



## ABSTRACT

Human history generally has been history of conflicts interests and values expressed in varieties of inter and intra-ethnic, religious, class and regional conflicts etc. Conflict be it religious, ethnic or class is impossible to occur unless, there exist incompatibility between the different values, desires or the needs of the people that co-exist. The motivation to undertake this study stems on the premise that mutual coexistence and sustainable holistic

# EVALUATION OF PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO ETHNO- RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN JOS

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## Introduction

Human history generally has been history of conflicts interests and values expressed in varieties of inter and intra-ethnic, religious, class and regional conflicts etc. Conflict be it religious, ethnic or class is impossible to occur unless, there exist incompatibility between the different values, desires or the needs of the people that co-exist. Ethno- Religious and Inter-religious conflicts dates back to the constant upheavals which occurred between Judaism and Christianity in the 16th century AD. Each time these crises occurred, they represented the interest of the ethnic in groups involved as well as the religion they follow.

In Africa, conflicts have led to genocide and monumental depletion of human resources, cumulative deaths and population displacement (Gur 8). Conflicts have led to the weakening and collapse of economies and the demands for secessions as was in the case of Biafra in Nigeria, Liberia, Burundi, Seirra-Leone South Sudan and Morocco etc (Dung 5). These ethnic groups and religious traditions give the country a rich culture, but these ethnic groups and religious traditions also pose major challenges to nation building through ethno-religious crisis. Ethno-Religious strife has plagued Nigeria since independence in 1960. Since 1966, Nigeria has experienced frequent coups and long periods of autocratic military rule



development in any given democratic society is achievable only in the face of peace and justice generated through good political will by the players of governance using the instrument of rule of law. The experience of Plateau State in central Nigeria is on the contrary as the rights have been taken away by lawless ethnic and religious extremists as ethnicity and religion have become lethal weapons of war, yet the performances of successive democratic administrations in the State. Commissions of Enquiry were constituted, and saddled with the task to investigate the causes of the conflicts, identify persons or groups responsible for the conflict, and establish the extent of the damage to properties and loss of lives and to suggest or recommend ways to prevent future occurrences. Unfortunately, those commission's reports, suggestions and recommendations were not strictly implemented as expected. The researchers evaluated the patterns and extent of damage the conflict have meted on the state and the response of the government to those ethnic and religious conflicts and recommend solution to the problem.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Democracy, Ethnicity, Politics, Religion

until 1999 when a democratic civilian government was established. Nigeria is still passing through conflicts of different sorts based on political interests, selfish desires, ethnic and religious values etc. Since the return of democracy in 1999, Plateau State, North-central Nigeria has been a flashpoint of ethnic religious clashes and is been one of the most affected States by ethno-religious conflicts in recent years. In the past time, Plateau State was known as one of the most relatively peaceful States in Nigeria. It could without mincing words be regarded as a tourism destination blessed with many attraction sites. Unfortunately, the state has been deeply enmeshed and suffused in the deadly and protracted Socio-political and ethno-religious conflicts which often lead to loss of lives and property worth millions of Naira. Effort made by the State authority to put in place lasting peace in this regard has not achieved the desired result, as inhabitants in Plateau leave in state uncertainty, despair, and mutual suspicion among the various ethnic groups and religious traditions. Many writers and public speakers have engaged the phenomena of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State in public discourses and scholarship, with no idea of when the conflict will end.

Nigeria runs a democratic government where the Rule of Law is expected to be the hallmark of governance. Nigeria is expected to operate within the guiding principles of democracy in its governance as enshrined in the tenets of democracy or democracies across the globe. The actors in the affairs of governance are expected to ensure fairness



and sustainability of peace and justice and preservation of basic fundamental human rights in the light of constitutional democracy. This is because all democracies in the globe recognize fundamental Human rights which include right to freedom of speech, right to life, right to association, right to religion, etc. However, the experience in Plateau State is in the contrary as these rights have been taken away by lawless ethnic and religious extremists as ethnicity and religion have become lethal weapons of war, yet the performances of successive democratic administrations in the State from 1999 to 2017 did not reflect in fullness, high sense of democratic principles and ideals where freedom and right to life and religion is secured for the inhabitants of the State. Consequently, ethno-religious violent contestations have without doubt been the bane of Plateau State. It is important to note that many progressive-thinkers in Plateau State are losing hope in the actors of governance due to the failure of successive regimes to curb ceaseless ethno-religious conflicts. Hence, people now see 'self-defense' as the only constitutional option left. In Plateau, Jos and its environs have witnessed ethno-religious conflicts notably from 2001 as a result of the quest for the control of land, economic resources and political positions. Several approaches such as deployment of security agents during and after crises, engagement of mass media, setting up of commissions of inquiry, organization of peace conferences and creation of camps for internally displaced persons have failed to arrest the vicious cycle of the deadly ethno-religious violence in the State. Commissions of Enquiry were constituted, one of such was the 2001 10-man's committee headed by Justice Niki Tobi by the Plateau State Government (Best 87). The committees were tasked to investigate the causes of the conflicts, identify persons or groups responsible for the conflict, and establish the extent of the damage to properties and loss of lives and to suggest or recommend ways to prevent future occurrences. The commission's reports, suggestions and recommendations were not strictly adhered to and implemented as expected. This research seeks to evaluate the patterns and extent of state's response to those ethnic and religious Conflicts on the plateau state from 1999 to 2017 and to propose modalities of providing lasting solution to this problem.

### **Causes of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Plateau State**

**Indigene Versus Settler's Clash:** Today, the ownership of Jos, Plateau State is hotly contested amongst three ethnic groups (Berom, Anaguta and Afizare) whose traditional lands meet on an unmarked border line in Jos town, on the other hand, and the Jasawa, the descendant of Hausa-Fulani settlers on the other hand. This is confirmed by the information gathered from the field-interview. There is a perception among various ethnic and religious groups in Plateau State on the contention that there are those who are indigenes while others are settlers. This perception has placed some people as strangers in the minds of those who claim to be hosts and real owners of the State, thereby creating



a sense of exclusion and marginalization in the affairs of the State. The nature of the clash seems to have been motivated by the ancient hatred when many ethnic and religious groups had for each other. This is similar to the situation in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere, where deep seated animosities, which were held in check for years by authoritarian rule, and came to the fore with the collapse of the former USSR (Synder 79)

Gwofen stated that the Afizere, Berom and Anaguta claim that Jos is their ancestral home, while the Hausa and Fulani also claim that Jos is a land where their fore fathers stayed (Gofwen 36). According to Badama, the city of Jos was established around tin mining activities during colonial times. It attracted migrants from all parts of Nigeria to work in the mines and with the colonial administration. He further stresses that though all ethnic groups in Plateau are product of migration, but it is a fact that these ethnics groups did not migrate to the Plateau the same time. As far as history is concerned, the Hausa and Fulani people migrated to Jos after Berom, Afizere and Anaguta (Badam 52). Owing to the fact that indigene certificates ensure access to political representation and positions within the civil services. There are people who claim they are indigenes of Plateau but are not recognized by Local Government to be given indigene certificates as others had their *indigeneship* status retracted. It has been a long-time struggle on the side of the Hausa/Fulani in gaining access to indigene certificates in many Local Government Councils of the State; reason being that they are settlers, and not indigenes. Indeed, the contest in the light of “indigene-settlers” divide is in the increase (Bitrus 86).

Indigene certificates are issued by local government and need to be signed by ward and district heads, but there is no clear agreement upon a set of criteria for deciding whether or not someone is an ‘indigene’. The system is therefore ambiguous, subject to abuse and to the whims of those in positions of authority. Problems have arisen with this across Nigeria, because many of those regarded as settlers in their state of residence live there permanently; some were even born there and their families have been there for generations, yet they do not have indigenous status. Even with the indigene certificates discrimination still occurs. Furthermore, people not being recognized as indigenes in their states of residence can have difficulty attaining the benefits of indigeneity in any state at all-even if they have indigene certificates of other states, they may not receive anything because they are not living there. The concept of indigeneity generates exclusion at all levels, even among Plateau indigenes at the local government and district levels within the State. The potency of indigeneity in Plateau State is reinforced by its frequent conflation with religion; Hausa and Fulani Muslims tend to be described as ‘settler’, whereas Plateau people, most of whom are Christians see themselves as ‘indigenes’ of the State (Bitrus 77).



Krause corroborated the above submission by stating that there have been competing historical interpretations between ethnic groups in the area of study. The Hausa/Fulani leaders argue that there was no Jos when they arrived on the Plateau. They claim to have founded Jos and nurtured it into a modern city. The recent publication circulating among the Hausa-Fulani cites the 1930 Jos township census to demonstrate that back then the Hausa constituted by far the most numerous ethnic groups in Jos, Plateau (Krause 26). For the Hausa/Fulani, they claim the ownership of Jos in particular not only on the basis of history, but also on the basis of being the major contributors to Jos' economic development, whereas the natives base their claim on the historic realities of the State (Krause 26). Danfulani writes:

In the history of political community, the question concerning who are “settlers” and who are indigenes” exhibits the fact that the whole argument is within the realm of *citizenship*; and citizenship is a domain of exclusion and permanent contestation. *Citizenship* is often characterized by attempts by those in power, who skew and manipulate it to exclude others on the basis of certain construction of political identities, such as gender, class, religion, and/or ethnicity. “Indigenes” seek the exclusion of those describe as settlers”, while those excluded on the basis ground of “settlement” seek to resist their exclusion on ground of long residency and their membership or citizenship of the Nigerian State (Danfulani 14).

In a nutshell, the issues of indigene versus settler are complicated by differing conceptions of citizenship between groups, and conflicting interests with regard to citizenship right. Disputes around indigeneity and citizenship in Plateau State are acute because they also express deeper divisions and contradictions within the political system and in society. These conflicts gain expression and are exacerbated through the idea of indigeneity, but they have built up over decades and draw on the repertoires of longer-term social encounters and inequalities between religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups. In Plateau State, views from some interviewees have it that there has been increasing ethnic and religious exclusion and discrimination in politics, strident religious assertiveness in both the political and public spheres. The Muslims tend to be excluded from the political benefits of the State, just as the Christians on the other hand keep referring to the military era when Muslims were favored in sole administrations. In any case, the opening up of politics since 1999 shifted political power in the state firmly towards ‘indigene’ Christians, who are in the majority, while ‘non-indigene’ Muslims—particularly in Jos feel politically marginalized (Higazi 9).





**Quest for Economic and Political Control:** The findings in this regard suggest that majority of the interviewees affirm the fact that quest for Economic and Political control is also responsible for ethno-religious unrests in Plateau from 1999-2017. It is difficult to disconnect ethno-religious clashes in Plateau from economy and politics. It is a fact that economic power facilitates political power, and political power on the other hand guarantees economic power. This means that power and economic are inseparable entities in any given pluralistic society. Low per capital income and slow economic growth drastically increase the chances of violence in any given nation. Poverty and conflict are widely understood to be closely interconnected; poverty causes conflict just as conflict causes poverty. This is a motivational factor among ethno-religious groups in the State where people carry arms against each other. Ambe-Uva stated an instance that the November 2008 Jos crisis was politically motivated on one hand, and economically motivated on the other hand. The crisis was a political struggle turned ethno-religious violence. The crisis became inevitable when the Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission (PLASIEC) had not yet declared a winner in the Jos North LGA polls, but was perceived by the Hausa-Fulani comity that the election was rigged. This led to the tension that sparked the violent contestation; many economic properties were looted from shops and houses (Ambe-Uve 47).

Hagazi opines that there are accusations and counter accusations between Christians and Muslims motivated by political interests that usually increase the tension in Plateau State. For example, it is often claimed by Christians that the violence is part of an Islamic jihad against non-Muslims-continuing on from that of the nineteenth century, where central Nigerian people were subjected to slave raiding by surrounding Muslim emirates in order to take over the state (Hagiza 18). The Muslims on the other side accuse the Christians of marginalization against political benefits in the State. These forms of accusation have generated religious militancy; a situation where churches and mosques have become not only places of worship, but where plans to kill people take place, and where sometimes people are encouraged to buy weapons, believing that once another group is erased, there will be access to political and economic prosperity (Bitrus 98).

Human being is said to be notoriously political in nature. This fact is reflected in the way and manner political power has created ceaseless tension among ethnic and religious groups in Plateau State. The quest for political power over others is a strong driving force in fueling ethno-religious conflicts. According to Collier et al; the exponents of conflict trap theory scribed the lengthy pattern of a typical conflict of any kind to a number of interlocking factors including political domination. Conflicts in multiethnic or multi-religious societies are enduring possibly on account of their ready vulnerability to the rallying, messaging and mobilization of ethnic or religious sentiments in desire to rule (Collier et al 210).



Collier et al add that, in a pluralistic society, particularly where the population of various ethnic groups have significant grievances, conflict usually become an effective political strategy for pursuit their interests and goals. Furthermore, even if the custodians of power and authority in the society are willing to concede to demands of the groups, they are usually neither trusted nor believed to have credible means of committing the warring factions to agreement; hence resort to conflict becomes inevitable. The warring groups might be afraid that once they hold the olive branch, the custodians of power could encourage the flowering, proliferation, mushrooming and radicalization of other groups, which often have opposing objectives (212).

According to Salawu, quest for economic possession has forged the needless ethno-religious unrest in Nigeria, including Plateau State. He further noted that the fight for political domination is a consequence of economic strife by various ethnic and religious groups (348). This implies that political victory is an economic victory just as political freedom is an economic freedom. Poverty denotes people's exclusion from socially adequate living standards and it encompasses a range of deprivation. This can stir violence in communities as in the case of Plateau State (Bamaiyi 24).

**Biased Mass Media Reports:** The stability and peace enjoyed in any given democratic setting largely credited to the influence of mass media in the broadcast, dissemination, education, entertainment and information of the public about issues that are directly or indirectly connected to their existence. The progress and development of a state are highly dependent on mass media. While this assertion is incontestable, it is also an undeniable fact that the mass media is inseparable from the continuity of human existence. History has shown that the media can incite people toward violence. For example, Hitler used the media to create an entire worldview of hatred for Jews. Rwanda's radio station RTLM urged listeners to pick up machetes and take to the streets to kill what they called the cockroaches (Adediran 37). Media is communication channel through which news, entertainment, education, data or promotional messages are disseminated. The role of media is to mediate information between authorities and the public and to do so in a fair manner. Mass media in every society are seen as agents of positive change. It is generally believed that mass media set agenda for the public to follow. Media has a way of raising salient issues for public discourses. The media set agenda of peace, love and unity, but how these agenda are presented determines how the public respond. This perhaps explains why Grabber states that besides calling attention to matters of potential public concern, the media also provide clues to the public about the degree of importance of issues (Grabber 5).

However, Plateau State has over the years witnessed biases in terms of objective reportage. Today media outlets are known to report news in biased way. Religious faithful and ethnic jingoists would want to report to the public to their favour and sympathy,



thereby ventilating renewal of conflicts and causing breakdowns of law and order. A free press with unhindered power to inform people is a cornerstone for functioning democracy. But when media engage in seeking profits and tempering their contents for their benefits to manufacture public sympathy and supports, the consequence in the context of conflict can be negative.

Drawing from the experience of the September 2001 crisis in Jos, the role of the media in the crisis was received with mixed feelings by different parties in the conflict and outright accusations of the media taking side in the conflict. From the feedback of various stakeholder (comprising the elders and the youths), the Muslims accused the Plateau State-owned media, Plateau Radio and Television Corporation (PRTVC) of taking side during the crisis when they denied outright access to the Muslims even when they were willing to pay for it. Christians also accused the Voice of America (VOA) of taking side with the Muslims in reporting the crisis (Adediran 37)

In discussing the role of media in conflict management in Jos, Mangud took a tour of the media environment in Plateau State. The Government owns a Radio/Television Station (Plateau Radio Television Corporation PRTV), there are also Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) owned by the Federal Government. There are private Radio/Television Stations namely; African Independent Television (AIT), Unity F.M., and Ray Power Radio Station; Silver Bird Communication with both Television and Radio Broadcasting in Jos. All the National newspapers are stationed in Jos, with experienced editorial teams and communication gargets. Broadcasting Media such as Channels Television, TVC, Galaxy TV are on the ground of Plateau. When there is newsbreak, the State normally gets reinforcement of journalists for proper or effective courage. Mangud, however argues that the men behind the media have some challenges facing them. These challenges range from professional training and knowledge of the environment; editorial policy, ownership of the agencies, competition with other media organization and relationship with the government of the day (Mangud 36).

He further noted that media in Plateau State have sensationally and falsely disseminated information in various forms that have worsened the public perception about them to be dishonest in their reports. Just as media is said to be the fourth realm of the government, their activities have brought some questionable actions that have called for doubting their integrity; when it comes to being fair in conflict reportage some of the information passed to the consuming public in many situations is not reliable because of the bias nature of the reports being made (Mangud 37). Galadima aligns with the view that biased reports from media hinged on the ownership structure, political affiliation, religious affiliation, location and mission, stating that media could not give objective and unbiased report on crises in Jos, Plateau State between 2001 and 2003 on the basis of these reasons (Galadima 26).





Usibge states that the people's perception of the media can be negative once mass media do not fulfill their expectations where there is a contest between two distinctive opposing groups. It is difficult to totally remove biasness and play down negative phrases that may stereotype others in media reportage especially as it affects ethno-religious matters. This is because every reporter belongs to either an ethnic group or religious divide (Usibge 7). He further stresses that in ventilating information to the consuming public, there is a possibility of escalating the conflict, different media outfits have presented their views in biased form probably without considering the way it affects the relationship and stability of the public. In regard to the profession, efforts are being made to ensure that population knows the situation of the State but it is not enough to prove that such is true when considering the political influence and statements to douse tension from the people (Usibge 7).

According to Kurti, the mass media have negatively impacted the ethnic and religious conflicts by several escalations that were provided. He further notes that sponsors of ethno-religious violence could pay journalists in order to write reports that favor them (Kurt 65). Both electronic and printing media have played their role which is not considering to be up to standard (does not comply with the ethics of broadcasting) as expected. Members of staff in the media outfits do find it difficult to be quite neutral in the submissions and findings when it comes to objective investigation and reportage. Sometimes submissions in print media result to individuals in the public buying favorite papers which they believe will give the right information. Similarly, electronic media produce information that is biased, as people choose which Television or site to watch in order to get favorable information (Kurt 65).

**Inciting Speeches of Religious Leaders:** In the third world countries, religion is embedded and infused in their politics and cultures by religious leaders and their followers, and its impact on politics is correspondingly more pronounced as compared to the western world (Ngbea 207). Religion and politics are integral in the aspect of the human person and this assertion leans on a certain vision of human affairs within the natural tradition. When Aristotle stated that man is by nature, a political animal, he used the word politics to mean "social" for one who is not social is either a beast or god. Like politics, religious leaders use religion as a social institution to modify human interactions in the society (Ngbea 208). Religious leaders have deep and trusted relationships with their communities and the ability to reach people's minds in ways other actors in the society cannot. Due to their moral influence, they are an essential conduit of communication for social change and transformation, and they can contribute to shaping social values and fostering dialogue and peaceful coexistence. In this regard, many religious leaders have misused the instrument of religion by giving inciting utterances to the public which is capable of instigating religious faithful against each other. Many Churches and Mosques are used to



preach disparaging or critical messages of hate against each other's faith, instead of messages of peace and unity (Badama 98).

In extreme cases, the teachings from religious leaders transcend the traditional monopolization of essence, thereby delving into the arena of judgmental and scornful delegitimization of opposing religions and their prophetic symbols using their intellectual skills. With little or no censorship of the critical contents of these sermons, religious fundamentalists have used their influence to cause serious ethno-religious disharmony in the State under view. Bitrus stated that many religious leaders have played significant role in motivating the youths to carry arms either for self-defense or advancement of attacks against other faith. He added that many youths who are violent in attacking the Muslims are not even communicant members in churches; they are mostly driven by what some church-leaders say. Similarly, Islamic teachers have a way of putting warring words in the hearts of the young Muslims at various mosques which normally created the hatred the Muslim youths have against their Christian counterparts (Bitrus 23).

In the words of Andrain and Apter cited in Ngbea, religion has political implications in the following ways: religious belief represents a form of cultural power that articulates ultimate purpose, transcendental meanings and ethical ideals. Religious values justify and criticize the exercise of political power. Religious institutions strive to translate general ethical values into specific government policies; religious values shape attitudes toward socio-political change and the opportunities for realizing a transformed society (cited in Ngbea 207). In corroborating this view, Ngbea states that religious leaders anywhere in the world are closer to the people and have in-depth knowledge of people, place and communities more than the political leaders. Many religious leaders therefore have been taking advantage of the honor they have from their followers to influence crises in the society (Ngbea 207).

According to Abogunrin, religion and politics are conjoined twins in the human psyche and structure. He equally asserts that earthly governments are mere agents of God's theocratic governance of the physical and spiritual world (86). From these important assertions above, religion and politics are inseparable entities; this has informed politically oriented religious leaders to have impacted ethno-religious interaction in Plateau State in a negative sense. Ngbea however posits that the relationship between religion and politics has been given various interpretations (Ngbea 208). There are opposing views on the role of religion in the politics of North-central Nigeria, and in particular Plateau State. Some critics consider organized religions as an obstacle to the achievement of political development, while others insist that religion belief can motivate believers to work for the unity and progress of the region. Hence, religion and politics continue to be an important theme in the states under discussion as it has shaped people perception about each other.



**Influence of Traditional Rulers:** Findings suggest that Traditional Rulers also played roles in fueling of ethno-religious crises in Plateau from 1999 to 2017. Maduagwu in line with the above result mention the names of king-men and other known civilians respectively who have played influential roles in promoting religious crises in Plateau, but were protected and vindicated and bailed by traditional rulers (Maduagu 27). Former Minister of Defense, Mansur Dan Ali once stated that intelligent reports had exposed the complicity of some highly-placed traditional rulers in the ongoing killings of Nigerians across the Northern parts of the country (Premium Times 9 April, 2019). This assertion reflects the fact that traditional rulers have the tendency of inspiring conflict in the society as confirmed by some respondents.

No doubt, the roles of traditional rulers in conflict resolution include reconciliation and integrating parties, maintaining law and order in the communities, promoting the use of informal settlement, checking and balancing relationships among people groups as well as managing improper communication and interaction breakdown among their subjects. When these failed, it is difficult to attain peaceful coexistence. Deducing from the discussion above, it is therefore appropriate to conclude that some traditional rulers also contributed to the ceaseless ethno-religious crises in Plateau State.

#### **Patterns of State's Response to Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Plateau State**

**Deployment of Security Forces:** At the end of the global cold war and in particular the Nigerian Civil War (Biafra) in 1970, there have been changes in the paradigm of the role and scope of military force in management and resolution of conflicts. The conventional use of military forces in the context of conflict resolution seems to be undergoing rapid evolution. The effective use of force being the most critical element, but simultaneously more differentiating and characterizing of the use of the military instrument is popular in the 21st century. The management and resolution of conflicts has elevated the range of capabilities of military forces that goes beyond traditional capabilities combat, showing themselves useful in support, complement or replacement of non-military capabilities. This pattern in Plateau State has been the most engaged. Plateau State Government has over the years engaged conventional Pattern of response to conflict by deploying security forces in enforcing control and ceasefire of ethno-religious fighters. This pattern is seen in all successive regimes in Plateau State; Joshua Dariye (1999-2007), Jonah Jang (2007-2015) and Simon Bako Lanlong whose leadership covered part of the timeframe of this study (2015-2017). What then has been the strength of deploying military strategy in management of ethno-religious conflicts?

It is important to note that security forces usually do not play their roles in isolation, they perform their function as complement to instrument of power that be. Deployment of military in curbing ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau has reduced the capacity of ethnic



and religious extremists that would have led to total human destruction in the State. Security forces were able to recover many small firearms in the State. Effort of the security forces in arresting perpetrators of conflicts worth commendation. For example, in 2001, some people who were the brain behind the brutal conflict in the State were arrested for prosecution by the security forces. In 2004, special courts ordered the arrest of many suspects. A police assistant commissioner in charge of investigation in Jos states that the military arrested sixteen people in Yelwa when they intervened to stop the violence on May 3 2004. Those arrested were kept in the military custody until the declaration of state of emergency on May 18, then they were transferred to police custody in Jos (Bitrus 71)

The context of security and defense in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the military runs three main types of activities namely; traditional combat operation, a wide range of non-traditional activities, ranging from humanitarian assistance to special operations through to the peace operation and support activities and interaction with other instrument in power (Albert 306). The military and other sectors of security are expected to be facilitating political process, promoting reconciliation dialogue, assisting disarmament, demobilization of conflict actors, and promotion of human rights as well as restoration of respect for rule of law. Often times what security forces do during peace-keeping counter these ideal principles.

However, in as much as the deployment of security forces has helped in controlling conflict in the State the State under view, this pattern has also brought more complication to the nature of ethno-religious interaction in the State. Conflict prevention means the elimination of the causes of predictable conflict before it occurs in an open form, it involves the application of external measure of a diplomatic, economic and social intervention. Often times security agents who are deployed for peace-keeping in Plateau State are not aware of the root causes of the ethno-religious conflicts. Secondly many of them do not have the required knowledge of conflict management and resolution. These deficiencies therefore put the security forces in activities of controlling the conflicts at the sport of the moment, giving curative measure rather than preventive one. The practice of sending Special Military Task Force for internal security duties, even if they work in the most professional and saintly manner, it is only meant to put off the fire; the military is not in the position to find solutions to civil crises. It is therefore illogical to rely on the military for lasting peace (Epelle 120)

Because of the military nature of response to crises in Plateau State, there are records of developments associated with many vices such as shooting of innocent citizens on the basis of religion or ethnicity, rape and beating. Consequently, this coercive method of intervention had created distrust and lack of confidence on the part of citizens toward the security agents during and after crises. There are reports of cases where the security



agents take side on the basis of religion or ethnicity during peace-keeping. In this regard the principle of impartiality as a guiding military principle is at stake. There were arbitrary killings by security forces following the November, 28-29 2008 violence in Jos, Plateau State. Human Rights Watch testified before the Plateau State Judicial Commission of Inquiry on July 20, 2009 in Jos. Human Rights Watch conducted on-the-ground research in Jos in the immediate aftermath of the violence and in February 2009 and found that while most of the deadly inter-communal clashes took place on November 28, the vast majority of killings by the police and military came on November, 29, the day that the Plateau State governor, Jonah Jang, issued a “shoot-on-sight” directive to the security forces. Human right documented 118 cases of alleged arbitrary killings by the security forces that took place. Areas where the arbitrary killings took place include Dutse Uku, Angwan Keke, Rikos, Angwan Rogo, Congo Junction, Ali Kazaure, and Laranto. A resident of Angwan Rukuba stated how he saw a military man shooting his friend while fleeing the scene of crisis. He added that security men sometime don’t only fail to share intelligence among themselves, they are also suspected of taking sides in the conflict (HRW 86).

Corroborating this, Bitrus argued that the deployment of Nigerian police and military by both State and Federal Government to avert the needless clashes in the State could not halt occurrences of conflicts because all the security agencies are federal institutions, thereby affecting and limiting total control by the State Government. It is important to note the low level of arrest of perpetrators of violence as complained by both ethnic and religious groups in the State. However, when a few people were arrested, each side would be quick to complain that its own members were being targeted disproportionately and that the security forces were carrying one-sided operation (Bitrus 51).

**Setting of Commissions of Inquiry:** Commissions of inquiry are official, normally independent, temporary bodies established to investigate and document episodes of violence and abuse and make recommendations for action (Hayner 12). Commissions of Inquiry have a long history in Africa, where approximately 70 national commissions were established between 1990-2016, with 12 in Nigeria alone representing the largest number on the continent (Jain 306). This demonstrates that Commissions of Inquiry are relevant not only to Plateau State, but in wider regional and global process of formal accountability.

One of the measures adopted as a pattern of response to ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau state as affirmed by respondents is setting of Commissions of Inquiry. Successive regimes of Joshua Dariya and Jonah Jang have received white papers from various constituted commissions of inquiry without proper actions upon recommendations made by the state Government. These commissions of inquiry were tasked with the role of investigating violence, identifying perpetrators, hear testimony and make recommendations for government action. It is important to note that within





commissions, transparency revolves around the notion of truth; testimonies from survivors, witnesses to perpetrators about what happened, to inform victims, family and society at large. The aim is to address historical injustice and violence. One of their mandates is to propose prosecution or other punishment for perpetrators, and or proposing reparations or other measures for victims (Mendez 261). Commissions of inquiry have helped in shaping the citizens of Plateau State historically and otherwise related to the various needless conflicts in the state since the return of democracy. Severally, commissions of inquiry have provided the templates for achieving peaceful coexistence to the government of Plateau State. The last commission of inquiry in Plateau state was operational in 2009 as the government resorted to the use of committees. However, there is a general consensus that these commissions of inquiry have been largely ineffective at securing justice or establishing accountability for violence. This is because commissions of inquiry lack the legal power to prosecute. This institutional and legal limitation have rendered commissions of inquiry ineffective in securing the State since Multiples commissions of inquiry have had only limited success in delivering accountability and preventing further conflicts. Furthermore, the pattern of setting of multiple commissions of inquiry as response to the waves of ethno-religious unrests engaged by Plateau State could not yield lasting peace among ethno-religious groups due to poor political will on the part of the actors in power to enforce recommendations via legal instruments.

Government inaction over implementations of recommendations has been acknowledged by successive commissions. For example, the Ajibola Commission report explicitly states that recommendations made by the Niki Tobi Commission and Fiberesima Commission were not implemented (Ajibola COI 56). Several whitepapers received by the Government of Plateau State as reports and recommendations from various Commissions of Inquiry are not being implemented. Several Commissions of Inquiry have been established since the clashes in Plateau within the time frame for this study; their members and findings have always been accused of bias results, and recommendations have remained closed to the public for years. Consequently, no commission of inquiry resulted in legal conviction for named perpetrators; nor is there evidence of appointments or removal from public office attributable to the efforts of Commissions of inquiry. For instance, until the year 2010 the Fiberesima's report on the 1994 crises, the Niki Tobi's report on the 2001 crises, and the Ajibola's report were released. The various recommendations are largely similar. The Fiberesima commission report recommends a fair and transparent allocation of political offices and improved equipment for police force. It also demands that government officials and security forces take warnings and rumors transmitted by civil society actors seriously. The report reinforces the real understanding that Berom, the Anaguta, and the Afizere are the real indigenes of Jos



North LGA. It indicts the Jasawa Development Association for belligerent activities and complicity in the riots (Maduagwu 75)

Based on the various memoranda submitted, the Commission stated 312 lives were lost, 323 injured with uncountable loss of properties. The commission recommends compensation of the victims of the crisis. Other recommendations include relocation of Bauchi Road Motor Park, relocation of slum markets and reconstruction of Jos main market, re-declaration of Electoral Wards within the Jos North Local Government Area which slowed fewer Hausa/Fulani voters to have more wards than the numerically superior native voters. The Commission also recommends that the constraints associated with the creation of Jos North Local Government Area should be addressed; allegation of excess use of force, extra judicial killings and dereliction of duty made against the armed forces should be investigated. The commission noted that the rights of every citizen should be protected and poverty should be alleviated and employment opportunities be provided the commission also recommends that the state government must give due consideration to all ethnic groups in appointments, nominations and promotions. Finally, the Commission recommends the implementation of previous reports of other commissions of inquiry (Maduagwu 87); none of these recommendations were implemented

**Meetings of Stakeholders:** In creating rooms for dialogue among ethno-religious groups in Plateau, the State engaged several stakeholders under various nomenclatures to find the path of peace. Plateau State Government has constituted many Peace Building Committees; several meetings of stakeholders were held. This approach seems regulatory in nature; these regulations manifested in form of dialogue among various ethno-religious groups in the State. Several committees on peace building have been established in the State in order to have ethno-religious dialogue where common grounds can be discovered and interests being discussed.

In May 2010, the Governor, Jonah Jang convened stakeholders' meeting to discuss the way out of the unending crises in the State. The meeting which was attended by prominent citizens, including former governors, retired military officers and bureaucrats was however boycotted by the Hausa Community which had vowed not to have anything to do with any peace initiative by the governor, demanding for the resignation of the governor. This implies that the meeting was one-sided, and therefore couldn't yield any inclusive positive outcome. Jos Forum Inter-communal Dialogue Process undertaken by communities with the permission of the government was a laudable step in the right direction. The Jos Forum Dialogue Process spanned 16 months from August 2013-December 2014, ultimately leading to a "Declaration of commitment to Peace", signed by the participating communities (Afizere, Anaguta, Berom, Fulani, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba. This effort sparked a temporal peaceful coexistence in the State.



Bitrus noted that the Plateau State Government has been proactive in the area of sending relief material to victims of crises as a strategic response to conflict. The State has often, through the Plateau State Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) in conjunction with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) embarked upon the distribution of relief materials to displaced persons. These materials usually include food/water, drugs and clothes (Bitrus 67). One of the flaws with this pattern is the inability of various stakeholders to bury vested interests for the sake of peace.

The relationship between stakeholders is important in shaping corresponding responses toward the sense of peaceful resolution during crises. This has also impacted negatively, the outcomes of several meetings of the stakeholders in the State under view. Sometimes meetings of stakeholders require broad number of representatives for broader deliberation. In the case of plateau, there are groups which boycott such meetings for fear of injustice thereby create room for production of biased recommendations. This strategy employed by the State Government of Plateau also has its limitations in terms of having the legal power to enforce certain resolution, thereby still fall back to the government of the day for actions.

**Engagement of Mass Media:** The primary need for people in conflict situation is an independent news service broadcasting non-partisan information and ability to gain credibility. Research findings show that Plateau State has engaged the mass media in setting the agenda for ethno-religious conflicts in the State. This pattern has given people information about several conflicts. Engagement of mass media has provided a wider coverage on security issues in the State in terms of creating the platform for sensitization. Essentially, the goal of establishing radio stations by the State was purely non-politics. It is a platform for witnessing and creation of awareness on the happenings in the society including conflicts of any kind, and not for sensational propaganda. By implication mass media have the role of developing pro-peace content in order to enhance peaceful coexistence.

It is important to note that every government is accountable to the masses. To some extent, mass media in Plateau State have created room for individual and communal engagements during and after conflict times. All ethno-religious groups have had the opportunity to tell their side of the story and clearing negative or false impressions proclaimed by opposing groups in one media station or the other. The influence of mass media in shaping the perception of the people in Plateau State cannot be underestimated. In the spirit of freedom of expression, mass media as a signpost of democracy have provided accessibility to information regarding nature, causes, impacts or otherwise of many ethno-religious conflicts in the State under view for large audience. Mass media in Plateau State have helped in promoting democratic ideals and encouraging societal



development in the aftermath of many conflicts and have remain a net-positive tool for State's engagement in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflicts times.

However, media which have a crucial role to play in conflict resolution have not been giving objective reports of the crises in Plateau State, hence the need to review this pattern. The media have the power to defuse tensions before they reach a critical point and keep a critical eye on government, opposition and society. Unfortunate some media stations in Plateau State were established by the government, and are not independent and neutral; other private ones are not also neutral in reporting sensitive matters during conflicts. This is probably because these media are funded by the State government or the party in power or individual owners, therefore are limited in objective reportage. Similarly, some media that are owned by certain religious faithful would always want to speak for the interest of religions of the owners. These have been the experiences in Plateau over the years, leaving the need for better ways mass media can be a potent alternative in promoting the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral changes and peace-building in Plateau State.

**Executive Visit to Areas of Conflicts:** Official visit to conflicts areas is identified as an approach in responding to ethno-religious crises in Plateau State. One of the basic roles of the government is to provide mechanisms for peaceful coexistence. In this regard a responsible government that cares for the peace of the people must identify with the victims of conflicts. In 2004, Joshua Dariye was heavily criticized for travelling outside the country instead of identifying with the victims of conflicts in the State. The visit of State executives to conflict areas has a way of making people having a sense of belonging; it is a way being empathetical to the victims of conflicts as it provides a sense of hope to the victims (Bitrus 91).

**Ban on The Use of Motorcycles:** Findings reveal that one of the patterns of State's response to ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau is the ban on the use of motorcycles. There were intelligent gatherings that motorcycles were used in penetrating areas for killing with guns and machetes. The pattern actually boosts the security efficiency in the State, but at the same increased the rate of unemployment among many productive youths. This is why many residents of Jos North and Jos South LGAs of Plateau State groaned over the ban. On July 15, 2012, the Plateau State Police Commissioner announced a total ban on motorcycle and restricted movement of tricycles to 7:00 PM. According to the police, the ban became necessary following incidence of robbery, snatching, kidnapping and killing during the night. This approach has helped in ventilating security strategies in the state, but it did not provide the needed remedy to the root-causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State. It has also increased the rate of joblessness among active youths who find it difficult to access alternate means of survival



**Creation of Refugees camps and Distribution of Relief Materials:** In Plateau State, refugees are mostly victims of internal conflicts. It is important to note that refugees are a people forced into camps, sometimes families and friends are separated, made susceptible to brutality arising from events within the camps. Findings have it that displacement has affected the wellbeing victims of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State pushing many refugees into manual labor and prostitution. On average, displaced households earn less than half of what non-displaced households earn. Ability to meet basic needs therefore becomes difficult for the displaced persons in the State within the time frame of this study and beyond. One of the patterns of State's response to conflict in Plateau State is the establishment of camps for displaced persons and provision of succor to the plights of the internally displaced persons. It is on record that the State has spent a lot of funds in providing relief materials for the persons in the camps. This gesture has gone a long way in assisting the survivors of conflicts.

However, one of the limitations of this approach in Plateau state is the lack of the establishment of a viable institutional framework to handle internally displaced persons (IDPs) during conflicts. Many of the persons handling the distribution of relief materials most times are politicians who also become beneficiaries of the gestures and divert items meant for the frustrated IPDs instead of social workers. Secondly, it is difficult for the State to provide all the basic needs of the people considering the large number of displaced persons in various Camps and their peculiar challenges. The most affected persons are vulnerable groups such as children, aged and women who are exposed to severe socio-economic and socio-political challenges, lack of accommodation, poor access to good education, sexual harassment, child-labor, early marriage, poor health and sanitation. It is important to note that this ad-hoc measure usually lack effective monitoring mechanism to check the distribution of the limited relief materials.

Having discussed many variables on the State's responses to resolve intractable needless ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau which include deployment of security agencies, imposition of curfews, setting of investigative committees, provision of whitepapers, meetings of the stakeholders, promotion of interfaith dialogue, organization of Peace Conferences, distribution of relief materials, executive visit to conflict areas and ban on the use of motorcycles, the State is still faced with tension waiting for little triggers. The researcher observes that there is still a gap to fill as all the responses are yet to create a lasting peace in the State. This research therefore seeks to fill the gap that will provide a model in achieving lasting peace in the State (Plateau).

### **Recommendations**

Having discussed various patterns employed by Plateau State Government in managing ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State, the following are recommended as models for further engagement in tackling conflicts in the State:





- i. **Development and strengthening of Legal Framework:** Constitutional amendment, interpretation and application regarding citizenship and respect for the rule of law is a way forward for ethno-religious harmony in the Plateau. Furthermore, there is the need to make legislative effort to review immunity clause in the Nigerian Constitution; many political giants have been hiding under the clause to foster impunity in the polity of our dear nation and state, knowing full well that the 'Law' will not question them while in offices. The need for Plateau State Government to ensure formulation of laws to resolve the contradictions of societal plurality is an imperative. Government must evolve a political will to prosecute or sanction anyone involved in sponsoring ethno-religious violence in the State no matter the position of such a person in government or otherwise.
- ii. **Policy of Inclusiveness and Integration in Governance:** It is important to note that no ethnic group or religious divide holds the monopoly of good governance. The need for inclusiveness in governance in Plateau State is a key to ethno-religious harmony. Policy of inclusion governance has to do with development of frame work that creates participation of all, irrespective of ethnicity and religion in the space of governance in line with the principle of Federal Character and quota system which enable accessibility of all societal sections to schemes of affairs.
- iii. **Economic Empowerment and Human Development:** Security and economic are linked; without security there can be no sustained economic, and without viable economy there can be no sustained security, this is almost platitude. Persistent and widespread poverty can undermine the stability of any given society. The consequences of economic hardship include crises. There is therefore, the need for the State Government of plateau to deliberately embark on a comprehensive youth empowerment programs; for democracy does not thrive in poverty. Political zealots and religious chauvinists find ready tools in the teeming unemployed youths whose idle minds provide spacious workshop for the devil of war. When a state is driven by consumption than production, scarcity mentality will emerge, and that will definitely be translated into violence.
- iv. **Use of Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution:** The nature or the mechanism for resolving conflicts in every indigenous African society is anchored in cultural heritage. This peculiar heritage is informed by the strength of the custom and norms associated with conflict resolution, in this regard the manner of adjudging truthful evidence and verdict is presided over by sincere adjudicators. It is significant to note that these traditional patterns



of conflict management offered great prospect for peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationships among different groups. Traditional institutions for conflict resolution in pre-colonial Plateau societies were the core of the adjudicatory process that promoted peace and fostered peace. It is evident that in the past, the indigenous people of Plateau relied heavily on these institutions for peace to thrive.

- v. **Establishment of Religious Advisory Commission:** It is important to note that faith-based actors are well-placed to mediate, advocate, observe, educate and engage in interfaith dialogue. Perceived as legitimate and credible, they have a common framework for discourses, and access to financial, institutional and human resources within their faith community. They can be properly engaged in conflicts resolution. Apart from the usual way of appointing Senior Advisers to the Governor on religious matters, the State should rather constitute a joint religious advisory commission. The State, through this religious advisory commission can synergize in terms of intelligent information gathering and strategic plans in addressing the concerns of various religious groups in the State. This commission has a role of banning all kinds of preaching that are inciting, condemning and provoking, role to prohibit all forms of religious discrimination, religious victimization, religious harassment and hate speeches etc.
- vi. **Strengthening Community Policing:** In recent years, the United Nation (UN) has advocated for local community policing as an effective response to the increasing violent contestations and prevalence of insecurities across the globe. There has been a disconnection between ethno-religious conflict and community policing. However, the connection between ethno-religious identities and community policing has serious implications on citizen's participation. For example, a Hausa police officer from the Northern Nigeria posted to the Southern part of the country may have problem of cooperation from the people he or she is to serve in terms of language and perception. Community police creates a sense of internal vigilance among citizens of any given society; it offers the opportunity to take advantage of local resources such as language, culture and tradition in building peace and security. This is workable in Plateau State.
- vii. **National Orientation Agency and Cultural Intelligence:** In moving the nation forward, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) was established by Decree 100 of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1993. National Orientation Agency is an institution that has a mandate to promote and provide platform for meaning sensitization and interaction. There is the need to change the negative, stereotypes and



creating awareness on the value system within the context of the citizenry. In engaging the citizens of Plateau State, the State through the National Orientation Agency can take advantage of both mass and social media platforms to be a catalyst for mutual cooperation among ethno-religious groups in peace-building.

- viii. **Training and Retraining of Security Personal on Conflict Resolution:** Many security personal only know how to use guns and bullets to address conflicts; they lack the requisite knowledge of conflict mediation, management and resolution. Though the security agencies are under the control of the Federal Government, but then when it comes to conflict interventions, the State Government and the Federal Government can collaborate in ensuring that officers coming for peace-keeping should not just be armed with guns, but possessing the basic knowledge on peace-building through mediation and reconciliation. This will reduce the rate of illegal shooting of innocent citizens by some security officers during peace-keeping.
- ix. **Prosecution of Perpetrators of Ethno-religious Conflicts:** There were some indicted personalities in the past responsible for prevalence of ethno-religious conflicts in the State who were not prosecuted using relevant laws. In moving forward, Prosecution of perpetrators of ethno-religious violence in Plateau State will serve as a deterrent to many who nurture the intention to stir conflicts and create a volatile atmosphere in the State. It must be noted that no citizen is above the law; people must be treated equally with the instrument of the law in any given democratic society without fear or favor. Law breakers must be punished in order to keep the law effective.

### Conclusion

This article examined the causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State, patterns of State response to these conflicts. It is important to note these conflicts are deeply rooted in quest for ownership of Jos, unequal distribution of economic and political resources, inciting speeches from religious and traditional among other variables. The proposed strategies in this article therefore required a political will on the part of the actors in power to engage them in order to attain lasting peace

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