Tiv in Colonial Passé**

The period of European Colonization of Nigerian marked the beginning of ruthless exploitation of economic resources and it marked the beginning of discord between different communities that had once lived peacefully with each other such as the Jukun and Tiv (Agbu 2012, p66). By 1900, the Jukun and Tiv had come under the British domination with far reaching consequences on their relations in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In order to minimize cost and maximize profit at the expense of the two groups, the British colonial administrators imposed on the populace certain policies which had serious undesirable implications overtime on the two groups. Agbu (2012, p70; Agbu & Varvar 2017, p19) assert that apart from the fact that these policies contributed to the creation of rural poverty among the Jukun and Tiv, it also led to the movement of people from their places of origin into other places with high potentials for agriculture and other means of livelihood, contributing to subsequent out-break of communal disturbances between the two groups, particularly in the post-colonial period. These were the British colonial economic policies of **Cash Crop Production** (see Rodney 1972, p108; Agbu 2012, p72; Agbu & Varvar 2017, p20), which put much pressure on Jukun and Tiv lands that so much lost their fertility. Also, the lands couldn't cater for the rising population in the areas, thus resulting to emergence of rural poverty among the Tiv and Jukun who thereafter sought for alternatives either within or outside their areas; **Monetization Policies** (Agbu & Varvar 2017, p21) which steered serious exploitation of the rural Jukun and Tiv farmers. The consequence was economic decline of the rural farmers leading to development of rural poverty (Agbu & Varvar 2017, p21). The more the cultivation of the land in order to meet up colonial demands, the more pressure on the land leading to its depletion, compounding rural poverty: and lastly, the **Colonial "Ring Fence" Policy of 1917/1918**, considered by many Tiv and Jukun scholars as responsible for the strong divide between the two groups up to date. Recall that during the ending years of the reign of Aku Awudumanu Abite (1871-1903), due to the expanding Tiv group becoming a new source of anxiety to the Jukun, there were conflicts around the Jukun areas of Akwana and Arufu axis. At a point, the Jukun formed alliance with some Tiv to drive out Dankaro from Arufu. But after that episode, some Tiv immigrants into the area wanting to take-over the fertile area of the Akwana-Arufu axis, went to Dankaro for assistance. They (Tiv and Dankaro) made a surprise attack at night on the Jukun, resulting to the destruction of the Jukun war fetish, and fighting continued without any satisfactory result (Meek 1931, p59; NAK/SNP17/8/K2441 Vol.1., Pp14-24).

Consequent on the above deed of the Tiv immigrants, between 1883 and 1899, Aku Awudumanu Abite sought for the help of the Royal Niger Company to contain both Dankaro, the Fulani and Tiv expansion. He was still on the throne when the British government took over the administration of Northern Nigeria from RNC in 1900. Subsequent events between the Jukun and Tiv took place under the British colonial administration.

First and foremost, in order to achieve their aim of total control, the colonial administration created the Muri Province in 1902 with Ibi its capital not Wukari, (reasons best known to them). Ibi was later made the capital of a Division comprising certain areas that were hitherto independent of Ibi but dependent of the Aku of Wukari (Atohinko 1991, p95). If the colonial administration truly wanted to "resurrect" the Jukun Empire of Wukari as claimed by Jacobs (2007) and his students, the Jukun chiefdom of Kona and other areas north-east of Wukari



would have been carved out and placed under a 'Wukari Province' with headquarters in Wukari, under the control of the Aku-Uka, a centralized authority even before the arrival of the Europeans. However, that was not the case, because, for the fear of creating a very strong traditional central authority which might conflict with their economic and political policies, the British decided to recognize the various chiefs of Kona, Bantaje and Jibu; Donga and Suntai among others as autonomous, subject only to the British Resident at Ibi, thus watering down the powers and prestige of the Aku.

Instead, the Tiv that migrated into the area of Akwana and Arufu were placed under the Aku for Colonial administration's convenient purpose knowing very well that the Tiv migrants operated a totally diverse socio-political organisation with the Jukun. Because the colonial officers such as Captain Ruxton, Captain Gordon, Captain Rowe and Mr. McKay were much more concerned about tax generation, they encouraged Tiv migration and expansion eastward into the vast Wukari area which they considered virgin and laying waste. Jacobs (2007, Pp336-339) explain thus, the 'Tiv School' saw no objection to Tiv expansion into Wukari as they believed that it would lead to expanded agricultural output and what they understood to be economic development. This led to mass migration of Tiv from Southern and Central Tiv area into Wukari area, but for their lack of central traditional system, they found the Jukun socio-political organisation and procedure very strange and refused to even pay the tax to the colonial government through the Aku and Wukari (Jacobs 2007, p337). The happenings started creating frictions between the two groups before the colonial administration came up with a plan or policy creating a clear boundary line between the two.

In 1917, Freemantle concluded that since the Tiv had swamped nearly the whole of Jukun area, thus cutting off Jukun villages and would not accept the authority of the Aku, the best solution was to give the Tiv concerned a year notice to quit, meanwhile to give them facilities to choose new settlements in the Districts from which they came from (NAK/SNP/10/5/321p/1917).

From Freemantle's report for 1917, it is clear that the migrants had been troublesome over the years and the best solution was to create a separate Province for them. Thus he ordered them to withdraw South and West of Akwana, Arufu and Wukari axis behind what was referred to as the 'Gordon line' which was supposed to represent the limits of Tiv penetration of Wukari area at the time of the British occupation. This was the policy known as the 'Ring Fence' policy administered around Ibi Division. By 1918 almost all the Tiv had been evicted from the Ibi Division, but it was already becoming apparent that it would be difficult to permanently prevent Tiv migration into Jukun territory. The colonial administration categorically failed in this action because, instead of conducting a census to ascertain those Tiv that were really migrants amongst those that had lived side by side with the Jukun and then move them back to wherever they were coming from, they categorized all Tiv as migrants and treated them same, leading to deprived feelings among all the Tiv.

Consequently, when in 1919 (1<sup>st</sup> January) the Munshi Province was created headed by Captain Rowe who was sympathetic to the idea of the Tiv returning to Wukari, and with the replacement of Freemantle with Duff as Resident of Muri Province, the basis of a compromise was worked out by which the Tiv would be allowed to return to Wukari but they

were to be regarded as ‘settlers’ under the authority of the Jukun Native Authority headed by the Aku (Jacobs 2007, p345). Here again, there was flaw because, categorization was not made between the returning Tiv (whether indigenous or migrants), thus, any Tiv that wanted to move into Wukari area was allowed in the name of ‘settler’, populating the Jukun area with large number of Tiv. Much subsequent resistance were to center on these two points as the Tiv clans of Shitire and Ukum who claimed residence of Wukari area believed that they were not ‘settlers’, but ‘indigenes’. This has been the situation into the post-colonial period leading to outbreak of conflicts coupled with some other factors.

### **Colonial Politics and Jukun–Tiv Relations**

Party politics played a vital role in the relations between the Jukun and Tiv in the colonial period and subsequently into the post-colonial era. The idea of the Jukun joining party politics was introduced to Aku-Uka Atoshi Agbunshu Agbumanu IV (1945-1960) in 1945 when he attended the Northern House of Chiefs’ meeting at Lugard Hall in Kaduna. It was initially Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa and the Aku blessed his secretary then, Ibrahim Usman Sangari of the Ambakpariga group to join. Though the Jukun elite in Wukari showed apathy in joining party politics then, few of them and the Hausa elite happily joined the political association (Usman & Adamu 2005, p.85). Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa was later transformed to Northern People’s Congress (NPC), and it became a dominant political party in Wukari Federation. Nevertheless, the political apathy of Jukun elite at that time affected the entire Jukun people in the area generally.

Before 1955, majority of Jukun and Tiv belonged to the NPC because it was the only popular political party around. The Tiv were not comfortable in NPC due to what they labelled as discrimination and rivalry between them and the Hausa-Fulani leadership. Thus in 1955, when the United Middle-Belt Congress (UMBC) was formed by Joseph Sawuan Tarka, a Tiv political leader, it was indeed the opportunity most Tiv people had been yearning for due to the unhealthy relationship between them and the ruling NPC (Akombo 2005, p166). Consequently, majority of Tiv in Wukari area decamped from the NPC and joined the UMBC which was more or less a Tiv political party. With the Jukun elite remaining in NPC and the Tiv in NEPU/UMBC alliance, the stage was ready for political clatters between the two. The Jukun became more conscious of the need to cheek the growing Tiv influence in what they considered to be their land; the pendulum in their relationship became simply graphical of hostile atmosphere; an indication that most integrative ingredients disappeared (Akombo 2005, p168). Found in different political camps, politics of rivalry intensified, since in the erroneous context of Nigerian politics, political difference was simply misconstrued to represent hostility and confrontation (Akombo 2005, p168). This was the situation the Jukun and Tiv found themselves in the colonial politics of Wukari Federation with Ibrahim Sangari Usman leading the Jukun political searchlight while Charles Tangel Gaza and Uva Vaase headed the Tiv camp. It was under this arrangement that the NPC politicians in Wukari, Takum and Donga through their political intrigues, elected Malam Ibrahim Sangari Usman from Wukari into the House of Representatives in 1956 (Usman & Adamu 2005, Pp.99-114). However, before the 1956 elections, in 1954, a very serious political event took place having serious setback on Jukun-Tiv relations in the colonial period. There was an attempt by Uva Vaase, a Tiv political activist to be enthroned as the Aku. According to Atoshi (1992, p.11), a Tiv leader, Manu Uva Vaase attempted, in 1954, to usurp the throne of Aku Uka Atoshi

Agbumanu as his people marched into Wukari town carrying him shoulder high. Vaase's action among other reasons was premised on the emerging awareness among the Tiv in Wukari District that by their history of origin, numerical strength and role in the area, they possessed the unflinching right to take part in all levels and categories of administration of the District (Akombo 2005, p168). The question that needed answer was if the so called categories of administration included the Jukun traditional seat – the Aku-Uka? The action of Va'ase was vehemently resisted as Aku Atoshi Agbumanu IV did not take it kindly. He knew that some Tiv who had arrived Wukari Division lately caused the crisis. So he ordered the Tiv who had earlier stayed with him to go one side and those that lately arrived to go the other. The Tiv group thus broke into two and paid dearly for the non-bloody political crisis (Atoshi 1992, p.11).

Notwithstanding the fact that Va'ase's action was checked, the development began a disturbing process of complications in the Jukun-Tiv relationship. It was in the zenith of this political differences between the Tiv and Jukun; massive migration of the Tiv into Wukari, Takum and Donga Divisions, coupled with breakdown in the NPC intra-party alliance over the choice of a candidate from Wukari that a Tiv UMBC candidate, Charles Tangel Gaza won the 1959 Federal House of Representative elections defeating Malam Ibrahim Usman Sangari a pro-Jukun of the Abakwariga group. Contrary to the Tiv majority fallacy in the election, Malam Ibrahim in Usman & Adamu (2005, p111) states that "I lost the election to Tangel Gaza not because the Tiv were more in number than us, but he was supported by our own brothers from Takum and Donga for what they termed a 'revenge' for the key role I played during the election of Tanko Jolly Yusuf". This political development served as a factor in the events that unfolded in the post-colonial politics of the two groups such as the Nande Ior of 1960 and Atem Tyo of 1964.

### **Post-Colonial Relations between the Jukun and Tiv**

Post-colonial relations between the Jukun and Tiv have been characterized with both negative and positive antecedents. Yet, most scholars mainly concentrated on documenting the negative incidents and antecedents which promoted division and hatred, leaving out the positive incidents and antecedents which promotes unity and love. Between 1960 to 2018, the Jukun and the Tiv had experienced violent communal conflicts such as the Nande Ior of 1960 and Atem Tyo of 1964 (Atoshi 1992, Pp11-12 & Akombo 2005, Pp191-196); the 1977 episode (Kpera & Hagher 2001, p28); the 1991/92 Tiv-Jukun conflict (Agbu 1992, Atohinko 1992, Atoshi 1992, Adda 1993, Best, Idyorough & Shehu 1999, Akombo 2005, Usman & Adamu 2005 and Alubo 2006); and the 2001/2002 Tiv-Jukun conflict (Adamu 2002, Avav 2002, Hagher 2002, Akombo 2005, Alubo 2006, Wuam & Ikpanor 2013 and Nyitse 2014). In the course of their investigation and documentation, the entire sources mentioned above allied the factors responsible to the conflicts to include political manoeuvring, claim over land ownership, marginalization, migration, lack of respect for constituted traditional authority among others, and the consequences or effects of the conflicts have been destruction of lives, property, towns/settlements, mutual distrust and creation of stout suspicion among the two groups. More so, the conflicts each time they erupted, they led to disruption of social and economic activities among the two groups. The fact above does not mean the Jukun-Tiv relations in the post-colonial period had no any positive incident. In-between these years and occurrences, the two groups had related positively in various areas

of endeavour. For instance, in the area of social interactions, after each of the encounters recorded above, the Jukun and the Tiv went back to their genial social and economic interactions as if nothing happened. Even though there were registers of difficulties in reintegration among the two groups as captured by Akombo (2005, Pp303-305), that in areas where the attacks were severe and the people suffered great losses, they found it difficult to socialize even many years after the 1991/92 crisis. But there were exceptional cases where the two groups were quick to normalize their relationship (Akombo 2005, Pp305-306).

Inter-marriages between these two are very fundamental in their social relations. According to Agbe (2006, p293), the 1990 war did not interfere much with the Tiv-Jukun inter-marriages, though there were some few cases of some of the women running back on both sides, the generality remained intact. In fact, more of such marriages were contracted after the war. There is enough evidence to suggest that the Tiv of the eastern frontier have reciprocated Jukun gesture marriage wise.

In the area of friendship/courtship, many Jukun and Tiv got involved. Many of them got into love relationship so much that they travelled to each other's villages to spend days and nights. This friendship is also formed in educational institutions right from the primary schools to tertiary institutions. There are many Jukun people involved in studies in Benue State University and Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi; likewise Tiv people studying and working in Federal University, and Kwararafa University, Wukari. It is very fundamental to state that no matter how group relationship deteriorate between the two, many of them would continue to be good friends to each other. That has been the nature of their relationship and friendship after every clatter.

The Jukun-Tiv friendship always extends to their consumption of *Tashi* and bottled beer up to the present day despite the occasional misunderstanding and clashes rooted in land and politics. Agber (2006, p.288) assert that "today, the Tiv-Jukun drinking partners have extended from *Tashi* house to modern beer parlours". It is important to note that after the 2001/2002 conflict, the Jukun travelled to Tiv settlements as Jootar, Kyado, Zaki-Biam, Gbeji, Jardekura, and many others and Tiv went to Jukun settlements of Wukari, Rafin-Kada, Chonku, Kente, Sondi and many others to drink and socialize. Also Tiv and Jukun youths were involved in night clubbing in Jootar and Wukari between 2010 and 2018. With this sociability, love and peace prevailed between them over the years.

More so, there were several Jukun families that adopted Tiv children to assist them in domestic work in Wukari and environs in the years between 2004 and 2019. These Tiv children were sent to various schools in the area. In economic relations, the Jukun and Tiv always related very genial after every clash. In terms of agriculture, particularly the post 2002 period, the Tiv had provided regular labour to Jukun farmers in almost all Jukun settlements. More so, through this relation, the Jukun farmers learnt new farming techniques particularly in yam farming from the Tiv. Jukun and Tiv men and women attended markets to sell and buy in the areas of the two groups. Most importantly, the Wukari Yam market became a center of economic activities for both groups during the post 2002 years until the 2019 skirmishes. Many Jukun and Tiv women opened food restaurants and hair dressing saloons in and around Wukari in the post 2002 years. The motor-cycle transport business popularly

called ‘Achaba’ or ‘Okada’ was what many Jukun and Tiv youths got involved in up to when the 2019 skirmishes started. Akombo (2005, p356) captured how the two groups related positively after the 1991/92 and 2001/2002 conflicts and concludes that “it is, in fact, observed that no concerted efforts have ever been made after any conflict in the area to achieve peace and harmony between the two groups as was evident after the 2001/2002 conflict”. And by these efforts, significant peace was attained between the Tiv and Jukun across Nigeria in general and Taraba and Benue States in particular between 2004 and 2019. Politically, relations between the Jukun and Tiv after the 2001/2002 conflict have been genial to a certain extent. However, during the 2015 general elections, while the Jukun voted massively for their son to become the Governor of Taraba State, majority of the Tiv in the Wukari area supported a political party that won in Benue State. However in the 2019 general elections, the Tiv in Wukari area, except some residents in Chonku ward (Kyaiaor and Gborocha), voted on the same party line with the majority of the Jukun.

### **The 2019 Skirmishes**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, violence erupted between the Jukun and Tiv at Kente in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. In a period of three (3) months (April-June), the violence started consuming communities in Donga, Takum LGAs in Taraba State; and some border communities in Ukum, Katsina-Ala and Logo LGAs of Benue State. Between April and December 2019, a lot of harm were done to Jukun and Tiv communities and relationships strained, leaving thousands of these people counting their losses.

What are the instantaneous and isolated grounds of the catastrophe, the nature of the ferocity and the magnitudes of the catastrophe on not only the two groups living in the area, the Southern Zone and Taraba State as a whole?

### **The Instantaneous Source**

Between 2013 and 2015, almost all communities in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, faced devastating attacks by the rampaging violent Fulani-armed herdsmen. Jukun communities such as Akwana (4<sup>th</sup> March 2013), Ando-Katswen (4<sup>th</sup> March 2013), Nwukyon (15<sup>th</sup> April 2014), Ando-Yaku (21<sup>st</sup> April 2014), Chinkai (24<sup>th</sup> May 2014), Nwuko (29<sup>th</sup> January 2015), Tunari (multiple attacks, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2014, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015), were attacked and several people lost their lives and property worth billions of naira were destroyed. Tiv communities too were not spared in the attacks, moreover, the issue started between the Fulani and Tiv in the area before it tangled the Jukun when one of their community leader (Ward Head of Ando-Manu), was killed by the rampaging Fulani armed-herdsmen. By the third and fourth quarters of 2015, relative peace was restored in the area by the Taraba State government. In 2016 the Chairman Caretaker Committee of Wukari LGA, Hon. Adi Daniel (Adigrace), took it upon himself to resolve the catastrophe between the Jukun, Tiv and Fulani, and to further resettle the displaced people in their villages such as Nakambo, Nayinawa, Nwukyon, Ando-Yaku, Chinkai, Ando-Katswen and others (Agbu 2017, p.39). While the Jukun were rebuilding their destroyed settlements, and restarting their normal economic activities and social life, conflict resumed again, in the beginning of 2018, between the Fulani and Tiv. Consequently, Tiv settlements along Wukari – Ibi road and along Wukari – Akwana – Chinkai axis in Taraba State; and Tiv communities on the border of Benue and Nasarawa States started coming under attacks by the rampaging Fulani armed herdsmen. The consequences were destruction

of these communities, with many people losing their lives and property, while IDPs flocked into Wukari town in Taraba State and other towns in Tiv land. For example, on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018, Gborucha, a Tiv settlement along Wukari – Kente road was attacked by the herdsmen leading to death of 6 persons and 17 injured. Also on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Jandeikura also a Tiv community was attacked leading to 9 deaths and 24 injured. Thenceforth, there were series of attacks on Tiv villages in Benue State as covered by the electronic, print and social media.

Astoundingly, in the beginning of 2019, the Tiv became wary of the Jukun and questioned the Jukun's genial connection with the Fulani in the area; and concluded that the Jukun were supporting the Fulani in their attacks on Tiv communities. Thus, between January and March 2019 some events spread-out between the two groups along Wukari – Kente axis, leading to the final stroke that broke the Camel's back on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019, popularly known as the Kente Attack.

Grounded on security report by the Chairman of Wukari Local Government Council, Hon Daniel (2019), and memorandum of the Jukun Youth Central Body to the 10-man Committee constituted by the Taraba and Benue States' Governments on the protracted Tiv/Jukun crisis, dated 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, it was clear that on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2019, one Nwubu Istifanus (a Jukun) was lynched by the Tiv people at Iorja on the insubstantial and groundless reason that the Jukun people of Ando-Katswen were supplying food and essential materials to the Fulani who were attacking the Tiv. Again on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019, the Tiv from Ikyaior, without provocation, burnt down Chudan, a neighbouring Jukun settlement, and seized three (3) motorcycles belonging to the same people of Chudan. They further seized four (4) motorcycles belonging to the Jukun people of Sondi and completely vandalized a pick-up van belonging to a Jukun man from Fyayi village. Daniel (2019) notes that all these infringements were done by the Tiv on frivolous allegations of Jukun conniving with the Fulani. It is important to state here that all these acts were reported to constituted authorities and pictures/videos disseminated to the general public through the social media. Displeasures were beginning to upsurge among the Jukun youths, particularly on the Wukari – Kente – Akwana axis. But for the intervention of security agents; the Chairman of Wukari LGC and the Jukun Traditional Institution, the Jukun youths were pacified and there wasn't any retaliation.

Furthermore, prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> April episode, the Tiv had openly harassed and maltreated Jukun women attending their (Tiv) markets such as in Gbeji, and at the same time, hassled their (Tiv) women for attending Jukun markets. Note that as inter-group relation among the two groups was breaking down, some Tiv and Jukun along the Kente axis were still tangled in social relationship which together with the action of one Solomon Ihong in Kente climaxed to the eruption of ferocity in Kente on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019.

### **What Happened in Kente?**

The Tiv having armed themselves to teeth, were charged and probing for any trivial chance to unleash terror on the Jukun people. In order implement their plan, they callously and brazenly suspects the Jukun of devious with the Fulani in attacking them (Tiv). To make it real, a Tiv youth named Solomon Ihong was sent by his people to chase out all Tiv women attending

Kente market on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019. This act of Solomon Ihong was not taken frivolously by the Jukun youth in Kente, leading to open quarrel and fight between the two groups. In the end, Ihong was apprehended by the security agents (Police) in Kente. While being quizzed, Ihong stated clearly that the Tiv women were selling their goods to the Jukun which will eventually pass to the Fulani.

As events were unfolding in Kente, simultaneously about sixteen (16) Jukun women on a business trip to Afyakot (in Benue State) and a Jukun man who went to Gbeji (in Benue State) with his pick-up van were all held hostages by the Tiv. Thus, in order to resolve the matter, with the intervention of the Chairman of Wukari LGA, and other security agents in Kente, including the Police, Solomon Ihong was released from police custody in exchange for the Jukun women and the man that were held hostages by the Tiv.

After the release of Solomon Ihong, on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2019, there was argument between the Jukun and Tiv youths in Kente which resulted to open fighting. However, the situation was put under control by the elders, only for another group of Tiv youths to return in the late hours of the same day, hurling stones on Jukun houses. There was retribution by the Jukun youths in Kente too, hurling back stones. At about 8pm of the same day, gun shots were heard from the direction of the Tiv settlements and some houses of the Jukun people in Kente were torched. This was the commencement of what came to consume parts of Wukari, Donga, Takum LGAs in Taraba State; Ukum, Katsina-Ala and Logo LGAs in Benue State – The Tiv-Jukun scuffles of 2019.

### **The Assaults**

Beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020, there were harmonized attacks carried out by both the Tiv and Jukun reservists on Jukun communities/persons and vice-versa respectively, leaving hundreds of people dead on both sides, obliteration of homes and property, displacement of persons and disruption of economic and social undertakings of both the Jukun and the Tiv. Sampled instances of Tiv attacks on Jukun communities are as follows: on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 10<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (Kente), 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2019 (Front Line Area in Wukari), 13<sup>th</sup> April & 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (Chonku), 3<sup>rd</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> May, 7<sup>th</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1<sup>st</sup> July & 14<sup>th</sup> Aug 2019 (Rafin-Kada), 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (Numa), 13<sup>th</sup> June, 8<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> July 2019 (Tsokundi), 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (Nwusen), 22<sup>nd</sup> June (Sondi), 4<sup>th</sup> Aug & 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2019 (Takum), 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 (Kwararafa). Likewise instances of Jukun attacks on Tiv communities are: 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019 (Tomator), 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (Va'ase), 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (Ikyaior, Voagenda, Mamkpe, Uvondo, Utsea, Ube, Tse-Humbe, Tse-Dzor, Gborgbor, Teghtegh, Uke, Tse-Gindin Mangoro), 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019 (Jootar), 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 (Jandeikura), 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 (Tse-Adepke, Tse-Adam, Tinekon, Tse-Yongogba), 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 (Leke), & 28<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 (Tse-Akume). In all the alleged attacks on both sides, there were maleficent killings, obliteration of property worth billions of naira, desolation of the environment and displacement of many persons including the aged, women and children and so on.

## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conflict, in general is an inevitable part of relationship within and between groups and societies. It is intrinsic and thus natural to human and is expressed in diverse forms: differences in opinion, views and sentiments etc. When conflict occurs, interests are always at stake. The values attached to these interests mostly define the nature and character of such conflict. The most disturbing is the violence that often leaves in its wake several loss of lives, destruction of valuable property and a general sense of insecurity. The Jukun-Tiv scuffle of 2019 assumed such a character with these attendant consequences of violent conflict, fast becoming the “normal” reality of our time. This is not only dangerous and unacceptable, but it calls for what should be done in order to address the issue before it is too late. It is on the basis of these that the following are considered.

Firstly, it is clearly observable that the applications of the western methods of conflict management on the Jukun-Tiv scuffle seem to have only recorded little success. Several peace meetings were organized in the wake of the violent conflict. In all the meetings, there were representations from the Jukun and Tiv as well as governments. In each of these peace meetings, there were claims and counter claims from both the Jukun and Tiv representatives. Funny enough, hardly did each of these meetings was concluded before fight broke out again between the two. It therefore became much obvious that the peace meetings were quite inadequate in resolving the lingering violent conflict between the Jukun and Tiv in Southern Taraba Area. In the first instance, the compositions of the participants at the peace meetings were problematic. The conflict was basically between the Jukun and Tiv in Wukari, Donga and Takum Local Government Areas of Taraba State. But it was observable that some of the representatives of the Tiv at the peace meetings were from Benue State, unlike the Jukun. As such, this did not afford the representatives of the Tiv the opportunity of understanding the fundamental issues and the exact nature and character of the conflict. This partly explain why the Tiv came up with claims and counter claims that were seemingly bogus, unattainable and unacceptable by the Jukun. It is therefore, expected that, in as much as the peace meetings are inadequate, the composition of participants, particularly the representatives of Tiv, should reflect the parties genuinely involved in the conflict. This would not only avail them the opportunity to know the real issues at hand, but would also help them in coming up with claims that are realistic and attainable.

Dilatory or delay approach in addressing the security challenges in and around LGAs in Southern Taraba State has been responsible for the lingering Jukun and Tiv violent conflict and has to be attended to. Delay is basically an act of being slow in action or reaction towards a particular course. It has to do with sluggish decision making/taking in critical circumstances. According to Sterman (2000), delay entails any of the following: “it takes time to measure and report information, it takes time to make decisions, and it takes time for decision to affect the state of a system”. Delays could either be in two forms; material and information delays (Gallo, 2012). Any form of delay in conflict prevention is dangerous and can have devastating effects. Thus, security agencies must be aggressive and prompt in responding to issues that could lead to security break-down.



Again, the armed forces must be apolitical and non-partisan during and after the conflict. Their role as security agents for the purpose of safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens must not be sacrificed on the altar of political or ethnic affiliations. They must be prompt in swinging to action before conflicts exacerbate. Their presence should give a form of assurance of safety to victims and not a signal of danger and insecurity.

Kidnapping, armed robbery and other related criminalities have been a recurrent decimal around Wukari area, particularly along Wukari-Takum road, and Takum-Katsina-Ala roads where there are substantial Tiv settlements. There has been a general perception by the Jukun, who are the major victims, that the Tiv are the ones perpetrating and abetting these criminal activities. Such perception gradually led to stereotyping and resentment of the Tiv people by the Jukun people in and around Wukari and other LGAs in Southern Taraba State. In the face of these continued criminalities, the government and stakeholders were seemed to be doing less. This situation naturally created rift between the Jukun and the Tiv in Southern Taraba State, to the extent that an issue between just two people quickly snowballed into a major ethnic conflict between the Jukun and Tiv, beginning in Wukari, and later Donga and Takum LGAs. As such a prompt and necessary action to check criminalities, such as kidnapping, armed robbery and so on should be taken seriously.

It is equally important to note that the issue of indigene – settler relationship has been a factor in the Jukun-Tiv conflict in Southern Taraba State. The Jukun, based on historical claims, see themselves as the indigenous people, while perceiving the Tiv as settlers, based on their later arrival. This relationship tended to have occasioned an attitude toward each other from both groups. While it is important to note that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives all law abiding individuals the right to live and pursue their legitimate businesses in any part of the country, be that as it may, when individuals residing in a particular place decide to engage in activities that endanger the lives of other innocent citizens residing in that place, without being checked by the relevant security agencies, may lead to citizens taking law into their hands for the purpose of self-defense in protection of their lives and property. This may further lead to mutual suspicion between the parties involved and lead to further conflict. As such, the agencies responsible for maintaining law and order should not keep folding hands while allowing citizens take law to their hands.

The Jukun and Tiv conflict in Southern Taraba State has overtime exacerbated into a larger conflict between the two nations in the Benue Valley. What started as a conflict between the nations within Wukari Local Government became a conflict between two States- Taraba and Benue leading to tensions arising from the border of solidarity for their “brothers” in diaspora. This is majorly because the two nations hold a predominant majority in each of the States. This external influence and interference in the conflict has continually posed a threat towards national unity not to forget the slow pace of development it has caused in the States. Border communities in the two States have become a snare for both residents and other Nigerians particularly when plying the Federal Highway connecting both States. The impact of this cannot be overemphasized; the role of external influence in the conflict has led to a larger effect not just between the Jukun and Tiv in Wukari, or Benue and Taraba States but the country as a whole. For the purpose of peaceful resolution of this conflict between the

parties involved, third parties must be warded off as they contribute majorly to spreading false and malicious reports about the conflict.

The role of traditional leaders using indigenous methods of conflict management, peace-making and peace-building must be brought to the fore in tackling the Jukun-Tiv conflict in Southern Taraba State. Conflict management and peace building are long term peace-making processes and as such they require routine frequent attention. Traditional leaders at the community level are in good positions of organizing communal meetings to foster peace. They are part and parcel of those communities and understand the history, nature and character of the conflict. Setting up committees that include paramount rulers and other third party without involving the community chiefs may not yield as much needed result as constituting a local committee of unbiased community leaders resident in the communities.

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