

When Maps Create Conflict: State Formation, Indigeneity, and Borderland Violence in Nigeria.

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Abstract:

Maps have produced conflict wherever administrative lines have cut through lived human geographies, from the partition of South Asia to the internal borders of post-colonial Africa. This article examines that phenomenon through two Nigerian border corridors, drawing on fieldwork comprising key informant interviews and focus group discussions in the Vandeikya-Obudu and Konshisha-Yala communities, alongside process-tracing of colonial and post-colonial boundary decisions. Integrating territoriality theory and the concept of structural violence, it argues that borderland residents are governed simultaneously by four competing orders of belonging: civic, statist, customary, and indigeneity-based. Where these orders collide over boundary lines, as in Vandeikya-Obudu, conflict is recurrent but containable; where they collide over identity, as in Konshisha-Yala, violence produces displacement and exclusion. Community-rooted peace mechanisms outperform state security responses but cannot substitute for boundary and citizenship reform. The article recommends residency-based citizenship, participatory demarcation, and institutionalised borderland peace committees.

Keywords: state formation; indigeneity; borderland violence; structural violence; territoriality; peacebuilding; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Maps have produced conflict wherever the lines drawn by states have failed to match the human geographies they claimed to describe. The partition of British India in 1947 turned a hurried cartographic exercise into one of the largest forced migrations in recorded history. The Sykes-Picot settlement of 1916 drew a Middle East whose borders bore little relation to the communities they enclosed. The Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 partitioned Africa among European powers with a disregard for indigenous polities whose consequences the continent still administers (Asiwaju, 1985; Herbst, 2000). In each case the mechanism was the same: a line drawn for the convenience of a distant authority cut through settled patterns of kinship, livelihood, and belonging, and the gap between the paper line and the life on the ground became a durable fault line of violence (Newman, 2006).

This article examines that phenomenon at close range, following the mechanism into two border corridors in Nigeria's Middle Belt where it can be observed directly through fieldwork. The first joins Vandeikya in Benue State to Obudu in Cross River State. The second joins Konshisha in Benue State to Yala in Cross River State. The Vandeikya-Obudu corridor is populated by the Tiv (Kunav lineage) on the Benue side and the Bette, Utugwang, and related Udam clans on the Obudu side. The Konshisha-Yala corridor is populated by the Tiv (Mbaaka and Bontakindreds) on the Benue side and the Yache, Gabu, Ukelle, and Igede-Edii communities on the Yala side. Both corridors sit on the oldest internal boundary in Nigeria, the line between the former Northern and Southern Protectorates, later reinforced by the colonial boundary marker known as the Munshi or Lugard Wall. Both have experienced recurrent intercommunal violence across more than four decades, and yet their conflict trajectories have diverged.

The Nigerian setting sharpens the puzzle. Since 1967 the federation has expanded from three regions to thirty-six states and seven hundred and seventy-four Local Government Areas, each round of state and local government creation justified as a measure for minority inclusion (Suberu, 2001; Bach, 2006). If administrative subdivision delivered inclusion, the borderlands should be among the most settled spaces in the country. Instead, they are among the most violent.

The conventional explanations are incomplete. Primordialist accounts attribute borderland conflict to ancient ethnic hatred, yet both corridors have long histories of intermarriage and cooperative farming that preceded the violence. Resource-scarcity accounts (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) identify a real pressure but cannot explain why the same fertile land is held peaceably for years and then becomes a killing ground, nor why two corridors under comparable ecological pressure diverge so sharply. Institutional-weakness accounts (Englebert, 2009) describe the vacuum but not what fills it. Each captures a fragment; none captures the architecture. This article argues that maps produce conflict in Nigeria's borderlands because the Nigerian state has never resolved what its boundaries are for. Caught between a civic logic, in which a boundary encloses citizens equal within it, and an ethnic logic, in which a boundary marks the territory of those whose ancestors belong to it, the Nigerian map operates as both at once. A single borderland resident is therefore governed simultaneously by four competing orders of belonging: a civic order anchored in federal citizenship, a statist order anchored in the Land Use Act, a customary order anchored in lineage and traditional authority, and an indigeneity order anchored in the indigene certificate and the Federal Character principle. Where these orders collide over the location of a boundary line, as in Vandeikya-Obudu, conflict is recurrent but containable. Where they collide over the identity of the people inside the line, as in Konshisha-Yala, conflict produces displacement and exclusion. Three questions follow. First, how have colonial and post-colonial state formation shaped the architecture of belonging in the two corridors? Second, through what mechanisms does that architecture translate into intercommunal violence, and why do the two corridors diverge? Third, what do the Nigerian corridors reveal about the relationship between boundary-making and borderland violence more generally?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Two logics of land and the colonial hybrid

Borderland conflict in Nigeria rests on a deeper disagreement about what land is. In the European feudal inheritance, land was held in a hierarchy of crown, lord, and church, with cultivators holding use rights beneath a structure of title that eventually resolved into individual freehold. Much of pre-colonial Africa, including the societies of the Benue valley, organised land otherwise. Land belonged to descent groups, and was allocated through kinship and social membership rather than bought and sold as a commodity (Berry, 1993). Among the Tiv, the right to farm flowed from one's place in the genealogy, and settlement expanded outward as lineages grew (Bohannon, 1954). This was not the absence of a property system but a different one, governed by trusteeship across generations rather than proprietorship.

The colonial state could not see this system clearly because it was looking for European categories. Confronted with land held under customary trusteeship, colonial administration did two things at once. It declared "communal" land vacant and vested ultimate title in the Crown, and it simultaneously froze fluid customary arrangements into codified "customary law" administered by chiefs the colonial state often appointed or empowered (Chanock, 1985). The result belonged to neither tradition. Mamdani (1996) names the outcome the bifurcated state, in which a civic sphere of rights coexisted with a customary sphere of administratively defined belonging, each tied to an ethnically bounded "home." Young (1994) traces the same inheritance across the African colonial state more broadly, and Boone (2014) demonstrates comparatively that the land regime a state inherits shapes precisely where communal violence later erupts. The Nigerian post-colonial state did not resolve this hybrid. The Land Use Act of 1978 entrenched it, vesting all land in the state governor while leaving customary tenure operative beneath (Mabogunje, 2007; Otubu, 2018).

2.2 The Munshi Wall and the foundational boundary

The two corridors examined here sit on the line where this hybrid was first drawn. The boundary between the Northern and Southern Protectorates, formalised by the Nigeria Order in Council of 1913 and technically described for the regions in Legal Notice 126 of 1954, ran through the Benue valley and was reinforced on the ground by a colonial boundary marker of stone cairns known to the Tiv as the Lugard Wall and in colonial text as the Munshi Wall. The marker was built in part to contain Tiv agricultural expansion, a dynamic the Tiv themselves still narrate as a southward movement "pushing for land." Every subsequent state-creation exercise, in 1967, 1976, and 1991, inherited this alignment as the basis for the Benue-Cross River boundary. The line, however, was never securely fixed. Difficult terrain defeated colonial surveyors, successive maps

render it inconsistently, and the cairns have been obliterated or moved to expand farmland and tax bases. A 2012 Supreme Court judgment on a neighbouring interstate boundary acknowledged that administrative maps are "at best approximate." The corridors therefore lie on a boundary that is legally foundational and physically uncertain at once, and the gap between its paper line and its human line has been built into these communities from the beginning.

2.3 Indigeneity, citizenship, and the analytical gap

Onto this colonial foundation, the post-colonial state added a further layer. The 1979 Constitution introduced the indigene category into federal law, and the 1999 Constitution entrenched it through the Federal Character principle, operationalised by the locally issued indigene certificate (Bach, 2006). Adebani (2009) shows that indigeneity functions as territorialised citizenship, binding political and economic rights to claims of ancestral place, while Human Rights Watch (2006) and Ehrhardt (2017) document the systematic exclusion of long-resident non-indigenes that follows. The empirical literature on Nigerian borderland violence is rich but fragmented. Studies of the Tiv-Jukun conflicts (Avav, 2002), the Plateau crises (Krause, 2011), and farmer-herder violence (Higazi, 2016) each examine a specific border or actor in depth, but the literature has not synthesised these cases into a single account of what produces borderland violence as a recurrent Nigerian phenomenon. The analytical gap this article addresses is that synthesis: naming the architecture rather than describing its rooms one at a time.

3. Theoretical Considerations

Two concepts frame the analysis. The first is territoriality. Sack (1986) defines it as the attempt to control people and resources by asserting authority over a bounded geographic area, which establishes that boundaries are never neutral descriptions but instruments of social control. The second is structural violence. Galtung (1969) distinguishes personal violence, with an identifiable perpetrator, from structural violence, in which harm is built into the institutional order itself and shows up as unequal life chances. The two combine directly in the borderland: a boundary is an act of territoriality, and the exclusions it institutionalises are structural violence. What erupts as machetes and burnt barns is the visible echo of harm that has been continuous, bureaucratic, and silent.

These two lenses, however, do not by themselves capture the specifically Nigerian condition, in which several incompatible rule-systems govern the same ground at once. This article therefore proposes an organising concept: the four orders of belonging. Drawing on the legal-pluralism scholarship (Lund, 2011; Berry, 2002), the four orders are the distinct and competing systems through which a borderland resident is assigned, or denied, a claim to place. Figure 1 sets them out.

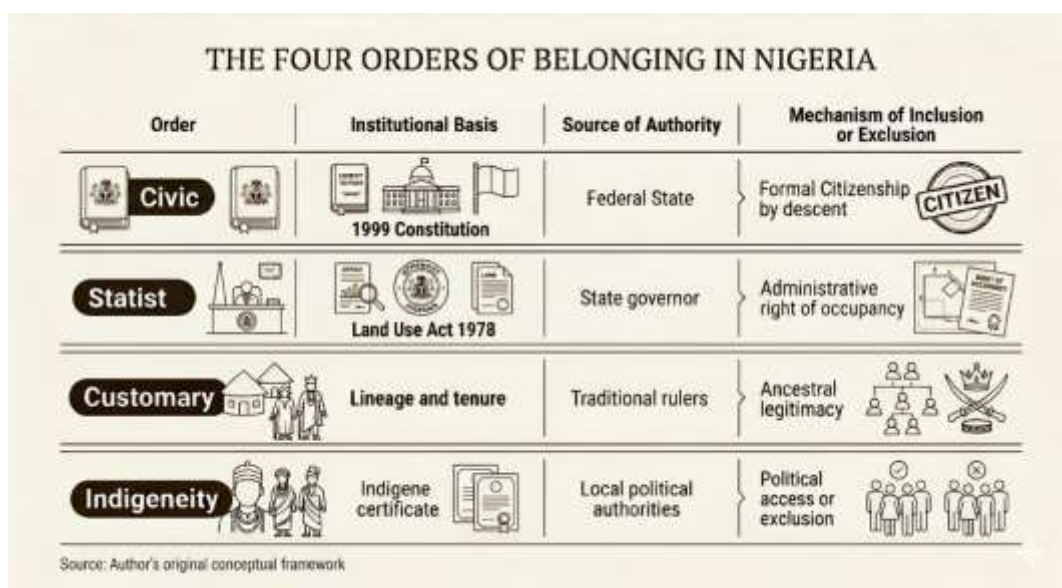


Figure 1. The Four Orders of Belonging

(Source: Author's elaboration, synthesising Mamdani (1996) on the bifurcated colonial inheritance of citizenship and customary belonging; Ekeh (1975) on the two publics in African political life; Lund (2011) and Berry (2002) on legal pluralism and the inseparability of land claims from claims of belonging; Adebani

(2009) and Ehrhardt (2017) on indigeneity as territorialised citizenship; Boone (2014) on property regimes and political order; with reference to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) and the Land Use Act (1978).)

Each order is internally coherent and externally incompatible with the others. The civic order recognises a borderland resident as a Nigerian; the statist order treats the same person as a tenant of the governor; the customary order may regard them as a settler on another lineage's land; the indigeneity order classes them as a non-indigene of the state in which they were born. All four operate simultaneously, and the Nigerian state has never declared which prevails. The argument of this article is that borderland violence is the predictable output of that unresolved collision, and that the two corridors differ because the orders collide at different points, over the boundary line in Vandeikya-Obudu and over identity itself in Konshisha-Yala.

4. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative comparative case design with an interpretivist orientation, treating the Vandeikya-Obudu and Konshisha-Yala corridors as a most-similar-case pairing (George and Bennett, 2005). Because the corridors share the structural conditions that might otherwise explain their conflicts, the divergence in their trajectories can be attributed to the variable of interest, namely the point at which the four orders of belonging collide. Fieldwork was conducted in three phases between July and December 2025, covering national-level institutional actors in Abuja, followed by each corridor in turn. Data were generated through 43 key informant interviews and four focus group discussions comprising 27 participants drawn from seven stakeholder categories, traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth leaders, community members, local government and boundary officials, security personnel, and academics, selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Documentary analysis and process-tracing of the 1913, 1954, and 1976 boundary instruments supplemented the interview material. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke (2006) through iterative coding, with documentary and interview sources triangulated throughout. Participation was voluntary, based on informed verbal consent, and all participants were assigned descriptive codes. The right to withdraw was exercised in one corridor, where community members declined to discuss a recent conflict and asked the research team not to enter the affected area, a limit treated as data in itself.

5. Analysis

5.1 Colonial boundary formation and the inherited line

Both corridors trace their conflicts to a boundary their inhabitants did not draw and were never asked to accept. The line between the Northern and Southern Protectorates, reinforced on the ground by the stone cairns of the Munshi Wall, became the basis for the Benue-Cross River state boundary at every subsequent reorganisation. Participants narrate this inheritance with striking precision. A former Benue legislator from the Vandeikya corridor recalled that the Tiv areas were once administered from the south, observing that "before, we were not under the North. We were actually governed from Obudu. Obudu was our headquarters. Gboko had not existed" (COM-VN-01, personal communication, 2025). The boundary, in other words, did not record a settled human geography; it interrupted one.

The interruption was compounded by the line's physical uncertainty. A local government security officer in Obudu traced the conflict directly to colonial survey failure, explaining that in the mountainous terrain "it was impossible for them to join the beacons. That created an opening for both communities to lay claims" (LGS-OB-01, personal communication, 2025). Where the colonial surveyors left gaps, later demarcation efforts widened them. The 2022 boundary exercise, according to the same officer, began from a later beacon rather than retracing from the original markers, prompting the question repeated across interviews: "Why did they not start from where the older beacon was planted?" Newly placed beacons were destroyed overnight (REL-VN-01, personal communication, 2025). The boundary remains, in the words of a National Boundary Commission director, a divergence between "the paper line and the human line" (GOV-NAT-01, personal communication, 2025). This is territoriality in Sack's (1986) sense made literal: a line asserting control over space that the space itself has never confirmed.

5.2 Indigeneity and political exclusion

Where the inherited boundary placed Tiv communities inside Cross River, the indigeneity order converted residence into a permanent disability. In the Konshisha-Yala corridor, Tiv families who have farmed the land for over a century are classified as settlers by the Yache and Yala host communities, and the classification is enforced through taxation, restriction, and political exclusion. A Konshisha community member described a system in which Tiv residents pay annual levies imposed outside any formal government structure, are prohibited from building permanent structures, and find their village heads barred from traditional councils.

"They recognise the Tiv chief when they want to collect tax," he observed, "but not when it comes to governance" (COM-KN-01, personal communication, 2025). The exclusion extends to the basic infrastructure of citizenship: no government primary school, no census enumeration, and no polling unit on the Tiv side of the corridor.

This is structural violence in Galtung's (1969) precise sense, harm encoded in the institutional order rather than delivered by an identifiable hand. The harm is also constitutional. A community leader in the Vandeikya corridor, reflecting on why the Konshisha-Yala conflict has proved more intractable than his own, identified the legal mechanism directly: "the Federal Character Commission Act has been used to exclude non-indigenous residents from rights and opportunities" (COM-VN-01, personal communication, 2025). The lived consequence surfaced most sharply in a Konshisha woman's account of displacement and loss, which reframes the entire indigeneity question as one of citizenship: "The Yala people ask for royalties for land we have farmed for 100 years. My children were born there, are they not indigenes?" (COM-KN-01, personal communication, 2025).

5.3 Land, customary authority, and territorial competition

Beneath the civic and indigeneity orders lies the contest the corridors fight most often, the contest over land itself, where the statist and customary orders collide. The Land Use Act vests the land in the governor, but the communities govern it through customary tenure, and the two systems answer the question of ownership differently. In the Yala corridor, the Yache and Yala host communities describe a customary arrangement in which Tiv farmers were "accepted under clear customary agreements that defined them as temporary occupants, not landowners," permitted to farm but not to settle permanently (FGD-YL-IND, personal communication, 2025). The arrangement broke down, in the hosts' account, when settlers built permanent houses and stopped paying customary royalties, which the Yache read as a unilateral claim to ownership. A Yache women's leader from the Yala corridor stated the customary logic plainly: "We are the landlords, but the settlers sometimes stop paying the traditional royalties" (COM-YL-01, personal communication, 2025).

The Tiv account inverts the moral weight of the same facts. To pay perpetual royalties on land farmed for a century, holding ancestral graves, is precisely the denial of belonging that the indigeneity order encodes. As one Konshisha respondent put it, "that land is vast. There are graves of more than 100 years there" (COM-KN-01, personal communication, 2025). In the Vandeikya-Obudu corridor the same collision takes a boundary form rather than an identity form. Conflict there clusters on fertile land near the contested line, triggered by the cutting of boundary trees or farm encroachment. A priest in the corridor explained the agrarian stakes without apology: "We are farmers. We can't just see fertile land and let it lie like that" (REL-VN-01, personal communication, 2025). The land question, in both corridors, is never only about land. It is about which order of belonging gets to define what holding land means.

5.4 Layered sovereignty and fragmented governance

Governance in the corridors is not absent but layered, and the layers do not cohere. Traditional rulers, peace committees, local government councils, police, and military each exercise a portion of authority, and the borderland resident must navigate all of them. The traditional rulers describe themselves as the first responders, holding a system that punishes troublemakers and reconciles disputes without recourse to the state: "we don't judge like a court where one wins and the other loses; we reconcile them" (FGD-VN-KN, personal communication, 2025). Yet their authority is unbacked. They command no police and depend on security escorts they cannot summon. The Divisional Police Officer in Yala confirmed the dependence from the other side, explaining that the police "depend on community leaders for intelligence and early warning" and that "where leadership is weak or divided, the police alone cannot keep peace" (SEC-POL-01, personal communication, 2025).

The result is a governance order that works through accommodation rather than authority, and whose effectiveness varies precisely with the strength of the local actors filling the state's absence. A senior army officer involved in internal security operations drew the limit of the military's contribution with unusual clarity: the army "can stop the shooting, but we cannot move the boundary pillars" (SEC-MIL-01, personal communication, 2025). Each layer can do something; no layer can do enough; and no layer has been given authority over the others. This is the fragmented sovereignty that the four orders produce on the ground, an order in which, as one local official observed, "the chairman will leave, I may retire, but the community remains" (LGS-OB-01, personal communication, 2025).

5.5 Conditional peace and informal stabilisation

What holds the corridors together is not resolution but management, and the communities are candid that the distinction matters. In the Vandeikya-Obudu corridor, a community-led architecture has measurably

reduced violence: the Inter-Local Government Peace Committee and the Mbaduku Development Association, drawing Tiv (Kunav) representatives from Mbaduku and Mbazerem alongside Bette, Utugwang, and Udam representatives from Abonkib and neighbouring communities, run proactive meetings, exchange phone contacts across the boundary for rapid response, and intervene before disputes escalate. The corridor's recent conflict record shows the effect, with the 2022, 2024, and 2025 episodes each contained within days. A youth leader and peace committee secretary attributed this to local initiative rather than government action: "we don't wait for government. We call them directly, and the army responds" (YTH-VN-01, personal communication, 2025). The peace, however, is explicitly understood as conditional. A priest in the same corridor described the limit precisely: "for now, we are enjoying peace. But the wound is still there" (REL-VN-01, personal communication, 2025).

The Konshisha-Yala corridor shows what happens when the same informal mechanisms face an identity conflict rather than a boundary one. There, traditional and religious leaders successfully restrained retaliation after the July 2023 violence that destroyed over three hundred Tiv houses and displaced families who remain, two years later, without a formal camp, "hanging around, some in churches, some in schools, some with relatives" (COM-KN-01, personal communication, 2025). Restraint prevented a wider war, but it did not restore anything: "if there is any small spark now, they will react." The comparison across the two corridors is the paper's central empirical finding. Community-rooted peace infrastructure can contain conflict that arises from a contested line, because a line can be jointly managed. It cannot resolve conflict that arises from a contested identity, because identity, under the indigeneity order, is not something the community has been given the authority to grant.

5.6. Discussion

The comparative finding of this study is that the same architecture of belonging produces different conflicts depending on where its four orders collide. In the Vandeikya-Obudu corridor, the collision is over the location of a line. The civic, statist, customary, and indigeneity orders disagree about where Benue ends and Cross River begins, but they do not fundamentally disagree about who the people are. Conflict there is recurrent, because the line remains physically uncertain, but it is containable, because a line is something communities can jointly manage. The corridor's own peace infrastructure has demonstrated this, reducing episodes that once ran for weeks to incidents contained within days. In the Konshisha-Yala corridor, the collision is over identity itself. The orders disagree not about where the boundary runs but about whether the Tiv who live inside it belong there at all. That conflict has produced displacement, destroyed settlements, and a population of internally displaced persons who remain unrecognised two years on. The difference is not one of degree but of kind, and it explains why the same informal mechanisms succeed in one corridor and fail in the other. A community can be given the authority to manage a boundary. It has not been given, and under the indigeneity order cannot give itself, the authority to confer belonging.

This finding speaks directly to the conventional explanations the introduction set aside. The primordialist account cannot explain the divergence, because both corridors share the same ethnic composition and the same history of intermarriage and exchange; if ancient hatred drove the violence, the corridors would not differ. The resource-scarcity account cannot explain it either, because both corridors face comparable agrarian pressure on comparably fertile land; scarcity is the medium of the conflict, not its cause. The institutional-weakness account comes closest, but it misdescribes the problem. The Nigerian state is not simply absent from these borderlands. It is present in a particular and damaging form: as four institutional orders that each assign belonging by a different rule and that the state has never reconciled. What the borderland suffers is not a vacuum of governance but a surplus of it, layered and contradictory. This is why peacebuilding that addresses only one layer, a boundary demarcation, a military deployment, a peace accord, produces what one respondent called a "peace of the graveyard": calm at the surface while the contradiction beneath remains intact.

The two corridors therefore, return an answer to the article's third question, the one that justifies the global framing. The Nigerian case suggests that boundary-making produces violence not at the moment a line is drawn but at the moment the line's logic is left undecided. A border that is unambiguously civic, enclosing equal citizens, or unambiguously ethnic, enclosing a recognised nation, is a border a society can live with, however imperfect. A border that is both at once, that promises civic equality while administering ethnic belonging, manufactures a population caught permanently between its own orders. This is not unique to Nigeria. The partition lines invoked at the opening of this article, in South Asia, the Middle East, and across colonial Africa, were destructive precisely because they fused incompatible logics of belonging and left the fusion unresolved for successor states to administer. Nigeria's internal borderlands are a laboratory in which that unresolved fusion can be observed at close range, in the testimony of the people who live on the line.

The Tiv woman who asks whether her children, born on land farmed for a century, are not indigenes is articulating, from the ground, the same question the partition scholarship asks from above: what, in the end, is a boundary for?

6. Conclusions

6.1 Summary of findings

This study examined how maps produce conflict, using the Vandeikya-Obudu and Konshisha-Yala corridors as a lens on a phenomenon observable from South Asia to post-colonial Africa. The findings show that Nigeria's borderland violence is produced by four competing orders of belonging, civic, statist, customary, and indigeneity-based, installed in layers since 1913 without resolving which prevails. The Munshi Wall drew a boundary across a human geography it did not consult; the Land Use Act vested the land in the governor while leaving customary tenure operative beneath; and the Federal Character principle converted long-term residence into permanent outsider status. None of these layers was removed when the next was added.

The study therefore concludes that borderland violence in Nigeria is not produced by ethnic hatred, resource scarcity, or institutional absence alone, but by the unresolved coexistence of these four orders, and that the corridors examined here diverge not because they differ in kind but because the orders collide at different points within them. Where the collision occurs over a boundary line, as in Vandeikya-Obudu, conflict is recurrent but manageable, because a line can be jointly administered. Where the collision occurs over identity itself, as in Konshisha-Yala, conflict produces displacement and exclusion that community mechanisms cannot resolve, because the indigeneity order places the authority to confer belonging outside the community's reach. Community-rooted peace infrastructure is effective in the first corridor and insufficient in the second, and treating it as sufficient converts active violence into a silent crisis held by restraint rather than resolved by justice. The Nigerian case thereby reveals a general principle: boundaries produce violence not at the moment a line is drawn but at the moment the line's logic is left undecided.

6.2 Recommendations

The National Assembly bears the most foundational responsibility. Sections 25 and 318 of the 1999 Constitution must be amended to disentangle citizenship from indigeneity, adopting the 2014 National Conference recommendation of a ten-year residency threshold for state-level rights, with the Federal Character Commission accepting verified residence alongside descent. The Konshisha-Yala corridor demonstrated that the most intractable borderland violence is produced by a disputed identity, and identity is disputed because the Constitution has made it a locally distributed resource rather than a federally guaranteed right.

The National Boundary Commission, with Benue and Cross River State governments, must complete physical demarcation from the original Munshi Wall markers through a participatory process involving traditional rulers, women's representatives, and youth leaders from both sides. Where cairns have been destroyed, Joint Border Development Zones with federal infrastructure should replace them, making the line a shared resource rather than a contested barrier.

State governments should establish permanent inter-state borderland governance platforms meeting quarterly and funded by state budgets, alongside community land mediation panels that harmonise statutory and customary tenure in writing, ending the condition under which every farm dispute becomes a constitutional contest.

Local Government Authorities and traditional institutions should formally fund the early warning infrastructure communities have built at their own expense, including inter-community phone networks and boundary conflict committees. Security agencies should formalise intelligence-sharing with traditional rulers and cross-post Divisional Police Officers across the state boundary as standard policy.

Civil society organisations and development partners should invest in structured historical dialogue around overlapping migration and land narratives, promote infrastructure-for-peace across border communities and in youth economic integration through cooperative farming and joint market infrastructure, because a young man with a farm, as traditional rulers in both corridors observed, does not go to war. Sustainable peace requires reforms addressing citizenship, governance legitimacy, land administration, and inclusive political participation simultaneously, because each layer was added in that order, and each must be addressed at the level at which it was installed.

6.3 Contributions to knowledge

This study makes three contributions. Conceptually, it introduces the four orders of belonging as a

transferable diagnostic framework that distinguishes boundary-collision conflicts, requiring demarcation and governance, from identity-collision conflicts, requiring constitutional reform. Empirically, it provides the first systematic comparative fieldwork analysis of both corridors, documenting how the same structural architecture produces divergent outcomes. Historically, it establishes the contemporary operational relevance of the Munshi Wall, connecting a colonial cartographic decision to individual lives at a level of empirical specificity the existing literature has not achieved.

6.4 Suggestions for further study

Several questions this study raises exceed its scope and warrant dedicated investigation. The four orders framework should be tested across other Nigerian border corridors to determine whether the boundary-collision and identity-collision distinction holds as a general typology or is specific to the Munshi Wall alignment. A longitudinal study tracking whether the 2025 Vandeikya-Obudu Peace Accord produces durable structural change or merely another episode of conditional peace would provide critical evidence for the peacebuilding literature. Constitutional scholars should examine the legal case for challenging the indigeneity certificate system under Section 42 of the 1999 Constitution. Finally, the women leaders in both corridors emerged as significant and underexamined peace actors whose market-centred diplomacy deserves a focused gender and peacebuilding analysis.

There is no foreign solution to this problem. The architecture was made in Lagos and Abuja, by Nigerians, through choices that other Nigerians can unmake. The map in Nigeria is not a description of the country; it is a draft constitution, and every line on it is a clause that confers or revokes citizenship. The corridors examined in this study are not exceptional borderlands. They are the places where the ordinary contradictions of the Nigerian state are most visible, because they are where the paper line and the human line have been forced into the same small space since 1914. The most painful borders in this country are not the ones drawn on paper. They are the ones the paper has drawn through individual lives. Until the republic decides what kind of map it wants, the child born in Yala to Tiv parents from Konshisha will keep arriving in a world that has already decided he does not fully belong to it. The violence that follows is not inevitable. It is a policy choice, and policy choices can be changed.

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