

## CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURS AND PERPETUATION OF TIV-JUKUN ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN WUKARI, TARABA STATE

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### ABSTRACT

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*The end of every conflict begins with an adequate knowledge of its political economy. An overwhelming majority of scholars agreed that as long as there are beneficiaries of a crisis, the chances of such conflict coming to an end become prolonged or impossible. This is a result of the roles played by instigators, war profiteers, or conflict entrepreneurs. These sets of beneficiaries play mutually complementary roles in terms of war, which ultimately define and determine the dynamics and directions of most violent conflicts, at both their latent and manifest stages. Thus, this paper aims to investigate how war profiteers, and instigators - or, in one word, conflict entrepreneurs – contributed to the perpetuation of the Tiv-Jukun crisis in the Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. The study employed the Greed and Grievance Theory as its theoretical framework for analysis. The study relied on mixed method of data collection and analyses. Both secondary and primary sources of data collection were utilized. The primary method involved the use of interviews and observation; while the secondary method comprised documentary sources such as books, journals, articles, etc. Findings showed that the seemingly irreconcilable nature of the Tiv-Jukun crisis in Wukari was contributed to by greed, which translates as the desire to acquire material resources; and pent-up accumulated grievances. To address such a conflict engendered by greed and grievance, the study recommends that a comprehensive approach be adopted, which should encompass addressing economic inequalities, promoting inclusive governance, and addressing historical grievances. By addressing both the economic motivations and underlying grievances, sustainable peace and development can be achieved.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict Entrepreneur, Jukun, Perpetuation of Conflict, Tiv.

## Introduction

The rise in recurring communal clashes in Nigeria may be attributed to various intrinsic factors which include: land disputes, ethnic rivalry, religious clashes, conflicts associated with the production of oil – as in the Niger Delta – and conflicts connected to boundary demarcation for administrative purposes and power. However, no serious ideological analysis of a conflict is possible without a minimal level of understanding of the facts of the conflict, its socio-political background, history, main actors, the basis of the conflict, leading positions, and arguments (Herman & Peterson, 2017). While some conflicts may be caused by a single factor like religion or ethnicity, the reality is often a myriad of complex activities (Moti, 2010). The Tiv-Jukun ethnic crisis is among the many, seemingly intractable inter-ethnic crises that have stifled development and peace in the affected areas in Nigeria. It has been rightly labelled as the most violent clash in central Nigeria since the Nigerian Civil War (Moti, 2010).

The Jukun ethnic group in Taraba state forms the main group and the nexus of the ancient Kwararafa Kingdom. They achieved successes in war exploits in the days of territorial expansion, and have a long history of subjecting their opponents to

humiliating defeats though in most cases, without establishing any form of direct political control but extending lordship over them (Odigbo, 2016). They existed for many years without threats and major challenges due to their ability to achieve internal peace and security in their territories. Even before the advent of colonialism, Wukari occupied a strategic position for commercial purposes. It serves as a link in the Trans-Saharan trade between the Northern (Kano) market and the Bamenda in Cameroon through Ibi (another Jukun community along the river) (Adamu, 2002). This made Wukari (the main Jukun city and capital of the Kwararafa Kingdom) attractive for the settlement of the Hausa traders and other visitors in such an early period.

The Tiv form the majority in Benue, a border State to Taraba. The Tiv people are known for their rich cultural heritage, agricultural practices, and historic significance within Nigeria. They have a long and complex history, with origins dating back several centuries. According to oral traditions, the Tiv are thought to have migrated from the eastern regions of Nigeria, potentially originating from the Congo Basin area. Over time, they established themselves in the fertile lands of Benue State, where they built their communities and cultivated a

distinctive socio-cultural identity. Agriculture plays a vital role in the Tiv economy, serving as its fundamental pillar. The Tiv community excels in farming and demonstrates remarkable skills in cultivating a diverse range of crops like yams, sorghum, millet, maize, and rice. They actively participate in subsistence farming to ensure self-sufficiency, as well as engage in commercial farming for economic purposes (Akombo, 2005)

Wukari community and its environs are known for high land fertility thus making it irresistible for farming communities like the Tiv and Chamba to make their settlements. Members of the Tiv and Jukun communities had cordial relationships for centuries that preceded the colonial era (Avav, 2002) before socioeconomic and political arrangements in the Benue Valley in general and in Wukari in particular gradually turned the genial relationship resentful (Shut, 2007).

What is today known as the “Tiv-Jukun Ethnic Conflict” evolved at different stages over the past decades concerning its causes, actors, momentum, actual impact, and counteractive mechanisms geared toward peace. There have been recurring crises in 1991/1992; 2001/2002 and 2019/2020. The wreckage of the carnage left behind on

Wukari and other neighbouring Tiv villages years after the irreconcilable, recurring clashes speaks volumes of the impact and is now indelible in the minds of those who witnessed it, leaving behind grotesque images for younger generations to come. In 1991 alone an estimated 5000 thousand people were killed and houses and other valuables worth millions of naira were destroyed, while business activities were paralyzed (Hudgens and Grillo 1995, cited in Egwu 2013). The 2001/2002 and 2019/2020 resurgent crises were observed to be more impactful and destructive, perhaps due to the development of weapons technology and improved strategies of warfare.

Despite the recurring, violent clashes between the Tiv and Jukun communities, existing literature espouses views that the violent confrontations are the results of indigene/settler conundrum, disputes over land and identity politics. Thus, earlier studies such as Nnoli (1995), Jibo (2001), Egwu (2004) and Egwu (1998), understood the conflict as a mere ethnic rivalry or communal feud between the Tiv and the Jukun. For instance, in 1991/1992 and 2001/2002, there were bloody skirmishes between the two groups which led to the illegal blocking of major roads and the erection of unauthorised checkpoints by the

youths of both groups. Hundreds were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2003; cited in Odigbo, 2016).

Similarly, recent scholarly studies such as Otite, (1990); Cordell & Wolf, (2009); Ciboh, (2014); Odigbo, (2016); and Moti; (2010) viewed the causes of the Tiv-Jukun conflict from the perspective of indigene/settler dispute; identity politics and securing of land for farming. Ciboh (2014) posited that the feud over land ownership and occupation, the conundrum of indigene/settlers, political participation and privileges; and fear of domination, account for the causes of the Tiv-Jukun crisis. On their part, Cordell & Wolff (2009) itemised factors such as sentiments of superiority by one ethnic group (mostly the indigenes) over others; issues of land ownership, chieftaincy succession, scrimmage over land usage or location of institutions and services as reasons for inter-ethnic-crisis.

While the efforts of these scholars on unraveling the causes and nature of the Tiv-Jukun crisis in Wukari are highly commended, nevertheless, they approached the issue from viewpoints that are replete in the literature, such as indigene/settler conundrum; disputes over land; sentiments of supremacy and fear of domination and

marginalization; and identity concerns. There seems to be little or no literature exploring the issue from a political economy standpoint: that greed and grievance are strong, motivating factors for the perpetuation of the conflicts; thereby leaving a gap in literature. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap by examining the dynamics of the occurrence, reoccurrence, and perpetuation of the Tiv-Jukun ethnic crisis from the perspective that the prospects for economic gains (greed) by conflict entrepreneurs, within or outside the government, and underlying grievances have not only contributed to the conflict but also prolonged it.

In order to fill this gap in extant literature, the study is carefully guided by the following research questions:

1. Did the presence of and roles played by conflict entrepreneurs lead to the prolongation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state Nigeria?
2. Did economic motivators such as inequality, poverty, and the desire to acquire material gains result in the perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, Nigeria.

3. Were unresolved, historical grievances part of the reasons for the occurrence, reoccurrence and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study has both broad and specific objectives. The broad objective is to investigate whether the activities of beneficiaries of the Tiv/Jukun conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, Nigeria led to the perpetuation of the conflicts.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Ascertain whether the presence of and roles played by conflict entrepreneurs led to the prolongation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state Nigeria.
2. Determine whether economic motivators such as inequality, poverty, and the desire to acquire material gains resulted in the perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, Nigeria.
3. Investigate whether unresolved, historical grievances contributed to

the occurrence, reoccurrence and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. The presence of and roles played by conflict entrepreneurs led to the prolongation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state Nigeria.
2. Economic motivators such as inequality, poverty, and the desire to acquire material gains resulted in the perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari local government area of Taraba state, Nigeria.
3. Unresolved, historical grievances contributed to the occurrence, reoccurrence and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Explication of Conflict Entrepreneurs**

According to Tukura *et al* (2020), a conflict entrepreneur is a group or individual who exists within or outside the government and stimulates violent conflict for personal

gains. This means a conflict entrepreneur usually indulges in or benefits directly or indirectly from illegal economic activities, geared towards the promotion of conflicts or that which undermines the government's efforts for good governance and economic development. Lyons (2002) posited that conflict entrepreneurs are economic and political actors who instigate and stir up violent conflict as a means of attaining economic and political power. He further postulated that conflict entrepreneurs often mobilize individuals through three general tactics, namely; appeal to ethnic, religious, and ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security. For Berdal (2009), even after the cessation of hostilities, many individuals or groups of individuals, who instigated or made gains from conflicts still maintain positions that make them enjoy political economy privileges.

Tschirgi (2004) further distinguished between passive and active conflict entrepreneurs. While passive conflict entrepreneurs benefit from conflict situations, they generally do not directly influence the outcome, duration, or the way it is fought. Active conflict entrepreneurs are usually in a position to incite and perpetuate

a conflict to maximise their gains. This means conflict entrepreneurs are sometimes among the belligerents themselves and not necessarily outside players.

Other scholars like Collier & Hoeffler (2004) contend that where there are few opportunities because of the prevalence of unemployment, poverty, and reduced incomes – as is the case with Nigeria – the prospect of resorting to conflicts as a means to material ends is high, and the impacts and interval of the conflicts would probably be higher. They upheld the view that deliberately or otherwise, war profiteers at times contribute to instigating wars and prolonging conflicts. Furthermore, if the benefactors of the war are powerful individuals who have a direct stake in the war, it may become difficult to de-escalate or settle.

By this reasoning, prolongation or duration of conflicts can be explained in terms of what benefits the conflict offers to those involved, as groups that benefit from a conflict situation would prefer to continue the fight rather than win (Collier, 2000; Keen 1998). Other forms of conflict entrepreneurs include opportunistic actors, who may not be directly involved in the crisis, but who benefit immensely in the outbreak of conflicts through resource exploitation like

looting properties of deserted homes and business premises (Berdal, 2009).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is predicated on a variant of the political economy theory of conflict known as the Greed and Grievance Theory. It is typically a Marxian perspective of the political economy theory of conflict, developed and made popular in recent times by Collier & Anke (2002); Collier & Anke (2004); and Collier (2003).

Like other Marxian political economy theories of conflict, which have the common tendency to accredit the prevalence of conflicts in society to unemployment, socioeconomic inequalities, poverty, greed, underdevelopment, and struggle for material resources, the Greed and Grievance theory postulates that the core of conflicts especially in developing countries (such as Nigeria) are greed and grievance. This theory suggests that conflicts can stem from two main sources: greed, which involves the desire for economic gain or resource control, and grievance, which pertains to perceived injustices within a society (Collier, 2004).

Political theorists like Collier & Hoeffler (2002) maintain views that where alternative opportunities are few, because of

low incomes poor education, and a high unemployment rate – as is the case with Nigeria – the possibilities of enrichment by war are considerable, and the incidence and duration of wars are likely to be greater and longer. They asserted that whether intentionally or unintentionally, conflict entrepreneurs help to instigate wars and make conflicts more protracted. Furthermore, in cases where there is a powerful group that stands to gain from continued war, conflicts may be more difficult to de-escalate. By this reasoning, the duration of conflicts can be explained in terms of what material benefits the conflict offers, as groups or individuals that benefit from a conflict would prefer to continue the fight rather than win it (Keen, 1998).

### **Basic Assumptions of the Greed and Grievance Theory**

Several fundamental assumptions underpin the greed and grievance theory, as elucidated in the literature:

- i. A fundamental premise is that conflicts can emerge from two primary causes: greed, which involves the pursuit of economic benefits or control over resources, and grievance, which is connected to perceived injustices or grievances

within a society (Collier, 2004). This theory argues that both economic motivations and societal grievances play essential roles in conflict dynamics (Agyei, 2021).

- ii. Additionally, the theory posits that nations rich in natural resources are at a higher risk of experiencing violent conflicts in contrast to those lacking such resources (Khadiagala & Motsamai, 2014); and that economic interests and opportunities are often the driving force behind wars rather than past group grievances (Olanrewaju et al., 2020).
- iii. Furthermore, the theory recognises the presence of conflict entrepreneurs, such as warlords, militias, criminal networks, and other individuals in the society, who exploit the dynamics of greed and grievances for personal gain during conflicts, such as through looting, control over resources, or involvement in illicit activities (Collier, 2004; Keen, 2008; Berdal, 2009).
- iv. Where there is a prevalence of grievance especially in plural societies, conflict usually becomes a viable tool in the hands of conflict entrepreneurs for the pursuit of their

interests and goals (Collier & Anke, 2003).

- v. The theory assumes that underlying grievances and perceived injustices contribute to the emergence and perpetuation of conflicts. These grievances can stem from various sources, including socioeconomic disparities, political exclusion, ethnic or religious tensions, land disputes, or historical grievances (Collier, 2004).
- vi. The theory suggests that conflicts based on greed and grievance create a vicious cycle, where economic motivations and grievances reinforce each other, leading to the prolongation of the conflict. This cycle can be self-perpetuating, making it challenging to resolve conflicts without addressing both the economic and underlying grievances (Collier, 2004; Stewart, 2008).

### **Application**

From the foregoing assumptions of the Greed and Grievance Theory, it is apt and quite relevant to explain the Tiv-Jukun ethnic crisis in Wukari from the perspective that the presence of conflict entrepreneurs appears to have contributed to the perpetuation of the conflicts.

On the one hand, the greed factor underscores the massive lootings of properties by conflict entrepreneurs from deserted homes and shops, during and after each resurgent crisis. People can suddenly get rich overnight. Therefore, the desire for material acquisition and the prospect of becoming rich overnight became incentives for the perpetuation of the conflicts. On the other hand, unresolved, underlying grievances only catalyse another resurgent conflict, further fuelling the greed factor.

In addition, the assumption of the theory that conflicts can become prolonged when based on greed and grievance thereby creating a vicious cycle of conflicts, holds of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts in Wukari, which has been reoccurring for decades. For instance, between 1991 and 2020 Wukari experienced no less than three violent crises between the ethnic groups resulting in huge loss of lives and properties worth millions of naira.

Finally, the assumption of the theory that conflict entrepreneurs tend to hijack or foment crisis to promote their interests and this usually has serious implications for peace-building processes provide it with a powerful appeal. This assumption of the theory appears to appropriately describe the Tiv-Jukun ethnic crisis in Wukari, as vested

political economy interest by private individuals or groups of individuals has, now and again, seemingly led to the culmination and escalation of the crisis, making peace seemingly elusive.

Despite its analytical prowess to provide explanation on the prevalence of conflicts in developing societies due to greed and grievances, the greed and grievance theory is not without its limitations. For instance it has been argued that conflicts often arise from a combination of factors that cannot be simply categorized into these two distinct categories (Regan & Norton, 2005). Furthermore, the theory has been criticized for its lack of ability to address the dynamic and evolving characteristics of conflicts, as well as the interconnectedness of different causes of violence (Dixon, 2014). Additionally, certain academics have highlighted that the greed and grievance theory often gives more importance to economic incentives rather than political, social, or historical grievances, thus overlooking the diverse aspects of conflicts (Bensted, 2011). By primarily concentrating on material gains and competition for resources, the theory failed to recognize the importance of identity, ideology, and power struggles in driving violent conflicts (Shivamurthy, 2022). This narrow

perspective restricts the theory's explanatory power and fails to capture the complexity of civil wars in different contexts (Murshed & Tadjoeddin, 2008).

### **Methodology**

The study utilized the documentary and survey methods of data collection. The documentary method relied on information gathered from books, journal articles, government documents, official and institutional documents such as government gazettes, and other relevant literature such as conference papers, periodicals, unpublished papers, and other related materials. The primary method includes: the study also relied on information obtained from interviews and non-participant observations. The population of the study comprises Wukari Local Government Area in Taraba State, Nigeria, and other affected communities like Tsukundi, Rafinkada, Kente, Donga, Takum, and Jootar.

**a). Observation:** The study adopted the non-participant observation technique by relying on study tours (ST) to select conflict sites and flash points. Affected areas such as Wukari, Tsukundi, Rafinkada, Kente, Donga, and Takum in Taraba state were visited; while Jootar in Benue state was also visited. The use of this observation technique enabled the

researchers to observe first-hand the nature of the communications and interaction between groups in the conflict areas, relationships in post-conflict situations, and the remaining physical evidence of the conflicts. By so doing, cross-match the documentary evidence to arrive at the facts of the study.

**b). Interview:** The second technique of survey method adopted for this study was the unstructured interview, with the fighters of both ethnic groups, residents of affected areas, and stakeholders. This choice was informed by the fact that it helped the researchers discover an in-depth view of the respondents and various circumstances associated with the topic. This was to investigate what led to the occurrence of the conflict; as well as to know their various positions on the reasons for its prolongation in the Wukari area.

Virtually all the stakeholders interviewed pleaded for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, which might result in the compromising of their various positions. Only one figure, late Mr. Baso Terhemen, a prominent Tiv, who was at the forefront of peace talks, decided to reveal his identity.

Analysis of data collected was done using the qualitative descriptive method based on content analysis. According to Asika (2006), qualitative analysis essentially

borders on summarizing the information generated in the research. This method is mainly used in analysing qualitative data or data collected through qualitative methods. Qualitative methods of data analysis are qualitative descriptive analysis used in verbally summarizing the information generated in the research. Qualitative descriptive analysis is, therefore, a descriptive verbal analysis that involves interpretation, description, and explanation of not only qualitative data from unstructured observation, interviews, documents, and others but also quantitative data collected from documents.

### **Economic Interests and Perpetuation of Tiv/Jukun Ethnic Conflict**

From the devastation of the Inca in Peru by Pizarro in his search for gold in the 1530s, to the 1960s when the Peruvian military bombed the Matsigenka indigenous peoples in the Amazon on behalf of Mobil; from the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 to the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States to secure the oil fields of the Middle East to the benefit of companies like Chevron, the mineral extraction industry has always profited enormously from violent political upheaval (cited in Tschirgi, 2004).

The above emphatic quotation captured by Tschirgi (2004) is an exemplar of a recurring thrust in the social sciences that the

likelihood of economic gains in wars drives groups of prospective benefactors to instigate conflicts. The famous anti-war slogan accredited to Socrates is: “All wars are fought for money”; in a book review, George Orwell wrote that “[War] against a foreign country only happens when the moneyed classes think they are going to profit from it” (Orwell, 1937/1998:75; Cited in Akombo, 2005). These assertions imply that economy and conflict are intimately linked and competition over access to material resources and the possibility of economic earnings (by a small group of individuals) are major motivating factors for the stimulation of wars and other forms of organised violence (Vernon, 2016), which results in the prolongation of conflicts (Collier, 2003). Peace seemingly becomes elusive more so, when the benefactors of such conflicts are actively involved in the peace-building processes.

The perpetuation and protracted sequence of the Tiv-Jukun crises and the seeming elusiveness of sustainable peace in Wukari may be understood in light of the above assertion. Even the then governor of Taraba state, Ishaku Darius Dickson, recognized this very fact when he remarked thus:

They will encourage you  
to fight and even provide

the incentive for you to continue but I want to assure you that there's nothing to gain from this fighting (Ishaku Darius, (2020), Governor of Taraba State; cited in Bolaji, 2020).

The above remark by the then Governor of Taraba State, Ishaku Darius was in direct reference to conflict entrepreneurs who, by the 2019/2020 Tiv-Jukun crisis, had proliferated to such a magnitude they could now determine the direction and duration of the crisis. The implication of this statement by the governor is that he acknowledged the existence of systematic roles played by conflict entrepreneurs in worsening the Tiv-Jukun crisis and making the achievement of sustainable peace in Wukari increasingly difficult. To emphatically drive home our point that the prospects for economic gains may have contributed to the occurrence, reoccurrence and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic crisis in Wukari, our discussion in this section will be anchored on two sub-themes namely: "Arms Procurement, Looting and Proliferation of Conflict Entrepreneurs in Tiv/Jukun Ethnic Crises"; and "Towards Politics of the Wukari Yam Market and Increasing Tiv Grievances". The purpose is to ensure clarity and coherence, as well as to reiterate the assumptions of the

greed and grievance theory employed in the study. Results from interviews will also be presented here in a non-judgmental way.

### **Arms Procurement, Looting, and Proliferation of Conflict Entrepreneurs in the Tiv-Jukun Ethnic Crisis**

One issue that was uncovered from both sources was the fact that certain persons, both within and outside the government were benefitting immensely from the process of acquiring arms. For instance, records showed that in both communities, the youths mobilized themselves to meet people – including non-indigenes - doing business in the area to make compulsory contributions of specific amounts with which to procure arms.

A Jukun source remarked thus:

During the crisis, both Jukun youths from Wukari and Tiv youths in Jootar gathered themselves together to raise "bullet money" from traders in the area. Whether you are from the place or not, you have to pay your money when we come to you (Field Interview, 2020).

It is unclear whether the money so collected was used for the purpose for which it was raised, however, many believed that many youths used this opportunity as a means

to enrich themselves. This is a clear indication that with the resumption of hostilities in the area, interested parties in the conflict had proliferated. Sources agree that these gains accrued by the youths and the suppliers of weapons of warfare were a strong motive to perpetuate the crisis.

Another instance of conflict entrepreneurs making gains from the crisis was said to be some persons in government, who were benefiting from government allocation for security in the area. A prominent Tiv source, Mr Baso Terhemen (2020) remarked that,

I can assure you that some people in government are making gains from this crisis. They are making it big, especially through procuring weapons for the fighters. Do you know how much money is involved in security alone? A lot of money is involved and those sitting on it are making the money (Field Interview, 2020).

He went further to say that,

When you have such an opportunity to make money from the government you would not want the crisis to end. You can even instigate more crises to make more money. I can

categorically tell you that (names and positions withheld) are making so much money from this crisis (Field Interview, 2020).

Residents and the fighters were alleged to be looting properties from deserted houses after an attack. Both Tiv and Jukun sources agree that residents indeed used the crisis to loot properties from deserted houses and shops. Nevertheless, they disagree strongly that their frontline fighters engaged in such acts. Yet, each ethnic group accused the other of this criminal act. On this latter issue, however, Jukun sources condemned and refuted these accusations in very strong terms. A Jukun resident remarked thus:

Those guys eh, the spirit that they carry to fight a war is something else. All they go to do is fight and scatter everything. If they take anything from the area, Allah, I tell you the truth, their powers will not work again. In short, they fit no comeback alive. So anybody that tells you that they carry things from the area is a lie. Unless maybe, it's the people that are staying in the area that go and carry such things (Field Interview, 2020)

Reinforcing this view, some frontline Jukun Warriors said they have nothing to do with

such things. They implicated third-party conflict entrepreneurs when a spokesperson remarked,

It is against the Jukun tradition to carry anything on the war front. If you do, you might die there. What I can say is that in most cases, it is the [names withheld] that go and pack everything. They like to see us fight because they benefit from it a lot. Sometimes we think they go and set one group against another because when we start fighting, they benefit one way or another (Field Interview, 2020)

Buttressing this view, a prominent Jukun said that,

The Jukun warriors have no time for such criminal acts more so in the battlefield. Their concern is to attack and destroy the enemy. It is against our belief and practice to steal from the battlefield.

For the Tiv,

Tiv militia has something like a spiritual code. They don't take things when they go to fight. Anything you take is that you have agreed that you want to die in the fighting. It is they [Jukun] that take things. Even in their

attack on Jootar, they carried some things like generators and others (Field Interview, 2020).

In all of these, interviewees generally agree that the number of those benefiting from the crisis is steadily on the rise; and the prospect for increased material gains for war profiteers effectively undermined the cessation of hostilities.

### **Towards Politics of the Wukari Yam Market, Economic Interests and Increasing Tiv Grievances**

It is not exactly clear why the Wukari Yam Market was relocated to its present location along Jalingo road, Wukari, Taraba state; nevertheless, its attribute to be easily accessible, large and affinity to attract high patronage gives it a comparative advantage over its previous locations in Wukari. As a yam hub, the market attracts farmers from far and wide, who bring their produce for better bargains and traders come from across the country and neighbouring Cameroun, Niger, and Ghana (Omanchi, 2018). Although yam is the primary commodity sold in the market, other products such as maize, guinea corn, millet, palm oil, garri, and fish are also sold.

In the Wukari Yam Market, as is with several other yam markets across Benue

state, the physical presence of the yam owners is not necessarily required for their yam to be sold; a *Dilaly* is all that is needed. A *Dilaly* is practically an intermediary between the owners of the yam brought to the market and the buyers. In essence, therefore, a *Dilaly* sells the yam for the owners in their 'absence' and returns the proceeds therefrom to the same. A *Dilaly* is more or less akin to a house agent, who brokers housing deals and gives out houses for rent to interested tenants without the tenants meeting physically with the property owner in most cases.

The Yam Market contributes to the socioeconomic development of the area in diverse ways such as revenue generation, attraction of additional functions due to the concentration of activities, and support in the sustainability of the society and livelihood within the area. Employment opportunities are many in diverse activities, connected with production and trade. This contributes

substantially to the economic development of the area. Among the socioeconomic benefits are specialization in production activities, population increase, expansion in the market, and increase in professional traders and intermediaries' activities. Traders pay tolls in the form of tax (Omanchi, 2018).

On average, each truck/vehicle loaded with yam leaving the market pays what is known as "market expenses", which range from around thirty-five to thirty-seven thousand naira to the market association; and no less than 80 trucks/vehicles of different types leave the market daily, before the outbreak of 2019/2020 crisis. Below is a tabular representation of the estimated revenue generated from the Yam market from the trucks/vehicles monthly before the 2019 crisis.

**Table 1: Summary of the revenue generated from trucks/vehicles loading yam in Wukari Yam market before the crisis in 2019**

(Estimated) No. of trucks/vehicles loading yam daily	Amount payable as "market expenses" per truck (N)	Average receivable amount daily (N) *except for Sundays	Average receivable amount monthly (N)
80-100	35,000 - 37,000	3,240,000	84,240,000

*Source: Authors' compilation with data from field research (2020)*

The above statistics imply that millions of naira are generated from the yam market

daily. Not all the money goes to the local government, however. Part of it goes to the

federal and state governments, the Wukari Traditional Council, the market association, and other parties. Nevertheless, these increase tax revenues for the local government and contribute to local prosperity and the development of the community (interview with *Dilaly*, 2020).

With such a huge income-generating capacity, it is clear that the yam market plays a pivotal role not only in the socioeconomic development of the Wukari local government as a whole but also in the lives of individuals, who have come to rely on services of varying degrees in the yam market as a means of livelihood. Sources mutually agree that the Tiv traders from Benue state, Wukari, and elsewhere contribute about 80% of the yams sold in the yam market in Wukari despite the many yam markets in Benue state.

Ironically, the Tiv have no representation in the Wukari Traditional Authority, nor do they have in the local government council. More so, the Tiv are said to have been side-lined in the politics of the yam market considering that, the office of the Chairman of the yam market always goes to a Jukun. It is, therefore, on these bases that some Jukun and third-party sources believe that the Tiv may have reasons to stifle economic activities in the yam market in Wukari. They believe that the lack of Tiv

representation in the politics of the Yam market as well as the local government as a whole, despite their immense contributions to the growth and development of the market are strong motivations (group interview, 2020).

In addition, the sources contend that a disruption of the economic activities in the yam market in Wukari through stimulation of crisis would automatically translate to increased economic activities elsewhere in other Tiv yam markets in Benue state. They maintain that gains from the yam markets can drive the numerous Tiv yam merchants to sabotage the process of peacebuilding since they would be making it big elsewhere.

### **Discussion of Findings**

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In all of these issues relating to conflict entrepreneurs raised during the interviews, as well as from data gathered through secondary sources, the researchers were able to conclude that the greed and grievance factors were implicated in the occurrence, reoccurrence, and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic conflicts. What was also clear to the researchers was that each ethnic group made efforts to exonerate itself from the greed and grievance factor, while at the same time implicating the other.

For example, members of the Jukun group interviewed in the yam market believed that the Tiv yam merchants were complicit in the resurgent crisis in 2019 due to pent-up grievances and greed towards the revenue being accrued from the market. They maintained that the Tiv yam merchants have a lot to gain by disrupting economic activities in the Wukari yam market, where they felt they were being excluded from its politics, as this will see an increase in economic activities in the yam market at Zaki-Biam, Benue state, where they (the merchants) have a say. As far as the politics of the yam market in Wukari is concerned and how it might have contributed to the resurgent hostilities between the two groups in 2019/2020, members of the Jukun community denied any involvement. Similarly, in the aspect of looting properties during and after each conflict situation, both groups accused each other of the act, while at the same time denying any involvement in such practices.

Perhaps, the only point of agreement for all interviewees, both from the Tiv and Jukun camps is their admission that there are beneficiaries of the crises who sometimes instigate them to fight against each other. Surprisingly, interviewees from the Jukun camp admitted that they were convinced that there were conflict entrepreneurs not just in

the Tiv community but also in the Jukun camp. In the same vein, Tiv interviewees also admitted that they believed that there were beneficiaries of the conflict in both groups that at times instigated the crisis.

It should be recalled that in the wake of the military invasion of Zaki-Biam and consequent killings and razing of houses following the 2001/2002 Tiv/Jukun ethnic crisis, both the Tiv and Jukun made claims and counterclaims that elites on both sides of the camps sponsored and manipulated the crisis. Vaaseh (2013) captured it thus:

The Tiv accused General TY Danjuma, a retired chief of Army Staff and later minister of Defense of always enlisting the soldiers to fight on the side of the Jukun ethnic group and another Jukun man, Group Captain Ibrahim Kephas, a retired Air Force officer and former military administrator of Cross River State, was also accused. The Jukun similarly accused the former governor of Benue State, George Akume, and other military brass like General Victor Malu, a retired Chief of Army Staff, late General Inienger, rtd, and General Atom Kpera, rtd of sponsoring and abetting the crisis.

Even though these claims and counterclaims were not easily verified, the degree of confidence with which they were made perhaps provides them with a powerful appeal. In all of these, interviewees generally agree that the number of those benefiting from the crisis is steadily on the rise; and the prospects for increased material gains for war profiteers effectively undermined sustainable peace and perpetuated the crisis.

### **Conclusion**

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This study examined conflict entrepreneurs and the perpetuation of Tiv-Jukun ethnic crises in the Wukari local government area, Taraba state. More specifically, it explored how the presence of, and prospects for economic benefits contributed to the occurrence, reoccurrence, and prolongation of the conflicts. The study found that the desire for material gains (greed) by individuals or groups at all levels - within or outside the government - and underlying grievances are strong, motivating factors for the instigation and perpetuation of the Tiv/Jukun ethnic crisis in Wukri. The greed and grievance factors were highlighted in the practices of arms procurement and looting of properties

during and after a crisis; and the politics of the Wukari yam market.

### **Recommendations**

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From the foregoing conclusion, the study recommends as follows:

1. Strengthening of intelligence gathering at the border areas, which could provide the authorities with useful and credible information that could lead to the identification, apprehension and prosecution of conflict entrepreneurs, instigating and perpetuating the crisis.
2. The government at all levels should make efforts to address the economic motivations for instigating conflicts such as economic inequalities, poverty (which often leads to covetousness) unemployment, low income, low education. This will ensure a minimum level of sustainable living and drastically reduce the tendency to instigate conflicts for material gains.
3. All underlying, historical grievances arising from non-inclusion in governance must be addressed. This

will alleviate bitterness that often arise from exclusion. By strengthening intelligence gathering which could help in the identification and apprehension of conflict entrepreneurs; and addressing the economic instigators of conflicts and historical grievances, the roles and presence of conflict entrepreneurs will be drastically undermined and sustainable peace can be achieved.

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