MODERN AFRICA
POLITICS, HISTORY AND SOCIETY

ISSN 2336-3274 (Print) ISSN 2570-7558 (Online)
https://edu.uhk.cz/africa

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Recommended citation:

Wika, P. (2014). Unveiling the salient issues in the protracted Jos crises, Central Nigeria. Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society, 2(1), 53–74. Retrieved from https://edu.uhk.cz/africa/index.php/ModAfr/article/view/142

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UNVEILING THE SALIENT ISSUES IN THE PROTRACTED JOS CRISES, CENTRAL NIGERIA

Peter Nungshak Wika

Abstract: This paper has critically examined the causes and contexts of the protracted crises in Jos Plateau State, Nigeria since 1994. The paper traces the emergence and perpetuation of the conflict to the imposition of an exploitative and competitive colonial system sustained by mass labour migration, ethnic-politics and religious contestations. At the centre of these violent eruptions are the groups' dynamics that the conflict has created: The Indigene versus Settler problematic as well as the Christian versus Muslims militias. The crises in Jos are resource and identity-based in a contest over the native, political and economic soul of the ancient Tin-city. The various attempts made by the State and other non-State actors at finding lasting solutions to these ensuing huge human and material loss in this circle of violence have largely been insincere as they are also politicized. The Conflict perspectives as well as the Ethnic and Resource Mobilization paradigm were adopted in an attempt to understanding the Jos crises.

Key words: *Jos crises, Nigeria, ethnic and resource mobilization paradigm*

Introduction

Throughout history, under a variety of social and political systems and contexts, people in almost all parts of the world have engaged in conflicts and violent expressions, they have also waged wars using a variety of techniques of struggle. In modern times, instances of conflicts and expressive violent outbursts have become more crowded on a diverse range of issues, from politics, economy, religion, ethnicity, ideology and extreme forms of terrorism. In general terms, violent eruptions especially group or collective are usually a result of conflicts which are not properly managed or regulated by society (Sharp 1973). Several violent techniques are often employed to pursue or defend

certain claims or interests by various competing groups in the society. In other words, violence especially those expressed by groups is always precipitated by political, economic and socio-cultural grievances which are not promptly or properly resolved. However, it is instructive to note that conflicts are not inherently destructive in society; in fact, the level of progress, development and civility of a society is measured by its ability to appreciate and resolve conflicts amicably (Wika 2010). It is within these contexts that we seek to examine the various explanations and theorizations presented on the unresolved issues that have characterized the 'Jos crises'.

The last two decades of the twentieth century for Africa were not only periods of economic crises and state policy adjustment; they were also decades of conflicts and violence of varying characters and proportions. This period also witnessed a general resurgence in ethnic and religious conflicts across the continent (Abdu 2010). Nigeria has witnessed a series of conflicts as well as violent eruptions across the length and breadth of the most populous black nation on earth; factors that caused them are both similar and distinct (Egwu 1998). Since the attainment of flag of independence from the British colonialists in 1960, Nigeria has since then experienced violent eruptions ranging from political, inter and intra-religious, ethnic and lately religious terrorism (Sha 1998; Falola 1998; Suberu 2009). The Maitatsine crises in the 1980s, the Efe-Modakeke crises, the Lagos Area boys problem, the Tiv-Jukun crises, the Bassa-Egbura Nassarawa Toto crises, the Kano, Kaduna and Jos religious uprisings, the Niger Delta youth militancy and the Boko Haram Islamic religious terrorism in the northern parts of Nigeria are some of the major eruptions.

In the past eighteen years Plateau state in general and Jos in particular has been literarily tuned into a theatre of intense social conflicts and has been variously labelled by conflict researchers and social commentators as the main site of an age-long ethnic and religious violence within the Middle-Belt region of Nigeria (Sha 1994; Egwu 1998; Best 2007; Wika 2010). Estimates by the media, the police and some of the victims of these violent eruptions put the number of human losses from 1994 to date in thousands with extensive damage to properties estimated to cost billions of Naira. The Crises has also impacted negatively on the developmental strides of the state as resources meant for development are often diverted to maintaining

the usually fragile peace and security (Best, 2007). The conflict has always been centred on religious sentiments between Christians and Muslims; however, ethnicity and politics also play decisive roles. For instance, the 2001, 2002, 2008 & 2010 violent eruptions have various degrees of religious as well as political issues involved. The violent eruptions also spread to other parts of the state including rural areas with devastating magnitude (Best 2007). Perhaps, a new dimension to the crises was revealed in the rural areas surrounding Jos, especially in the clashes between the Berom and Fulani militia groups within some surrounding villages and towns which records the killings of farmers, cattle breeders, and the massacre of Berom villagers in Gyamboruk (Dogo-na Hauwa) an old colonial tin- mine settlement on the outskirts of Jos (Wika 2010).

What makes the crises in Jos unique and perhaps, attractive is the myth that surrounds some of the issues that has characterised the conflict and crises. The indigene and settler debate, the struggle over the ownership of Jos, the significance of the city as the religious headquarters of some sort to both the Muslims and Christians, hence the religious outlook of the crises (Sha 1994; PIDAN 2010). It is generally perceived within both Christians and Muslim organizations in Northern Nigeria that Jos is a fertile ground for the establishment and development of religious movements and ideas partly because the city is among the young and fast growing ones in the old Northern region of Nigeria (Last 2007).

Interestingly, Jos has now been seen as a spiritually fertile ground conducive for Muslim as well as Christian reformers to establish their base for the propagation of their faiths. Jos is at present the spiritual headquarters of the Church of Christ in Nations (C.O.C.I.N.), the oldest and perhaps largest Christian denomination in Plateau State with branches in almost all the states of Nigeria and also in the United Kingdom, Niger, Ghana and Malawi. The city is also headquarters to the Evangelical Church Winning All (E.C.W.A.) denomination, the Anglican Church has a sitting archbishop in the city as well as an archbishop for the Roman Catholic Church. The Living Faith church has its regional headquarters in Jos amidst numerous other Pentecostal Christian denominations. The Muslims also have the national headquarters of the *Jama'atu Izala al-Bida wa Iqamatu al-Sunna* (J.I.B.W.I.S), one of the militant sects of Islam, that coined

its name from Arabic meaning: The Association for Suppressing Innovations and Restoring the Sunna. The association started in Jos in 1978 to promote what it asserts as a more orthodox spiritual Islam with emphasis on the Sunna and denouncing the practice of Sufis, (Loimeir 1997; Kane 2003; Danjibo 2010). The *Jamaatu Nasril Islam* (J.N.I.) also has Jos as its state headquarters and so do several other Islamic sects. The geographical location of Jos as the only access by road to all the north-eastern states of Nigeria also explains the contest and fight over its control and ownership. The temperate climate and the agricultural potentials of the state add to the list of issues serving as baits for the control of the city by the contending parties in the conflict. As mentioned earlier, factors causal to the conflict and crises in Jos are both historical and contemporary.

The historical dynamics of the Jos crises

The Jos Plateau has been conducive for Christian missionary activities before the advent of colonial rule. The European Missionaries established their presence with the founding of Jos as a town. The activities of the Sudan United Missions (SUM), as well as the Catholic missionary activities were instrumental to the development of the city and its peoples. The flourishing of Christianity and its spread from Jos was possible because of the rejection of Christianity in the far North and its acceptance on the Plateau especially in Jos, Gindiri and Shendam areas. The position of Jos as a cradle for Christianity in the North is further enhanced by its strategic location as a doorway to most parts of the North, especially the North-Eastern region and at the same time an economically important and strategic city within the Middle-Belt (North-Central) region of the country. Jos was and still is seen as a base for the evangelization of the entire area of Northern Nigeria. The advent of colonialism and the economic boost it created from the tin mining activities in the city attracted a large population of the Nigerian southerners who were largely oriented towards Christianity. In the same token, an equally large numbers of northern Nigerian labour migrants were predominantly Muslims. This historic crystallization was later to give way to economic and religious competition, political assertiveness, religious fundamentalism and violence (Sha 1994).

It could be further argued that colonialism was the single most important factor in the crystallization of contemporary identities

and identity conflicts in Jos. This was possible through the process Suberu & Osaghae (2005) called the "*Cobbling"* of different Nigerian groups into culturally and politically artificial entities. The result is the simulation of inter-group competition and mobilization for power and resources in the new political arrangements, thus the fuelling of ethnic, religious and political conflicts. This development has transformed most of these colonial urban centres, especially Jos, into the melting pots of ethnic contacts, competition, religious consciousness as well as mobilization.

Coleman, characterized these new colonial mining, commercial and administrative cities as "aggregations of tribal (and religious) unions (centres)" (Coleman 1958). Coleman argued further that, such colonial urban centres (or bus stops as it were) have encouraged the formations of kinship, lineage or ethnic associations and religious membership as a strategy and means to cushion the insecurity, instability, alienation and competitiveness characteristic of the new colonial urban life. Prior to the advent of colonialism, the Islamic Jihad which was championed by the self-styled Islamic reformer Othman Dan Fodio had swept the entire parts of what is now referred to as the north eastern and western Nigeria and parts of the Middle-Belt (North-Central) regions of the country including the present day Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Kaduna and Bauchi states (Danjibo 2010). This Islamic mission literarily swept through the entire northern portion of the country as well as forcefully converting almost everyone at sight in to Islam. However, the tribal regions of the Middle-Belt especially the Plateau areas put up a strong resistance as captured by a 2010 publication of the Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN):

...during all the Jihadic years of the early 19th century these(native) ethnic groups were not subjugated under the Fulani Emirate rule. The advances of the Jihadic forces were continuously repulsed by them until the Jihadists had to skirt round the Plateau to move into other parts of the country. A classic example was the Naraguta war of 1873 which inflicted tremendous reversals on the Bauchi forces. They met their waterloo from the combine forces of Amo, Afizere, Anaguta, Buji and Berom (Indigenous Ethnic Groups, PIDAN 2010: 4).

When these efforts to forcefully convert the tribal regions of the Middle-Belt into Islam failed, the colonial mining activities provided

a more subtle avenue for the realization of this religious mission, (Wika 2010). These labour migrants that came into Jos in their thousands in the wake of the mining activities were mostly from the Hausa and Fulani (predominantly) Muslim communities of Northern Nigeria extraction. This was critical for the actualization of their subtle religious mission. Similarly, Osaghae & Suberu (2005:15) reported that:

The advent of colonialism in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent amalgamation of the northern and southern Nigeria in 1914 witnessed more migration in response largely to modern economic opportunities in emerging colonial urban centres. A phenomenal instance of such colonial economic migration was the early twentieth century influx of southern Nigerian migrants, especially the Igbo and Yoruba into northern cities like Kano, Kaduna, Zaria and Jos. This migration did not however, lead to greater integration as might have been expected. This was partly due to the continuing strands of state consolidation by the Muslim overlords in the core north in the aftermath of the Fulani Jihad of 1804 that produced an acute sense of territoriality.

The Muslim Hausa-Fulani settler problem in Jos must be understood within the context of these similar migratory factors and patterns especially in the context of the number that migrated into Jos and the religious-cum-economic ideology behind such mass movement; particularly with the failure of the early Jihad crusades within the Plateau areas. Sha (1998) presented a detailed identities roster as well as the estimated number of the Plateau labour migrants based on the 1931 census tabulation:

Table 1: Distributions of ethnic identities and population of labour migrants: Jos Division based on the 1931 census tabulation

Hausa (Northern Nigeria)	6,498
Beriberi (Borno State)	1,960
Bagirmi (Northern Nigeria)	1,677
Fulani (Northern Nigeria)	1,097
Tera	648
Kerikeri	590
Arab(Shuwa)	424
Ibo	249
Yoruba	225
Bariba	221
Zaberwa	154
Munshi	153
Bolewa	151
Nupe	95
Asaba(Ibo)	66
Other Northern Province	430
Other Southern province	165
Other Foreigners	16

Source: Capital and Labour on the Nigerian Tin Mines (Freund 1981: 85).

The window provided by the mining migrations for the Northerners was basically seen as another opportunity to conquer and further control areas farther away from their hitherto enclaves in the core North. It was to say the least, an economic opportunity masked in colonial regalia but with a religious soul and mission. Documented evidences revealed that the Hausa and Fulani migrants/settlers were clearly not the first to have been attracted to Jos, even before formal colonialism and the attendant mining activities in the Jos area but perhaps their number rather than time of arrival gave them the false impression and claim that they founded Jos. For instance, Sha (1994: 47) reported that,

The settler question in its present character and form in Jos emerged as a result of colonial penetration and expansion; it was accompanied by such developments as the implantation of the colonial tin mining industry, the construction of railways and the growth of commerce and urbanization. These developments increased the scale of migration and settlement on the plateau and particularly Jos.

It is also important to note that, the contradictory and selective colonial policy reflected in the politics of inclusion and exclusion in their characteristic style of administration, also shaped the dynamics and the problematic of the Hausa/Fulani settler versus the Indigenous ethnic claims over Jos, a central thesis explaining the occurrence of the crises in Jos. As noted earlier, the introduction of capitalism via colonialism in Nigeria set the stage for the emergence of mass settler communities in Jos. This was necessitated by the capitalist economic ventures of the colonialists which required a large labour force for their operation. The establishment of this colonial tin mining industry also necessitated the creation of a large labour force which could not be provided by the population of the Jos natives (Sha 1994). Consequently, the claims by the Hausa labour migrants that Hausa names given to certain areas especially within Jos and environs translates into evidence to its ownership is not only simplistic and commonsensical but largely misplaced and fraudulent (Best 2007). What then happens to Hausa names given to other areas especially in Lagos and a few other northern trade points in the Eastern parts of Nigeria? Are they valid bases for ownership too? However, it is common knowledge that Hausa traders and commercial migrants are fond of given Hausa names to areas they perceived to have constituted the majority. Similar claims abound in parts of Southern-Kaduna in Kaduna state (Abdu 2010). Whether these claims are a reminiscent of the biological idea of ecological successesion or a mere friendly gesture to their hosts' communities has left more questions now than answers. Similarly, Adamu as cited by Egwu (2001) observed that:

The criteria for Hausa identity are broad, and include historical claims, cultural traits and social values as well as language and religion. Out of these criteria, Islam has been singled out as an influential social landmark in the acculturation process of the Hausa both at home and in migration (Egwu 2001: 21).

At the centre of the Jos bloodbath is the claim on its ownership by the Hausa labour migrants as demonstrated by the naming of some areas in Jos as basis for ownership. However, Best (2007: 29) documented some of these Hausa names in Jos as well as their original native names before the advent of colonialism and the subsequent attraction of labour migrants including the Hausa, to its flourishing tin mining sites in Jos.

Table 2: List of Native and Hausa names of some areas in Jos

NATIVE (BEROM) NAME	**HAUSA NAME**
KABONG	GADA BIYU
KUWURI	ANGWAN SOYA
CHUWELNYAP/GWONG	NASARAWA
LARANTO	KATAKO
JOT	GANGARE/GARBA DAHO
TITE	JENTA APATA
KAKRA	ALHERI
ROT NORO	ALI KAZAURE
GURA LOHMETJEI	ANGWAN ROGO
TOP	MAI ADIKO
BERUKURU	BUKURU
JISHE	TUDUN WADA

Source: Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State, Nigeria (Best 2007: 29).

These changes of Berom to Hausa names as argued by Best (2007) are basically to reflect names of some key Hausa miners as well as the origins of these early tin mining labour migrants such as Ali (from) Kazaure in the present Jigawa State in Northern Nigeria. Furthermore these claims via Hausa names as basis for ownership of some past tin mining posts in Plateau go beyond the state capital including Bokkos, Mangu, Bassa and Jos South Local Government Areas with names of areas such as Doruwa Babuje, Gindin Akwati, Dogo Na Hauwa, Mai Idon Toro, Tenti Babba, Tenti Karami, Mai Katako, Kantoma, Guade, Dutsen Lamba, Mangu Arna, Mangu Hausawa, etc. (Best 2007: 29).

Contemporary issues in the Jos crises

The 1999 declaration and the subsequent implementation of the Islamic Sharia legal system in Nigeria is central to understanding these new waves of religious and ethnic conflicts and violence especially in Northern Nigeria. As I have noted elsewhere, the introduction of the Sharia legal system in Northern Nigeria is instrumental to the new wave of Islamic religious revivalism that has since given way to religious fundamentalism and terrorism in the North and some parts of the Middle-Belt regions of Nigeria (Danjibo, 2010). Particularly, the clamour for the implementation of this religious legal code in Jos by the self-styled *Jasawa* Muslim settler communities, dramatically transformed the religious sentiments and dynamics of the Jos crises. It will be recalled that the then Governor of Zamfara state in North-West Nigeria, Alhaji Sani Yariman Bakura in defiance to perhaps ignorance of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, declared the adoption of the Sharia legal system in the state. Like a whirl-wind, almost all the northern states followed in quick succession. The Obasanjo government (1999-2007) then did not engage these states in a legal battle to seek interpretation of the secularity of the Nigerian state against the adoption of a state religion. The clamour for the stoning to death of Safiya Mohammed in Katsina state over adultery charges (ironically, without the conviction of her male accomplice) as reported by both home and foreign media readily comes to mind as part of the legal contradictions inherent in the Islamic religious law. To date, the religious law has not resolved the contradictions and guarantee the rights to life of a Muslim who willingly converts from Islam to other religions.

It was generally observed that the declaration of the Islamic Sharia system has created a lot of anxiety and tension to most non-Muslims that are either indigenous to these states or citizens. There were issues ranging from (im)proper dress codes, the outright ban on alcoholic drinks, the ban on the sale and consumption of certain animals labelled as 'unholy', the demolition of Christian worship centres and outright denial and revocation of land titles targeted at the Christians in some parts of the north. Public discourse has it that, the introduction of the Sharia law in the Muslim dominated northern Nigeria also attracted accolades from most of the world's leading Islamic countries. Unconfirmed media reports also have it that financial support to states that have adopted the Islamic law as well as inducement to others

willing to follow suit was presented. These perceptions and insinuations are believed to have further heightened the tension between the Christians and the Muslims particularly in the North and all over Nigeria. There were reported cases by the state and national media of thousands of youths from these Sharia-tagged states gaining scholarship admissions to study in some of Islamic countries, including those known globally for the training of Islamic terrorists groups such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, etc.

This chronology of events that followed the adoption and practice of the Islamic Sharia system in all of the Northern states and its clamour in some of the Middle-Belt states including Plateau was perceived and interpreted by the majority of Christians in these areas as a deliberate attempt to consciously and perhaps, forcefully, impose Islamic religion not only in these areas but the nation at large (Wika 2010). It is within the context of this religious reawakening that the Jos crises also adopted its religious characteristics, support, mobilization and execution with religious fundamentalism as its driving force. Furthermore, the interplay of ethnic and religious politics amidst intense socio-economic crises in Nigeria, and Jos in particular, saw the near institutionalization of communal and religious politics with its attendant social and political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Abdu observed that:

The State in Nigeria is a dependent capitalist society with minimal productive capacity and limited capital base, bureaucratic and security apparatus which serves those who are in control of the machinery of government and business. Therefore, since these individuals and groups belong to certain ethnic and religious groups, which they (also) use to sustain their hold on power and resources, the state sometimes also, serve the ethnic categories of those who wield state power. (Abdu 2010: 5).

Particularly, the narrow ethnic and religious politics among the Christians and Muslims in Jos has been largely responsible for the tension and the polarization of its inhabitants. These divisions have also been used as bases for the mobilization for support and the basis for the execution of violent eruptions in the city (Best 2007). From this analysis therefore, the crises in Jos can also be understood within the context of the local political economy as bequeathed by economic imperatives that attracted the old and new polarized inhabitants of

Jos. In the majority of cases, the behaviours and actions of the political and economic actors in Jos are influenced by their religious beliefs as well as ethnic interest. Government decision-making therefore, since the revival of the civilian rule in 1999 in Jos, tends towards ethnic patronage and religious clientism (Egwu 1998). Ifeka (2000) also observed that the state has become the focus of competition between individuals and groups competing for high offices at the centre, largely aiming at getting control of public resources, for personal and ethno-religious benefits. It has also been argued in several quarters that the new democratic order in Nigeria has reinvented a new symbol and idea of the state as an entry point to wealth, influence and control by its actors. This development has not only exacerbated conflict via competition but also fuels the prevalence of violence in such contests (Osaghae & Suberu 2005).

It is important to point out that the challenge in the management of ethnic and religious pluralism within the democratic sphere is not peculiar to Plateau state and Jos but a national problem. At present, the political culture in Nigeria is oriented towards ethnic and religious popularism, populism and patron-client relationship at the expense of the public and/or general good. What is observed has been very divisive, polarizing groups along ethnic and religious lines instead of accommodation in an all-inclusive system of government. This fact was evident as reflected by the religious voting patterns by Nigerians in the recently concluded 2011 presidential election.

Religious pattern of voting in the 2011 presidential elections between the two top candidates: Buhari & Jonathan

Table 3: Religious preference in 2011 presidential elections

MUSLIM DOMINATED STATES (BUHARI)	CHRISTIAN DOMINATED STATES (JONATHAN)
BAUCHI = 82%	ABIA = 99%
BORNO = 78%	AKWA-IBOM = 95%
GOMBE = 60%	ANAMBRA = 99%
JIGAWA = 60%	BAYELSA = 99%
KADUNA = 52%	CROSS RIVER = 98%
KANO = 62%	DELTA = 99%
KATSINA = 72%	EBONYI = 97%
KEBBI = 56%	EDO = 95%
NIGER = 65%	ENUGU = 99%
SOKOTO = 62%	IMO = 99%
YOBE = 56%	ONDO = 81%
ZAMFARA= 67%	RIVERS = 98%
AVERAGE = 64%	**AVERAGE = 97%**

Source: Election Monitor 2011

Religion and ethnicity are generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identities in Nigeria. This duo has also influenced and shaped the political landscape of Plateau and North Jos in particular since the return to civilian rule in 1999. The Jos crises present a picture of these complex crisscrossing and recursive identities of which the ethnic, religious and political issues are the most salient and the causal factors for the violent eruptions that has occurred. This is from the point of view of the identities most commonly assumed by the citizens especially for political purposes.

The indigene versus settler problematic in Jos

The indigene versus settler debate in Nigeria is generally a new phenomenon. The Jos debacles may have been reserved as perceived in several discourses, to serve as the legal cum political reference point to the constitutional contradictions these issues have come to represent in Nigeria's political landscape. What has sharpened this consciousness is undoubtedly the increase in the number of states and the atomization of ethnic and religious identities beginning from 1967 when the regions were dismembered (Abdu, 2010). To put this issue in context, the North was the first beneficiary of indigeneity as a concept and practice; for fear of marginalization by the southerners in the civil service in the North, in 1954 an indigenization decree was implemented for the Northern Region to replace the rather too large (for comfort) southern population in the northern civil-service with their northern counterparts (PIDAN 2010).

Conflicts and violent eruptions around the indigeneship and settlership question especially in Jos are acute because they also express and reflect deeper divisions and contradictions within the entire political system. The crises in Jos have gained an expression as well as the exacerbation of the ideas and issues around indigeneity and settlership. Commenting on the Indigene-Settler Syndrome in Jos, The Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN) observed that:

...at the heart of the Plateau imbroglio is the deep-seated twaddle called Indigene-Settler Syndrome, an obviously nagging national question which has pervaded the national scene thereby seeking to undermine the tenets of Nigeria's federalism...the spark-point of these recurrent ugly scenarios (in Jos) is the contention over the ownership of Jos between the native Anaguta, Berom and Afizere on one hand and the settler Hausa on the other hand (PIDAN: 101).

It is observed that the Hausa community in Jos for instance, have continued to enjoy multiple indigeneship and identities in Jos North LGC and their localities of origin. For instance, Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande, a one-time Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the platform of Plateau state, hails from Kano, Alhaji Ibrahim Baba Hassan, the immediate past Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly hails from Yobe State, and many others benefiting from the State. It

is instructive to note that other settler ethnic groups in Jos who have openly acknowledged and accepted the fact that they are settlers in Jos including those that migrated into Jos earlier and/or about the same time with the Hausa settlers have not enjoyed such privileges yet have remained peaceful and industrious contributing to the growth of their host state.

Young (1985) famously observed that people's perceptions of ethnic group memberships are situational in the sense that they may identify with and mobilized according to multiple or different ethnic categorizations, shifting identifications depending on the political context. The Hausa and other times, Jasawa Muslim settler elements in Jos are often caught in this web of shifting identifications during political contestations. Furthermore, Horowitz (1995) maintains that conflicts along ethnic lines are more likely to turn violent than are conflicts along ideological and other political cleavages. He suggests that because "ethnic brethren" are understood as metaphorical family members, ethnic conflicts attracts intense emotions and a sense of existential threat. Killing of rival groups as we have seen in the Jos crises then appears a more reasonable and justified reaction. This explanation has thus confirmed the claim that ethnic violence, not particularly in Jos alone, is used as a tool by which political elite instil fear on their opponents as well as maintain or increase their public support. Another dimension to the crises in Jos is the emergence and adoption of ethnic militia groups to execute the violence. According to Agbu (Badmus 2006: 19)

Ethnic militia movement is the extreme form of ethnic agitation for self-determination as various ethnic groups assume militant posture and gradually metamorphosed into militia groups each of which bears an ethnic identity and purport to act as the machinery through which the desires of its people are sought to be realised. The common features of these ethnically inspired movements are the resort to violence, preponderance of youth membership, ethnic identity affiliations, and that they are mainly popular movements demanding change over the status quo.

The introduction of ethnic militia groups and its impact on the crises in Jos especially, the 2001, 2008, 2010 & 2011 coordinated violent attacks have left scores dead, widened the scope and frontiers of the conflict and legitimized the use of military weaponry in the execution

of the violence on rival groups. It also goes without saying that the activities of these militia groups in Nigeria generally have constituted real threats and setbacks to the so-called Nigerian project and its corporate existence as a country.

Conversely, group violence carried out in the name of religion and in defence of its faith has long been a feature of human affairs (Suberu 2009). In Nigeria generally, religion has played and is likely going to continue to play a central role in the society. Over the years, our politics and the political landscape has been shaped by religion both at the early period of independence as well as this current period described as democratic revivalism. In virtually all discourse on the Nigerian state, religion is likely to occupy centre stage (Kukah 1994; Falola 1998; Kenny 2006; Suberu 2009). However, historical events linked to religion tilt more towards its negative than the positive contribution to the Nigerian project. The Jihad, the civil war, the Sharia law, the so-called introduction of Nigeria to the Organization of Islamic countries (O.I.C.), the Boko-Haram Islamic terrorism and a wide range of religious conflicts and violent eruptions that have engulfed the country are likely pointers to the fact that religion in Nigeria has assumed a dominant force in the country's political arrangement. In most parts of Northern and the Middle-Belt regions of Nigeria, particularly with the adoption of the Sharia Islamic law system, religious identity now assumes a more critical form of identity than the ethnic, in fact, the religious component is largely used to activate ethnicity, (Osaghae & Suberu 2005). Experiences abound in Nigeria that, of the three major religions Christianity, Islam and Traditional, the traditional is the least politically active on a significant scale partly as a result of the comparatively fewer number of its adherents rather than their belief systems. Commenting on the power of religion and its influence in igniting most of the violence occurrences witnessed particularly in the Northern and Middle-Belt regions of Nigeria, Egwu, (Egwu 1998) argued that:

Religion as an identity is about solidarity and setting of boundaries between those who are considered to be believers and those that are not. This deals with issues of sentiments, feelings and norms that may be a result of shared experiences. This identity is used to create a sense of order, meaning and hope as a counter point to the insecurity of everyday life or to what may

be perceived as an unjust social order. The identity can also bring distress and insecurity to those whom the group seeks to exclude (Egwu 1998:17).

Significantly, the Jos crises have created some identity boundaries in the definition of conflict and the emergence of violent groups in almost all the violent eruptions recorded. The 1994, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011 & 2012 violent attacks in Jos and environs reveals the ethnic, religious and to a lesser extent, political factors as the sustaining ingredients in all its alarming patterns and dimensions. The ethno-religious violence in Jos north as well as the Berom- Fulani violence in Jos South, Riyom and Barkin-Ladi all revealed the adoption of these identities. However, the ethnic factor particularly in the Jos north crises is likely to give way in the future through inter-marriages and what Pedan, (Pedan 2012) called 'situational ethnicity' thus, the in-group and out-group ascriptions of identity depending on context. The religious challenge might be the greatest threat to peace in Jos, particularly with the advent of the radical Islamic terrorist group, the Boko-Haram in the equation.

The Boko-Haram Islamic terrorism in Nigeria

The Boko-Haram insurgency came into the limelight in 2003. I had described the group elsewhere as ideologically convulsed, politically blind (within the context of Nigeria's politics); a ruthless and deadly religious terrorist group. The leader of this movement was the late Mohammad Yusuf, a secondary school dropout who later went to Chad and Niger Republic to study the Quran. In those two countries, Yusuf developed radical views that were abhorrent to westernization and modernization. In a similar fate to the former Maitatsine (Mohammad Marwa's) Islamic religious sect in the 1980s, Yusuf got back to Nigeria and settled in Maiduguri and established the Islamic sectarian group called the Yusufiyya, apparently after his name. The sect was said to have attracted over 28000 members spread across Nigeria, Chad and Niger Republic. Yusuf's radical and provocative preaching was not only limited to other Islamic sects and scholars but also against established political institutions and Christian religious institutions. The ideology and philosophy of the movement can best be understood within the context of the two words, 'Boko' and 'Haram'. While Boko is a Hausa term for book which also transcended to western and/or foreign norms

and values, Haram on the other hand, is an Arabic derivative, meaning 'forbidden'. Coining the two words together, Boko-Haram simply means to forbid everything western as well as western education. The goal of the movement is to replace the modern state formation with the traditional Islamic state because according to them, western norms and values run contrary to Islamic doctrines and values.

Sectarianism generally isolates group members with particular and peculiar identity from the larger body. In this context therefore, all Muslim faithful can profess Islam as their religion but not all can claim to be members of a sect and there are many sects in Islam as there are variations in teachings and interpretations. Perhaps, the earliest known sects in Islam are the Sunni and the Shia (Shiites). Whereas the Sunni believe in integrating religion and society by adopting religion to state structures, the Shiites on the other hand, believe in religious Puritanism such that Islam must be practiced in its pure form and must be guarded from being adulterated by society (Danjibo 2010).

The fratricidal wars that these doctrinal divisions have produced between the Sunni and the Shiites have assumed an indefinable magnitude in Iraq, recording scores of deaths. In Nigeria however, the Boko-haram is not at war per se with other Muslim sects but Christians and Government organizations and institutions that are perceived to having a western soul. The Boko-Haram violent attacks have largely been restricted to the Northern and Middle-Belt regions of Nigeria. Borno State has been the epicentre of these terrorist attacks, with Bauchi, Yobe, Kano, Gombe, Katsina, Kaduna, Plateau and Abuja (the seat of Government) has had their share of the violence. The loss of lives and damage to properties while this violence lasts is inestimable as the sect was said to have used propelled grenades, locally produced bombs and AK47 rifles in carrying out their attacks. Interestingly, one, Abdulrasheed Abdullahi confessed to the police in 2009 that he and another member of the group were sent to Afghanistan to train in the art of bomb and improvised explosive devices making (ThisDay, Thursday September 3rd, 2009, p. 1); which leaves the impression that the sect had been receiving financial and military support from foreign countries and other terrorist groups. Furthermore, the majority of the Boko-Haram members have been brain-washed and believe strongly that dying in the course of defending Islam would make them earn

the status of martyr. Therefore, they are inclined to sacrifice their lives through violent means.

In Nigeria today, religion has become a strong force to reckon with in almost all facets of our public and private lives largely because of the sentiments and beliefs Nigerians have on religious symbols and meanings. Good governance that may translate into improved literacy especially for the youth remains a key ingredient to reducing some of this religious induced violence. Caution must also be taken in using religion to mobilize against modernity and modernism which is perceived by the vast majority of the Muslim population as the root of social ills hence, anti-Islam. If these checks are not adhered to, Nigeria might be slipping towards the path of disintegration along religious lines. The recent proclamation of a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in north-eastern Nigeria by President Goodluck Jonathan is widely assessed to have been yielding results. However, the extent to which military might is preferred as an option to effectively dislodge terrorism is one strategy feared by global analysts which may not yield the needed lasting solution.

Theoretical perspectives on the Jos crises

Most group violence take their roots from group differences, ancient unresolved hatred, century old feuds and the stress and strain of modernity and modernism, including competition over scarce material and non- material resources. These factors individually or jointly contribute to the potentials for tremendous violent occurrences (Lake & Rothschild 2000). The crises in Jos historically stem from longstanding disputes over the ownership and control of Jos and its attendant political and economic privileges between ethnic and religious groups who consider themselves 'indigenes' and those who are viewed as 'settlers'. Religion is readily used as a tool to whip up sentiment between these feuding groups.

The conflict theory

Using the conflict perspective to understand the Jos crises is to view the crises along the identities that have evolved in the evolution of Jos as a modern city and the conflict it has created over scarce values and

resources. Particularly, focus must be put on the historical context in the formation of such identities and their bases for political relevance, demand, mobilization and action. The politicization of these identities is not only salient in the attempt to understanding the crises in Jos but relevant in the definition of the conflict groups. These crises pointers have consistently presented this identity colouration along its mobilization for action which is brought to play depending on the perception of the situation, including the identity adopted by the competing actors.

This situational explanation in the Jos crises exists largely at a collective or group level. Thus members of a group may decide to identify themselves as religious, ethnic and political. The occurrence of the Jos violent eruptions follows this familiar trend, which interestingly has been replicated in most of the violent eruptions in the Middle-belt as well as the Northern parts of Nigeria depending on the level and scope of the conflict.

The ethnic and resource mobilization theory

The ethnic competition perspective is an attempt to refine the human ecology perspective. This perspective treats ethnic conflict as an outcome of ethnic competition and specifies the mechanism that link competition with conflict. Barth (1956) analyses a key mechanism through which competition is transformed into active conflict in what he referred to as "niche overlap" thus, the exploitation and occupation of the same resources coveted by other competitors. This is the core of the competition perspective. Hence, ethnic, religious, political or economic conflict occurs when these groups struggle to control limited resources in the presence of competitors. Competition over the same scarce resources is in this context an important determinant of the ethnic or resource conflict.

This perspective further asserts that group conflict and violent eruptions result when the economy takes a turn for the worse or even with increase in emigration. Thus when two or more ethnic groups living in the same society or community, they inevitably find themselves competing for positions, jobs, appointments, housing, prestige, land and other scarce resources that could both be material as well as non-material. As a result of these, ethnic and other forms of group

consciousness and interests are likely to develop, provided that one or more of the ethnic group perceives that the competition is unfair (Belanger & Pinard 1991).

Conclusion

In Nigeria today, religion has become a strong force to reckon with in almost all facets of its public and private lives. This is as a result of the sentiments and beliefs Nigerians have on religious symbols and meanings. The Jos crises are largely an expression of these contradictions. The manipulations as well as the politicization of religion and ethnic identities especially in most parts of the North and Middle-Belt regions of the country have unfortunately shown no signs of weathering away even within the so-called democratic experiment. Caution must be taken by Nigerians in the actual use and/or the manipulation of religion to mobilize support against modernity, modernism and perceived religious enemies on both divides or else the country may well be on a path to more violent eruptions and an eminent disintegration along ethno-religious lines.

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