Causes and Effects of Communal and Ethnic Conflicts in Tiv-Land

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Abstract
Communal and ethnic conflicts have been endemic in Tiv-land and these have underdeveloped the area. In order to check the menace of the crises, the paper tried to unravel the causes and effects of the phenomena and as well proffered solutions to their causes so that the Tiv nation can grow and develop. Information for the study were gotten through primary sources via oral interviews, questionnaires, observation; and secondary data (textbooks, government documents and articles). The study discovered that the struggle for farmland and political positions are the major causes of conflicts in Tiv-land. Other causes of conflicts in the area are Iyuhe (envy), Tsav (witchcraft), greed and the struggle for chieftaincy positions, among others. To stem the tide of the conflicts, the paper recommended that: the Tiv Traditional council (T.T.C), rather than the law courts should settle land matters in Tiv-land, parties involved in disputes should embrace dialogue, the second term bid should be prohibited through constitutional review, and that retired public officers should be   encouraged by government to remain in the towns after their retirement.

1.1   Introduction
The Tiv and their neighbours just like other ethnic groups in Nigeria and the world over have not mastered the theory and practice of peaceful co-existence. This failure to maintain appropriate individual and communal relations, or put in place appropriate crises management strategies and tactics to handle intra and inter-ethnic conflicts whenever they happen to arise is responsible for the intermittent wars, clashes, riots and crises in the Tiv nation.

Some of the crises in Tiv-Land include among others, the Tiv/Fulani conflict in Makurdi Local Government Area (LGA), the Tiv/Fulani crisis in Nassarawa state, the Mbakor /Nongov border crisis in Guma and Tarka LGAs, and the Tiv/Idoma crises in Benue state. The list of these crises is endless as virtually every part of the nation has had its own share of inter and/ or intra-ethnic conflicts in the recent past. These conflicts have not only contributed to the breakup of some societies socio- economically and politically, but have also strained relationship between those of them that have once lived together peacefully.

The communal and ethnic conflicts in Tiv-land have so held a whole section down that progress has been sacrificed at the altar of underdevelopment. In fact, these tragic conflicts carry with them additional dangers that if not checked may spread and result in a Tiv holocaust.

The objectives of the paper are therefore, to study the causes and effects of communal and ethnic conflicts in Tiv-land with a view to finding lasting solutions to them so that the society can grow and develop. The hypotheses postulated for the study are stated in both the null (H_0) and alternate (H_1) in order to avoid bias thus:

H_0: Communal and ethnic conflicts have not underdeveloped Tiv-land

H_1: Communal and ethnic conflicts have underdeveloped Tiv-Land

The time frame for the study is between 2000 to 2010; during which the Tiv nation witnessed protracted communal and ethnic conflicts. Out of the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue state, the Tiv nation is made up of 14 LGAs spread into zone 'A' (Buruku, Logo, Katsina – Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Ukum, Ushongo, and Vandeikya LGAs) and zone 'B' (Gboko, Guma, Gwer East, Gwer West, Makurdi and Tarka LGAs)

1.2   Methodology of the study
Six, out of the fourteen LGAs in Tiv-land (Guma, Gwer West, Tarka; and Vandeikya, Ukum and Logo LGAs) were randomly selected for the study from the two senatorial districts in the Tiv-land. However, because of the impossibility of reaching everybody in the LGAs for the study, 50 respondents (30 rural dwellers and 20 urban dwellers) were sampled as population for study from each of the 6 LGAs. Out of the 300 questionnaire administered, 220 were returned (105 from Zone 'A' and 115 from zone 'B')

The choice of the sampled population mentioned above is based on the fact that rural areas experience communal and ethnic crises more that urban settlements. The LGAs selected for the study are spread across Tiv-Land to ensure fair presentation of facts about the causes and effects of conflicts in the Tiv nation.

Both primary and secondary information were used for the study. Primary data were sourced from the 220 respondents through questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire has two sections, that is section A and B. The section A seeks information on bio-data of the respondents, including their local governments of

origin and occupation. While section B elicits responses on the factors that trigger conflicts in Tiv-land. The questionnaire comprised of a set of multiple choice as well as Likert scale questions. It has five alternative options which are scored in the following order: 5 pointS is strongly agreed (SA), 4 points is agreed (A), 3 points for undecided (UD), 2 points for disagreed (D); and 1 point for strongly disagreed (SD). The higher the points, the stronger the factor is responsible for the conflicts that have occurred in Tiv-land.

A mean rating is also estimated by estimating the total rating and dividing this total by the total frequency. The mean rating is used to make decision concerning the respondent's agreement. If the rating is 3.4 and below, the respondent did not agree. But if the mean value is 3.5 and above, it is assumed that the respondents have agreed. A table of chi-square is computed from the table one (1) to test the hypotheses earlier stated to guide the work and 5% or 0.05 level of significance will be used. The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the calculated chi-square value is less than the critical value (X^2), otherwise, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Secondary data for the work were gathered from textbooks, journals and periodicals to complement the primary sources of data. These have been analyzed through simple statistical tools such as tables and simple percentages.

2.1 Literature review

The study by Abuul and Abuul (1993) had recorded over thirty cases of recent or ongoing intra and inter-communal crises that involved the Tiv people mostly land disputes. Many cases were probably not known to them and so were omitted, and many more have occurred ever since the study was conducted some years ago. The frequency, intensity and persistence to which communal crises happen in Tiv-Land compel careful attention, hence the need to explore their political and economic causes in this review of related literature.

Communal crises in the Tiv nation have to do with the struggle for farmlands and the exploitation of land related resources. The crises are therefore linked to the mode of economic production and distribution practiced in the society. In the pre-colonial Tiv society, land, then, the major means of production was commonly owned. Farming, hunting and fishing were collectively carried out and the proceeds were equitably shared. There was little surplus and therefore no exploitation. The society was egalitarian and government was gerontocratic (Hembe, 2000). Under such conditions, it was relatively easy to handle disagreements and disputes in such a way that grievances did not reach that critical point at which they usually degenerate into riots or wars which disrupt the peace, the economic life, the tranquility or the progress of one or more of the communities involved. Pre-colonial Tiv society at its communal mode of production was therefore relatively free from land disputes. Disputes which occasionally came about were usually handled by established conflict management mechanisms such as the "Orya" (village head) or, "Mbakwav" (age grade), (Fater, 2005).

However, with the experience of colonial rule which resulted in the fixation of boundaries and the introduction of new methods of farming, new crops such as tree crops (citrus tree) and several other aspects of the capitalist economy which have since continued to erode the base of communalism,Tiv-related conflicts had become intermittent and destructive.

The efforts by retired civil servants, ex-service men and politicians to privatize previously communal lands, as has been gathered have also not helped matters (Aule, 2011). Tiv farmers as well as their neighbours abandon farmlands in preference for bigger and better ones, and consequently they encroach on other people's farmlands. They thus have to fight fierce battles to maintain such farmlands (Hembe, 1995).

In another dimension, Avav and Myegba (1992) have pointed out that the Jukun,Etulo, Chamba, Nyifon and Abakwa were not particularly interested in the fertile farmlands during the colonial era as they were basically fishing communities on the banks of rivers Katsina-Ala and Benue. These non-Tiv people brought fish while the Tiv brought the yams that were combined for the production of pounded yam meals that were beneficial to the groups. The relationship at then was therefore cordial; so intimate that in 1854, when the leader of the Second Royal Niger Expedition at Ibi(in present Taraba state) wanted to know where the Tiv/Jukun boundary was, the informant simply inserted his ten fingers into each other to indicate that the two groups were thus mixed together as one people (Ahu, 2006).

The situation in the vast areas of present Nassarawa State, Cross River State and Plateau State were not much different as these were also occupied by the Tiv people. The existing traditional crises management methods reduced the number of intra and inter-ethnic crises in the pre-colonial era.

With the depressed nature of fishing occupation in the recent times, these non-Tiv people have also turned to farming as means for livelihood; their efforts to reclaim or enlarge their farmlands, as was gathered, often lead to encroachment on their neighbour's (e.g. Tiv) farmlands and hence the protracted communal crises in the Tiv nation (Aule, 2011).

In his contributions to the causes of conflicts in Tiv-land, Utov (2000) opines that Tiv engagement in manual labour depends on and is determined by the tasks that absolutely must be done for human preservation. Ironically, it is the execution of this noble obligation that conflicts begin when new fields are to be mounded and

planted and when the second year fields are to be leveled and planted. Infringements and thorough faring become rampant, and consequently conflicts. Besides, most Tiv men or women struggle to possess lager farms each year. This gives rise to greater tension over land acquisition.

Other disputes over land, according to the above author, come as disagreement over the siting of local markets squares, hospitals and new homes. Worst of all, when educated and working class Tiv amass wealth and higher standing in the federal and state services, they nonetheless come home to grab more land than is due their families, in order to try their hands on mechanized agriculture and the building of expensive mansions. These also ignite communal and ethnic conflicts.

Traditional rulers, according to Utov (2000:2) are also instrumental to most of the land disputes in Tiv-land. In his words,

> Traditional rulers claim that since they are of a "royal birth" from Tiv ancestors they must be
> highly remunerated when land matters are to favour any one. Thus, they freely dispose, by
> scale, to rich people pieces of land which belong to families subject to them (the rulers)…
> the rulers are happy to serve as fronts for the government, which uses them (the chiefs) to
> maintain law and order and oftentimes, the truth is not said over land matters just to satisfy
> personal and selfish ends.

Another cause of communal clashes in Tivland according to Utov, is rooted in internal instability among ethnic groups such as the Idoma, Jukun and Alago, who are boarder neighbours to the Tiv; as the conflicts give rise to internal alertness and partial cessation of progressive enterprise among the Tiv. These create tension in the atmosphere in case there will be some spill over into Tivlocalities. The slogan, "if you want peace, better be prepared for war", keeps the Tiv populace as restless as jerking tenterhooks. This may explain why some Tiv communities after waiting for too long, abandon their agricultural and noble livelihood and, upon provocation, descend on fellow communities. The destruction that is consequent upon such action leaves both parties the poorer and oppressed.

The basis for so much of the intra-personal and communal clashes, as well as underdevelopment of Tiv-land is Iyuhe (envy) which, to many observers, is prevalent in Tiv society to an unprecedented level. Jibo (1994:196) paints the picture succinctly:

> … ATiv man does not wish to have another Tiv to excel and this iyuhe is only
> applicable to fellow Tiv. Anything will be done to block a fellow Tiv from achieving fame,
> wealth, position, prestige, land, large produce, children etc. True, during the NandeNande
> (arson of 1960) and Atemtyo (head crushing of 1964), the non-Tiv living in Tivland (who
> are called Atoatiev) were not harmed by the Tiv.

Jibo's submission reveals that indeed the Tiv mercilessly killed fellow Tiv and destroyed their property on a gargantuan scale; and that the Tiv is more disposed to cooperate with a non-Tiv than with a brother or sister in order to do "business" with the non-Tiv in dispreference to a fellow Tiv. A Tiv is not happy to patronize a fellow Tiv lest "he becomes richer than myself or rich like myself. Jibo (1994:196) says that two types of "iyuhe" can be identified amongst the Tiv:

> The "iyuhe is boon" (naked jealousy) whereby one goes out with a clear intention to thwart
> the progress of a fellow Tiv, like "U nyorun bagu" (turning into a monkey) in order to
> willfully destroy crops in a neighbours farm which is doing better than ones own. The other
> brand is "bem-iyuhe" or "iyuhe I ken myer" (friendly envy) whereby one using it poses as
> if he wishes to help the targeted individual.

Another major cause of crises in the Tiv nation is rooted in politics. According to Varvar (1999), the "Nande" "Nande" (burning burning) and "Atemtyo" (head crushing) crises of the First Republic in Tiv land were clear cases of politics of violence. Violence has ever since, remained a significant feature of Tiv politics which, today, is characterized by factions built along personality lines (Varvar, 1999). Often, these elite centered political factions were manipulated to be so intolerant of each other that they related-only on the basis of mutual violence.

Jebuhee (1991:1) succinctly captures the above scenario of political violence in the Tiv nation. In his words, "instead of seeing politics as a game of wits, numbers, influence, consensus and absence of rancour, the reverse has always been the case in Nigeria but especially in Tiv land", judging from the past experiences.

In fact, Tiv politics has always been characterized by killings, maiming, intimidation and witch-hunting of political opponents (Joseph, 2011). Often times, this leads to lawlessness. Glaring examples of this situation include the 1960 political tussle between the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) of J.S. Tarka and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) which was introduced in Tiv-land by Akiga Sai. The UMBC wanted to destroy the NPC in the North and particularly in Tiv-land. Thus, the Tiv-land formed the "grass" on which the political giants "elephants" fought. Poisonous political blood was therefore injected into the Tiv body polity. This bitterness diffused into the 1964 politics in which countless people were killed and property destroyed. The fiasco started over the election of the Tiv Native Authority Caretaker Committee. That the N.P.C. won more

seats was strongly resisted and outrightly rejected by the UMBC. The onslaught that followed was without parallel. In Tombu for instance, Tor Gbargbar Apinega, a distrct head and his scribe as well as six police offices were killed (Abuul and Abuul, 1993), thus proving that Tiv politics had been a game of violence and a major factor for underdevelopment of Tiv land.

Tiv politics in the Second Republic witnessed less violence especially during the first tenure of late Aper Aku of National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as the First Executive Governor of Benue State. However, his struggle for second term became conflictual. For instance, the death of Paul Unongo's relative (Johny) was attributed to political bitterness between NPN and Nigerian Peoples party (NPP). The situation was however, saved with military intervention in politics in 1983.

The politics of the Third Republic, however, witnessed relative peace in Tiv land despite the internal attacks and counter attacks amongst the Yoruba people in reaction to the annulment of MKO Abiola's election in June 1993.

The Governor George Akume's regime which lasted in Benue State between 1999-2007 re-introduced violence fully into Tiv politics especially during his second term bid (Zaiyol, 2009). As gathered, most of the non-PDP (People's Democratic Party) members were molested, and others shown their way out of the State or to the world beyond because they did not support the ruling party (Aule, 2011).

2.2   Theoretical framework

One of the most quoted definitions of conflict regards it as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals(Coser, 1956:8). Conflict in this sense is conceptualized as a way of settling problems originating from opposing interests for the continuity of society.

To Shapiro (2006),conflict is a process of social interaction. It involves a struggle over claims to resources, power, status, beliefs, preferences and desires. From the foregoing,it is not out of place to navigate through the theory of social conflict by examining the writing of Karl Marx on the issue.

Karl Marx, one of the early writers on conflict posits that human societies consist of systemic and interrelated parts which are always changing largely through internal contradictions and conflicts. He emphasized the factor of economy which is torn between two different and opposing classes. Those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour and are exploited by the owners of the means of production. Conflict is therefore inherent in the relations between these two classes.

Drawing the above Marxian analysis closer to the topic under discussion, economic resources are scarce relative to their demands in Tiv-land or Nigeria at large, just like many other developing countries; and the competition for the scarce resources between groups and individuals is an open source of conflicts.

3.1   Presentation and analyses of data

Out of the 300 questionnaires administered to respondents in the 6 LGAs earlier mentioned, 220 were returned and 80 questionnaires were not returned. Hence, the study's analysis is based on the 220 respondents who have filled their questionnaire properly.

Table 1: Causes of communal and ethnic conflicts in Tiv-land

The respondents were asked to rate the causes of communal and ethnic conflicts in Tiv-land and their responses are contained in the table below

Causes of conflicts in Tiv-land

S/N	Factors/causes of conflicts	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
1	Struggle for political positions	80	55	30	25	30	220
2	Struggle for land	90	60	20	30	20	220
3	Envy (Iyuhe)	60	70	35	25	30	220
4	Others-witch craft, greed establishment of markets, chieftaincy positions etc.	60	65	40	35	20	220
Total		290	250	125	115	100	880

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 2:   Computation for mean rating

The rating of the factors responsible for the conflicts inTiv-land are hereunder computed for mean rating. The mean rating is used to make decision concerning respondent's agreement.

Computation for mean rating

Factors	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
1	400	220	90	50	30	790/220	3.6	Agreed
2	450	240	60	60	20	830/220	3.8	Agreed
3	300	280	105	50	30	765/220	3.5	Agreed
4	300	260	120	70	20	770/220	3.5	agreed

Source: Author's computation

The information contained in table 2 above show that all the 220 respondents agreed that the stated factors in table 1 are responsible for the conflicts in Tiv-land. This is because the mean score for the responses are above the cut-off point (3.4).

The first factor on the list that is responsible for conflicts in Tiv-land has a mean score of 3.6. This shows that the struggle for political positions are responsible for communal and ethnic crises in Tiv-land which have underdeveloped the society socio-politically and economically.

Item 2 on the table has the highest mean score of 3.8 and this shows that the struggle for land and its related resources is a major cause of communal and ethnic crises in Tiv-land. The views expressed by most of the respondents during oral interview collaborates this point.

Item 3 with a mean score of 3.5 also show that envy (Iyuhe) also ignite ethnic crises in Tiv-land. This explains why communities/villages descend on their neighbours with the slightest provocation; and when valuables in the neighborhood are destroyed, as gathered during oral interview, the crisis ceases immediately .

The mean score of item 4 which bother on other factors that can also cause crises to spark off in Tiv-land is 3.5; and this also explains that the factors are responsible for the crises in Tiv-land. However, the magnitude to which the factors can ignite crises in Tiv-land is low compared with other factors analyzed above.

3.2   Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses being tested, as earlier mentioned in the paper are: HO: communal and ethnic conflicts have not underdeveloped the Tiv-land. Hi: communal and ethnic conflicts have underdeveloped the Tiv-land.The factors responsible for the crises in Tiv-land have been subjected to chi-square (X^2) as a statistical tool of analysis.

Table 3.Computation of chi square

O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$\left(\dfrac{O-E}{E}\right)^2$
80	72.5	7.5	56.25	0.78
55	62.5	-7.5	56.25	7.5
30	31.3	-1.3	1.69	0.054
25	28.8	-3.8	14.44	0.5014
30	25	5	25	1
90	72.5	17.5	306.25	4.224
60	62.5	-2.5	6.25	1
20	31.3	-11.3	127.69	4.0796
30	28.8	1.2	1.44	0.05
20	25	-5	25	1
60	72.5	-12.5	156.25	2.1552
70	62.5	7.5	56.25	0.9
35	31.3	3.7	13.69	0.4374
25	28.8	-3.8	14.44	0.5014
30	25	5	25	1
60	72.5	-12.5	156.25	2.1552
65	62.5	2.5	6.25	1
40	31.3	8.7	75.69	2.43
35	28.8	6.2	38.44	9.64
20	25	-5	25	1
				41.41

Source: Author's computation of x^2

Degree of freedom (DF)
Formula for degree of freedom = (R-1) (C-1)
Where   R   = Row
        C   = column
Thus (5-1) (4-1)
i.e. 4 X 3 = 12
        Based on the 12 degree of freedom, the critical chi-square value at 5% level of significance is 21.03; while the calculated X^2 is 41.41

Decision Rule
If the calculated X^2 is less than critical, accept the null and reject the alternative hypothesis, and vice versa.

Decision
Since from our computation, X^2 is greater than the X^2 critical, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This means that communal and ethnic crises have underdeveloped Tiv-land.

3.4   Effects of communal and ethnic conflicts in Tiv-land.
Conflict can be seen from both its advantaged and disadvantaged position. Simmel (1955:13) observe that "if every interaction among men is a sociation, conflict must certainly be considered a sociation… conflict is designed to resolve some divergent dualism; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties".

        Conflict can also be seen in the dissociative stance. Lindberg (1949) therefore, observe that it (conflict) is characterized by "a suspension of communication between opposing parties". Likewise, Wilson and Kolb (1948) perceive conflicts as "a disjointive process which results in the disruption or destruction of the bounds of unity that may previously have existed between disputants. Since the end of the second Republic and throughout the period of military rule to the present time, the conflicts of electoral politics have remained unabated straining relationships between communities. They have manifested themselves in the struggles to acquire wealth, position of power, influence and prestige.

        In another dimension, conflict leads to the break-up of societies socio-politically and economically. This can manifest in the abandonment of markets or places of social gathering by a disgruntled party to the dispute and the establishment of new ones. The Abinsi market in Guma LGA, for instance was abandoned by the Tiv People of the area in favour of Tyough-Tyu market in Tarka LGA as a result of protracted conflicts between the Jukuns and the Tiv people in Abinsi. This has far reaching effect on the social and economic base of Guma LGA.

        Human lives and properties are also destroyed as a result of conflicts; just as development structures (e.g. markets, clinics, boreholes etc.) are vandalized and destroyed. These entail serious setback and hence the underdevelopment of Tiv-land.

        Conflict can also result into the domination and exploitation of the disadvantaged class/society as the privileged class/group continue to exercise power or influence over the other. This negatively impacts on such society/community.

3.5   Recommendations
Human life revolves around conflicts and efforts are constantly made to manage them so that they do not lead to the disintegration of the society. In view of the forgoing discussions in this paper, it is therefore recommended that:

        The Tiv traditional council (T.T.C) in conjunction with the Benue state government should enact a law limiting the number of citrus trees that an individual should plant. This can save land and forestall encroachment on the other people's farmland. In addition to this, the government should procure and distribute improved seedlings and fertilizer to farmers so that small acreages can still produce increased yield.

        Judges and Lawyers do not normally know the history and geography of disputed lands. Therefore, the T.T.C should handle or settle land matters rather than the law courts. In order to achieve this, the institution must live above petty and clannish considerations and work for the overall public interest. However, where a land case seems recurrent, the government should take over the disputed land and develop a project on it. The "Ijir Tamen" a forum where all Tiv can come together to reaffirm their oneness and reconcile their differences should also be revived.

        The parties involved in disputes should be encouraged to dialogue or negotiate on how to solve their differences. The negotiation strategy creates opportunities for each party to express their opinion and to listen to those of others. In a democratic situation like the one we are establishing in Nigeria today, the strategy of negotiation recommends itself as the best for settling communal crises.

The second term bid has done more harm than good to the Tiv people and the generality of Nigerians. Therefore the government should review the law that permits the second term bid for political positions.

Retired public officers who have spent decades of years in the township should be encouraged to remain in the towns after retirement. Such people should be provided contracts and as well serve as consultants to keep them busy in the town instead of returning to their villages to take farm land from their relations who have been in the villages.

3.6 Conclusion

The negative events of conflicts which have undermined progress in Tiv-land are universal. They are by no means only restricted in reality to the Tiv-people. Therefore, conflicts should be discouraged or avoided in all societies. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to foster a climate of common understanding and to bring the aggrieved parties together to negotiate for peace. Both the government and the communities have important roles to play in this regard.

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