Ethno-Religious Conflict and Peace Building in Nigeria: The Case of Jos, Plateau State

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Abstract

Nigeria has played host to different types of conflict, especially since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. Critical amongst these, is ethno-religious conflict, whose centrifugal tendencies potent dangerous vortex for the corporate existence of the country. The conflict in Jos, which has become interactable, is generally characterized as ethno-religious (mainly between majority Christian indigenes and minority Muslims settlers). The continual manipulations of these socially constructed categories trigger and drive violence in the city. Consequently, efforts at peace building within the ethno-religiously divided city have defied real and apparent solutions so far. One the one hand, government responses to the recurring conflicts have been widely perceived as ineffective, while on the other, the non-committal stance of the warring factions has given momentum to the collective destruction going on in the city. This study is an attempt to interrogate the intervening variables in the Jos crises. Aside its reliance on recorded data, the paper draws heavily on current reports of the crises in the city. After a carefully analysis of the available data, the paper recommends amongst others; a review of the 1999 constitutional provisions on citizenship, the strengthening of the security architecture not only in Jos but throughout the country, the prioritization of minority rights, the calvarisation of education in the country and the promotion of good governance.

I. Introduction

Nigeria is a plural, highly complex, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religions polity, with a diversity of ethnic groups. (Danfulani, 2009: Smyth and Robinson, 2001). This identity is played out in the way the country is bifurcated along the lines of religion, language, culture, ethnicity and regional identity, Osaghae and Suberu (2005:4). of the population of over 150 million people, the country is almost half Christians and half Muslims, aside other religions (Paden, 2008; Schwartz, 2010).

In Nigeria, as in all of Africa, "political competition, via the electoral process, embraces inevitably and inescapably, an uneasy tension between conflict and consensus" (Diamond, 1982:630); violent identity conflicts have become, since 1999, a method of collective action by diverse ethnic and religious groups engaged in contestations for political power. The most prominent of these conflicts are those that have pitted Muslims against Christians in a dangerous convergence of religion, ethnicity and politics.

Jos, the capital of Plateau State in Nigeria has, over the past decade, witnessed violent communal clashes across ethnic and religious fault lines. These clashes have claimed "thousands of lives, displaced hundreds of thousands of others, and fostered a climate of instability throughout the surrounding

region" (Kwaja, 2011:1). While large scale violence has occurred periodically since 2001, in recent years attacks have become more frequent, widespread, and efficient.

The conflict in Jos is often usually characterized as inter-religious or inter-ethnic, mainly between the majority but marginal Christian 'indigence' (Anagula, Berom and Afrisare) and the minority but dominant Muslim Hausa Fulani groups (Adebanwi: 2005). As is often the case with identity conflicts in Africa, these are socially constructed stereo-types that are manipulated to trigger and drive violence in Jos (Aapengnuo, 2010; Kwaja, 2011). They veil deeper institutional factors within the Nigerian social fabric that are abused and exploited to deny citizens access to resources, basic rights, and participation in political process; factors that if unaddressed, have the potential to fan the embers of violence across the country.

In the face of violent identity conflagrations, efforts at peace building become sisyphusean, or very daunting, to say the least. Over the years, government responses to the recurring Jos conflicts have widely been perceived as ineffective. At least, 16 public commissions have been launched to examine the conflict and proffer solutions but as yet, little gains have been made, owing to lack of the needed political will to act on the commissions' findings.

It is based on the foregoing, that this paper takes another critical look at ethnic and religious identity construction in Nigeria and its implications for national building in Jos, Plateau, State. In order to achieve this, the paper is divided into several parts which includes; abstract, introduction, theoretical perspective, overview of identity crises in Nigeria, the Jos crises, official responses, extant variables, the way forward, and conclusions.

2. Theoretical Perspective

Countries where centrifugal and fissiparous tendencies exist are often victims of violent identity conflicts. More importantly, the patterns of social cleavages in any given society are an important determinant of the intensity and irreconcilability of conflict. These can best be situated within the theoretical framework of identity politics, which interrogates the origins of identity construction and their fundamentalisation, including their recourse to violent conflagrations.

Identity politics is the political activity of various ethnic religious and cultural groupings in demanding greater economic, social and political rights or self determination (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). It claims to represent and seeks to advance the interest of particular groups, the members of whom often share and unite around common experience of perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the society of which they form part and exist in (Ambe-Uva, 2010). This usually gives rise to a political basis ground which they may unite and begin to assert themselves in society (Zweri and Zahid, 2007). Identity politics means more than the sole recognition of ethnic religious or cultural identity. In fact, it seeks to carry these identities forward, beyond mere self-identification, to a political framework based upon that identity.

Nigeria presents a complex of individual as well as cross-crossing and recursive identities of which the ethnic, religious, regional and sub-ethnic (communal) are the most salient and the main basis for violent conflicts in the country. This is both from the point of view of identities mostly commonly assumed by citizens "especially for political purposes and the identities often implicated in day-to-day contestations over citizenship as well as competitions and conflicts over resources and privileges" (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005:7).

Two approaches aptly capture the nature of Nigeria's identity diversity. One is Geertz's (1963) famous distinction between primordial ties, which are basically inscriptive and based on the 'givens' of life (tribe, Kinship, ethnicity etc) and civil ties, which hinge on society type aggregations like class, political party affiliation, interest group membership and so on. According to Geertz (1963), the

prevalence of primordial ties in Africa and Asia, has made it difficult, if not impossible for the integrative revolution, which entails the erosion of primordial ties by civil ties or what Oommen (1997:35) describes as the "transition from exclusionary and inequality-generating ethnicity and nationality identities to inclusionary and equality oriented citizenship to take place". Many studies of identity based conflicts in Nigeria, including those of contested citizenship and national cohesion, take their theoretical cues from this formulation (Ekeh, 1975; Oyovbaire, 1984; Oyelaran and Adediran, 1997; Suberu, 2001).

The second approach is more or less, a conflict based perspective in which only identities that form the basis of political demand, mobilization and action, or the so-called politicized identities, may be regarded as politically salient. Young (1976), Kasfir (1976) and Rothschild (1981) are some of the leading proponents of politicized identity. While this approach has the merit of focusing on active identities, it is mistaken in the exclusion of identities that are not politically salient such as gender and profession. This is because often times, identities tend to be situational and like volcanoes, identities that are dormant today can become active tomorrow.

Thus, what is clear is that any examination of Nigeria's identity would necessarily have to be inclusive of all identities, civil or primordial and the ways in which they are intricately linked. This is necessary to enable us situate the various identities, especially the more active and politically salient identities in their fuller, robust and recursive contents.

Plateau, a state of plural ethnicity and religion, has had several cases of identity based conflicts. It is the second most ethnically diverse state in Nigeria after Adamawa (Alubo, 2006). Like elsewhere in Nigeria, this diverse population is seen as bearing two identities; indeperes and settlers. There are also two major religions Christianity and Islam. In its contemporary situation, most of the so-called settlers are Muslims, while the supposed indigenes are mostly Christians.

Based on past experiences, particularly in Jos, conflict which begin as politically based frequently assume ethnic and religious dimensions (as in 2001 and 2008), in a telling conflation of religion and ethnicity (Alubo, 2009; Cesey, 2007). Identity conflicts in Jos are mostly between indigenes (Beron, Anaguta and Afrisarte and Settlers (Hausa/Fulani). In his research on communal violence in Plateau State, Bagudu (2004:314 – 316) reveals a count of "over 62 identity driven conflicts within a decade, with 22 recorded in 2004 alone". Also while indigenes have different identities, these are neatly folded into a common umbrella (Best, 2007) for the purpose of uniting against a perceived common enemy. Thus, the recurring Jos conflict illustrates how identity is used as the basis to access opportunities and ultimately, inclusive citizenship.

3. Overview of Identity Crises in Nigeria

Since the 1980s, identity conflicts have become a recurring decimal in Nigeria, especially in the country's Northern region (Abdu, 2002:2). This, identity crisis is not peculiar to Plateau State. It has caused similar problems in Modakeke/Ife, Sabongari/Kano, Sabo/Ibadan, Zango/Kataf, Urhobo/Itsekiri, Jukun/Tiv, Kuteb/Jukun-Chamba and Hausa/Shagamu (Danfulani, 2006). Others include the Chamba Vs Kuteb, the Ogoni Vs Andom in Rivers State, the Sharia crisis in Kaduna State, the Tiv Vs Other ethnic groups in Azara of Nassarawa State in 2001, the Tarok Vs Hausa/Fulani in Plateau State in 2004, the Geomai Vs the Hausa/Fulani in Shandan local government of Plateau State in 2002, the Quan Vs Pan in Quan'pan local government of Plateau State in 2006, the Hausa/Fulani and the Beron, Anaguta and Afizare in Jos North local government in 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, and 2010 and "the Boko Haram violence that has engulfed Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Kano States since July 2009" (Kwaja, 2009:106).

While, the roots of ethnio-religious and other identity conflicts have been linked to "colonialism and the Cold War" (Machava, 2008:2), other scholars argue that such conflicts are rooted in bad governance, politication of ethnic and religion identities, the competition and conflict for political power by the ethnic and religious communities respectively (Anafi, 2004; Conversi, 1999). Despite strong optimism that the enthronement of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 would avert or mitigate violent identity conflicts, "the country has rather witnessed a resurgence in high level ethnic, religious, communal and citizenship conflicts with devastating consequences" (Kwaja, 2009: 105). One of the claims for the enthronement of democracy as well as democratic consolidation in Nigeria lies in the fact that as a centripetal force, democracy is the only institutional arrangement that can guarantee "the peaceful resolution or management of ethnic, religious and other identity conflicts" (Olayode, 2007:134).

According to Ibrahim (2000:69), ethno-religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria, are linked to citizenship within the context of identity, which is rooted in the politics of inclusion or exclusion. These are tied to claims and counter-claims over identity as a basis for determining who is excluded or included from decision making as well as access to opportunities and privileges under the 'we' versus 'them' cliché (Kwaja, 2008; 2009). These identity conflicts have had far teaching implications for the state. According to Babangida (2002:11), the consequences have been; "waste of enormous human and material resources in ethnically and religiously inspired violent encounter, clashes and even battles, threats to security of life and properties, the heightening of the fragility of the economy and political process".

Thus, the ethnic, religious and communal groups that feet marginalized by the major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) are forced to adopt constitutional and extra-constitutional means to challenge the hegemony of the major ethnic groups. The main cause of violent, identity conflict in Nigeria is that most minority groups have remained permanent minorities, while the majority groups are permanent majority, a trend which has serious implications for inter-ethnic and religious relations among the diverse ethnic and religious identities in Nigeria. In this way, the incentives for cooperation, consensus and compromise have been undermined thereby posing an enormous challenge for the task of peace-building, as diverse ethnic groups are forced to co-exist in an environment of mutual mis-trust, apathy and suspicion.

4. The Jos crises

Situated on the northern edge of the 'middle belt' in central Nigeria, where the country's "predominantly Muslim northern half blends with the generally Christian south, Jos is a relatively new city" (Kwaja, 2011:2). Before its descent into violence the city was regarded by both Nigerians and foreigners alike, as a peaceful settlement with a temperate climate of magnetic attraction (Ambe-Uva, 2010; Higazi, 2011; Plotnicov, 1967, Gaya Best, 2007). While the serenity of the place lasted, it was reputed as the "Home of peace and tourism". Today however, the city is being mockingly referred to as the "Home of pieces and terrorism", (Jeadayibe and Kudu, 2010).

Since the early 1980s and especially from 2001, Jos has witnessed long-running, even if understated, rivalry between the majority but marginal Christian indigenes (Anaguta, Berom and Afisare) and the minority but dominant settler Hausa/Fulani (Adebanwi, 2005). The result of these rivalries has been recurring ethno-religious and political violence. The Jos crisis is usually attributed to "the polyglot nature of the city which resulted from the nineteenth century migrations of different ethnic groups to the area to work in the Tin mines" (Danfulani and Twatshak, 2002:244).

Today, is founding, or rather precisely who founded Jos city is part of the problem that sparked of the recurring violence (Gaya-Best, 2007). As such, the ownership of Jos is hotly contested among the

three main indigenous ethnic groups (the Berom, Anaguta and Afisare) where traditional land meet on an unmarked border line in Jos town on the one hand and the descendants of Hausa-Fulani settlers, who initially settled in Jos as traders and Tin miners on the other hand.

Signals pointing towards the manifestation of contentions issues between Muslim settlers and Christian indigenes started emanating in Jos in the 1990s (Danfulani, 2006), culminating in 1994 into open clashes mainly between the Berom indigenes and Hausa-Fulani settlers over farmland and chieftaincy issues. Abdu (2002:23) opines that the "1990s witnessed a resurgence in identity politics in Jos, this time centering around the control of Jos North Local Government carved from the former Jos local government in 1991", which enhanced the Hausa-Fulani hegemonic control of political powers in the local government.

On April 12, 1994, the growing tension escalated into violent clashes when Sanusi Mato, a Hausa-Fulani man was appointed chairman of Jos North Local Government transition committee. The indigenes rejected the appointment because, as Sha (1998:57) observed, they "interpreted the action as the confirmation of the fear that the federal government wanted to provide basis for the Hausa-Fulani to assume political hegemony in Jos". The ensuring violence led to the "burning down and vandalisation of government properties" (Abdu, 2002:13).

Also, in March 16, 1996, electoral violence in Angwar Rogo, a predominantly Hausa Fulani settlement almost escalated to ethno-religious violence. The indigenes alleged that the Hausa-Fulani tried to rig election by smuggling into the polling stations "Shagari voters" from the Northern part of the country. This prompted the electoral officers to screen out the unknown faces thereby evoking anger and protest among Hausa-Fulani youths. The resulting violence "left three people dead" (Abdu, 2002:24).

In September 2001 another devastating ethno-religious conflict broke out in Jos when Alhaji Mohammed Muktar, a Hausa-Fulani and a former chairman of Jos North Local Government was appointed as the coordinator of the Federal Government's National Poverty Alleviation Programme in Jos North. Indigenous Christian youths rejected the appointment on grounds that while he was chairman of the local government, he was indicted by a court ruling, which removed him from office for among other offences, falsification of birth records, perjury and falsehood (Ojukwu and Onifade, 2010). The Christian youths also felt aggrieved by the appointment of a person from the minority Jasawa group (Hausa-Fulani) to head such a sensitive office (Danfulani and Fwatshak, 2002). The resulting sectarian violence claimed as many as 1,000 lives (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

In 2004, more than 1,000 people were killed in attacks against Muslim and Christian villages from February to May, and 250,000 were displaced, especially in the town of Yelwa (Human Rights Watch, 2009; Kwaja, 2011). These attacks revolved around contestations over land and chieftaincy. Table I below shows in chronological order large-scale communal clashes in and around Jos since 1994.

Table I: Large-scale communal clashes in and around Jos

Year	Proximate Trigger	Extent of Violence
1994	Appointments of lay leaders prompt protests and counter demonstrations.	Four killed. Several city markets, an Islamic school, and places of worship destroyed.
2001	Appointment of local administrator of welfare allowances leads to weeks of demonstrations. Tensions rise, resulting in violence.	An estimated 1,000 to 3,000 killed. Violence expands across plateau state. Attacks by youth groups in Muslim and Christian neighbourhoods, on mosques and churches, and at the university of Jos. Sporadic attacks continue through 2002-2003, killing hundreds and destroying 72 villages.
2004	National elections held but postponed in	More than 1,000 killed in attacks against Muslim

	Plateau State. Local officials are appointed, resulting in disputes.	and Christian villages from February to May, and 250,000 are displaced. Federal government removes state governor and appoints temporary replacement.
2008	Local government elections - The first in Jos since 2002 - Are scheduled then delayed three times. Disputes emerge over party nominees and results.	Nearly 800 killed in gang attacks and riots from November to December.
2010	A dispute over reconstruction of a home destroyed by clashes in 2008 leads to violence in January and reprisals in March and throughout the year.	January: up to 500 residents killed over 4 days in January. Many villages and homes destroyed. March: up to 500 killed in an oversight attack. December: nearly 80 killed following twin car bombs. Hundreds more die in frequent intermittent attacks.
2011	Disputes between farmers and herdsmen over farmland leads to wanton destruction of lives and property throughout the year and especially in September and December.	September: Over 100 residents killed in several days of fighting in and around Jos. December: over 20 people killed in coordinated attacks.
2012	Land-related communal conflicts between the predominantly Berom ethnic group and Hausa/Fulani Herdsmen continues to rear its ugly head in Jos, leading to a complex interplay of conflict factors.	February: Suicide Bomber Rams Car Into Church Of Christ In Nigeria (COCIN), instantly killing three, injuring 38 and damaging 30 vehicles. July: Gunmen Attack over 10 villages, kill over 300, including a serving Senator Gyang Dantong, and the majority leader of Plateau House of Assembly, Hon. Gyang Fulani.

Source: *Kwaja (2011:5): Researchers' Fieldwork, 2012.*

Again, two days of inter-communal violence on November 28 to 29, 2008, followed a disputed local government election in Jos north local government on November 27, 2008. The violence pitted predominantly Christian indigenes from the Berom, Afisare and Anaputa ethnic groups who were largely in support of the Christian candidate from the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) against Muslim 'non-indigenes' primarily from the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, who backed the Muslim candidate from the opposition, All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) (Human Rights Watch, 2009). The PDP Chairmanship aspirant, Timothy Buba Polled 92,907 votes to beat his closest rival from ANPP, Aminu Baba with 72,890 votes (Ambe-Uve, 2010). It was the declaration of Timothy Buba, as winner of the election that sparked off the chain of events that led to the crisis. During the crisis, rampaging youths burnt down many vehicles, churches, mosques, filling stations and private houses. In all more than 700 people were reported dead while thousands were displaced and took refuge in several locations (Ojukwu and Onifade, 2010: Humana Rights Watch, 2009).

In January 2010, violence quickly broke out when a Hausa-Fulani man attempted to reconstruct his home which was destroyed during the 2008 clashes. Christians youths in the area vehemently opposed the reconstruction of the building and soon, the matter resulted in serious ethnic and religious disputes that left over 1,000 people dead (Kwaja, 2011). In December of the same year, nearly 80 people were killed in twin car bomb attacks.

Since 2010, several hundreds of Muslims and Christians have died in Jos in coordinated bomb attacks in worship centres and other public places. The dreaded Boko Haram sect has claimed responsibility for some of these killings as the security situation continues to depreciate in Jos. At the

times of doing this research, violent ethnic and communal clashes are still a recurring phenomenon in Jos and environs.

5. Official Response

There have been several commissions and strategies set up to study the causes of violent identity conflicts in Jos and proffer workable solutions. Unfortunately, until the present moment, government responses to the conflict are widely "perceived as ineffective" (Kwaja, 2011:2). At least 16 public commissions have been launched to examine the conflict and indentify solutions and many other studies have been conducted by independent groups. As noted by Kwaja (2011), there is little political will to act on these findings. Federal and State governments have regularly worked at cross-purposes, sharply disagreeing on the measures to mitigate conflict in Jos, while the involvement of civil society groups has more or less had a polarizing effect in most cases.

In the aftermath of the 1994 crisis, a seven-member judicial commission of enquiring headed by Justice Aribiton Fiberesime (Rtd) was constituted by the then military administrator of plateau state, to look into the causes as well as possible solutions to the crisis. However, "the report of that commission since 1994 is yet to be made public by the government and no white paper has been produced" (Abdu, 2002: 24). The commission made several recommendations to the government, including sanctioning all individuals, groups and organizations indicted, but these were never implemented. The government's inaction led to sporadic communal clashes for the next five years, culminating in the September 7, 2001 violence, which led to wanton loss of life and properties.

On October 18, 2001, the then Plateau State Governor, Joshua Dariye, also inaugurated a 10-member commission headed by justice Niki Tobi to look into the 2001 disturbances. In its findings the commission noted that the 1994 and the 2001 crisis were very similar and that had the 1994 Fiberesime recommendations been implemented, the 2001 crisis could have been averted. Unfortunately the Niki Tobi commission suffered the same fate as the Fiberesime commission.

In November, 2008, there were disagreements over whether it was the federal or state government that had explicit powers to set up probe panels. A major fallout of this disagreement was the setting up of different probe panels (Ambe-Uva, 2010). The Federal Government panel was led by General Emmanuel Abisoye, while that of the state was chaired by Justice Bola Ajibola, both houses of the National Assembly also set-up their own panels. These needless contestations and muscle-flexing tended to exacerbate the conflict (Ambe-Uva, 2010). In the end, no white paper was produced for any of the panels and none of the recommendations have been implemented, thereby, creating the basis for the continuation of crisis in Jos.

6. Extant Variables

It has been amply stated, in scholarly literature and debates, that Nigeria is a plural society. It is a deeply divided state in which major political issues are fiercely, some would say, violently contested along the lines of the complex ethnic, religious and regional divisions. (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Obviously, the issues that generate the fiercest contestations are those that are considered fundamental to the existence and legitimacy of the state, over which competing groups tend to adopt exclusionary, winner-take-all strategies i.e. the control of state power, resource allocation and citizenship.

It is noteworthy that the diversity in a country's ethnic, communal, religious and racial configuration is not necessarily the determinant of conflict. Rather, it is the fundamentalisation of these diverse identities that exacerbates restiveness. According to Fearon and Laiton (2003), such conflicts are associated with conditions that favour insurgency, including poverty, which marks financially and

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bureaucratically weak states. Clearly, the institutional fragility of the state, in terms of its ability to manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, gross violation of human rights, land contestations and cut-throat electoral competitions; have been some of "the underlining causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999" (Kwaja, 2009:107). These have been worsened by the inability, or unwillingness of the state to deliver on its core functions necessary to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations.

In Jos, prevalent Poverty and perceived socio-economic and political marginalization have heightened primordial alignments which have provided the historical ferment for violent conflict. Added to this, widespread unemployment and illiteracy have bred frustrations which have often been given an ethno-religious vent. Weak state capability, which is summarily underscored by the inefficiency of security institutions (the Police, Army, State Security) to effectively mitigate, or at least, reduce the scale of violent conflict, in a society profoundly characterized by deep frustrations, is another reason why crises may continue unabated.

Also, in Jos, as elsewhere in Nigeria, beneath citizenship are conflicts deeply entrenched questions of disproportionate access to power, resources and land. The inability of the state to guarantee better life for its citizenry by making resources amply available and accessible for all is the major explanation for the fundamentalisation of ethnic, religious and regional identities. Clearly, in the competition for the values of society to be realized politically in Jos, religion and ethnicity have become powerful means of claiming special place, recognition and advantage (Ibrahim, 2000; Osaghae, 2007).

What can be gleaned from the analysis above is that an appropriate policy option for mitigating conflicts in Jos and indeed other parts of Nigeria, must inevitably incorporate mechanism for reducing poverty, inequality and alienation. This is because in reality, they are the main precursors of violent conflict. Ethnicity and religion only serve as the platforms for the exhibition of deep seated frustrations and hardships.

7. The Way Forward

It is obvious that entrenched resource control factors are at the heart of the growing distrust and violence in Jos. Left unchecked, this pattern is likely to spread to other parts of the country. Accordingly, fundamental changes will be required to reverse, or at least, attenuate the incentives fanning the violence. In this regard, the following policy options are imperative:

7.1 Review of Constitutional Provisions on Citizenship:

Clearly, there are fundamental flaws inherent in Nigeria's 1999 constitution with regards to the citizenship question. There is a sense in which contradictions in certain provisions of the constitution has promoted the indigene-settler conflict. For instance, the provision in section 147 which requires a minister to be an indigene of a state conflicts with the constitution's notion of citizenship which section 25 (1a) attempts to articulate. It is therefore expedient for these provisions and other relevant provisions to be reconciled through a constitutional reform process that should be undertaken with due consideration with the Nigerian people. This will enable the Nigerian state to permanently relegate indigeneship/citizenship contestations to the backwaters of history.

7.2 The Strengthening of the Security Architecture:

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of security institutions in Jos and Nigeria generally is underscored by the scope, magnitude and persistence of violent identity conflicts throughout the country.

Strengthening security forces capacity to proactively detect early warning signs and respond to inter-communal tension can help better contain outbreaks of violence. This will require capacity building and efficient intelligence gathering mechanisms, including the provision of state of the art weaponry, necessary for combating unrest in the twenty-first century. In doing this, means for investigating allegations of security sector complicity in ethnic and religious violence are required to ensure accountability. Also, measures that prevent political elites from manipulating security personnel for parochial aggrandizement should be firmly in place.

7.3 The Prioritization of Minority Rights:

In order to reconcile the polarized ethno-religious identity groups in Jos, and galvanize support for peace building initiatives, all the groups must have confidence that "basic rights will be protected and that institutional means to investigate alleged violations is available" (Kwaja, 2011:7). In this way, the engagement of a trusted, independent, external actor, such as the National Human Rights Commission is required. Its capacity, budget and authority should be broadened in order to fulfill this broader mandate of enhancing social reconciliation. The commission should be granted authority to initiate and conduct investigations, issue subpoenas, access state and national leaders, pursue charges and order prerogatives so as to cut through political strolling. This arrangement can facilitate better cooperation from citizens who are more inclined to report violations and abuses to the trusted Human Rights Commissions, rather than the security forces.

7.4 Promotion of Good Governance:

There is no gain-saying that the promotion of good governance at all levels of governmental authority remains the greatest antidote to the problems of democratic sustenance in Nigeria. In the absence of good governance, the ruling elite recourse to ethnic, religious and regional appeals, thereby inflaming primordial identities of the masses. As such, only a transparent and accountable leadership that rises above primordial considerations will be able to enhance the peaceful co-existence of autochthons and settlers in Jos.

7.5 The Expansion of the Political Space:

One of the major causes of violent civil conflicts in Nigeria, since independences, has been the restriction of the political space. In Jos, there were instances when the political space was so narrowed that it became a one ethnic/religious group enclave. This has in no small measure famed the embers of discord on the plateau. Accordingly, the enlargement of the political space to ensure that all stakeholder in Jos are given equal right to aspire, contest and win elections, irrespective of their ethnic or religious extraction could be very potent in the attempt at nipping ethnic and religious violence in the bud in Jos. A more proactive and result-oriented civil society can be a very useful platform for the articulation of this agenda.

7.6 The Initiation of Poverty and Inequality Reducing Policies and Programmes:

The fact that poverty and socio-economic marginalization often leads to aggressive behavior that can take on etnnic and or religious connotations cannot be overemphasized. In Jos, as elsewhere in Nigeria, members of some ethnic groups who feel alienated or deprived often rationalize their hardship as resulting from the control of politics and society by members of rival ethnic groups. This scenario has

whipped up primordial sentiments which have often resulted into violent conflicts. It is therefore imperative that government and other relevant institutions should design poverty reduction schemes that will be inclusive of all identities and thereby, help reduce the level and scope of poverty and inequality, which are often the real causes for violent civil conflicts.

7.7 Calvarising Education:

Much of the violence on the plateau and in several other parts of Nigeria has resulted largely from ignorance and illiteracy. The fact is that a substantial population of Nigerians are still illiterate, which makes them easy instruments of manipulation by unpatriotic elites. This is very much the case in Jos. It is therefore necessary to promote and encourage education by way of making it mandatory and free, especially at primary and secondary school levels. This will help groom a new breed of citizens that are conscious of the implications of the manipulation of primordial identities or mutual co-existence and development. Through education, people can be exposed to the several other peaceful means for resolving conflicts, rather than resorting to violence. This will help reduce the scale of violent conflicts in Jos.

8. Conclusion

The task of national building can be very daunting, especially in countries that are deeply polarized along ethnic and religious fault lines. This paper has clearly demonstrated that ethnic and religious identities, in themselves, do not ferment or conduce violent conflicts. Rather, beneath conflicts that are often always regarded as ethno-religious, are questions of disproportionate access to power, scarce resources and opportunities. Moreover, the issues that generate the fiercest contestations are those that are considered fundamental to the survival and reproduction of the state, over which competing groups tend to adopt exclusionary, do-or-die approaches. These include control of state power, resource allocation and land.

In particular, factors such as poverty, socio-economic marginalization, weak state capability and lack of good governance were all implicated in the Jos conflicts and have contributed in large measure to the politicization of ethnic, religious and citizenship identities, thereby leading to their fundamentalisation and political salience. Such identities tend to become problematic when access to opportunities in the political system in terms of power and resources are dependent on membership of a particular ethnic or religious group as well as when the state is weak in terms of its capacity to protect its citizens and provide for their welfare.

In the final analysis, this paper has alluded to the role of identity construction and their fundamentalisation, in accentuating ethno-religious and political conflicts. It has focused on the development, diversity, density and trajectories of identities and identity conflicts in Nigeria while centering its analytical praxis on the recurring Jos conflicts. It is plausible that the goals and interests that all the groups in Jos pursue are rooted in the quest for access to power and opportunities via patronage and clientelism which can only be gotten through the use of state machinery. In the process, the privatization of violence and the manipulation and mobilization of ethnic religious and citizenship sentiments are often freely employed by the competing groups.

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