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Trends and Dynamics of Indigene/Settler Conflicts in Plateau State, 1994-2010

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ABSTRACT

Plateau State is a vibrant mosaic of diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural communities. It boasts one of Nigeria's highest concentrations of ethnic minorities, with over fifty-eight distinct groups residing within its borders. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the state has faced significant challenges in managing the complexities of indigene/settler dynamics and ethno-religious conflicts. While ethnic groups from various parts of Nigeria also live in Plateau State, the recurrent violent conflicts predominantly involve Hausa/Fulani settlers and the indigenous tribes. This paper delves into the patterns and intricacies of indigene/settler conflicts in Plateau State, analyzing their zero-sum nature where one group's gain is perceived as another's loss. It argues that the complexity of these conflicts is exacerbated by multiple interwoven factors, including ethnicity, religion, competition for scarce resources, and struggles for political and economic dominance. These factors collectively create a volatile environment, making conflict resolution particularly challenging. The study concludes that these persistent negative trends and dynamics have severely undermined the dividends of democracy in Plateau State. The ongoing conflicts have resulted in significant loss of life and property, leaving many homeless and exacerbating the socio-economic challenges faced by the state. This paper aims to shed light on the urgent need for comprehensive conflict management strategies to foster lasting peace and development in Plateau State.

Keywords: Trends; Conflict, indigenes; Settlers; Plateau State.

INTRODUCTION

In a plural society like Nigeria, conflict has been associated with social, political, communal, religious, or ethnic issues rather than other factors (Ugiebeme & Echeng,

2024; Ugiebeme, 2022). Even political and economic conflicts always carry with them religious or ethnic differences (Ukiwo, 2003). Since the return to democracy in 1999, ethnic conflict has become more prevalent in Nigeria, and the phenomenon of violent conflicts is a recurrent issue in some parts of the country. The impact of these conflicts is felt throughout the country, especially in the north, where the conflicts have either been ethno-religious, communal, or political. Arguably, conflict ought to be an agent of change from a negative trend to a means of problem solving or towards correcting some of the negative policies in society, such as human rights abuse, political exclusion, and marginalization (Akpan, 2013; Akpan & Uko, 2019; Akpan, 2017). Plateau State has experienced a recurrence of these conflicts over the years and is still grappling with them (Nnabuihe, 2016).

Plateau State has been engulfed in a continuous tussle of supremacy between identity and politically based groups, all of which have at one time or another demanded access to either space, natural resources, or political authority. This unremitting sequence of violent conflict has over time become difficult to resolve, having lasted for over twenty years now without success in resolving it through justice, security, mediation, or even brutal force. Jos, the state capital in the period under review, has experienced protracted violent conflicts. This perennial conflict has pitted the indigenous communities against the settlers. These clashes have resulted in the destruction of properties and livelihoods and the deaths of thousands of people since 1994, especially women and children. While most of these conflicts stemmed from the struggle over access to land for farming and cattle grazing, water, and other key natural resources, the diversity of the Middle Belt region means that land-based conflicts easily become integrated with grievances that relate to ethnicity, religion, and political power (Best, 2007; Dunmoye, 2003). It has been asserted that diplomacy in human relations is as old as mankind. Also, interactions among individual groups and political entities have not always been smooth and peaceful, despite these diplomatic means such as trading, intermarriages, and cultural exchange, which still persist today. Struggles over values and resources between or among social and political entities have always dominated human history, and it is this struggle that has constantly featured in human interaction in its various dimensions that have been termed conflict.

Nigeria as a nation is a plural state, highly complex, with diverse multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious groups. This identity has caused the country to be divided along the lines of religion, language, culture, ethnicity, and regional identity, thereby causing violent conflicts in the country (Adediji, 2016). Though the mere existence of diverse ethnic or religious groups does not constitute conflict, the marginalisation and discrimination of these groups have led to several ethno-religious conflicts in the country. The Nigerian population of over 200 million people and over 250 ethnic groups is mainly bifurcated into Christians and Muslims, with splinters or pockets of traditional religious practitioners (Okpeh, 2008).

These contacts have sparked unhealthy rivalries in most parts of the North in the last decades and have remained the major source of intractable inter-ethnic and religious conflicts. The indigene/settler phenomenon is a serious cancer in the politics of Nigeria. As a cancer, it has spread to every part of the country, and in some states, like Plateau, it has assumed an ethno-religious outlook. It's effect on the state is so disastrous to the socio-economic development as well as to the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of the state. In human history, issues bordering on communal conflicts and inter-ethnic crises are common phenomena, as conflict is a reality of social relations at the individual, group, organisation, community, and societal levels. During the pre-colonial era, tribal groups experienced inter-kingdom dynastic feuds or inter-community conflicts (Osaretin & Akov, 2013).

Presently, the lingering conflicts that emerged among the indigene and settler communities in various parts of Nigeria stemmed from the conception, definition, and perception of the character of who an indigene is and who is a settler, and this can be seen from the standpoint of what rights accrue to this set of people. These views arise from the unhealthy, divergent ethnic-based interests, desires, and aspirations of the crude competition for scarce resources to meet the conflicting demands of human relations in society. This trend has resulted in the wanton destruction of communities, colossal losses of lives and properties, and the displacement of millions of citizens (Sayne, 2012).

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE PLATEAU STATE

Plateau State is one of the minority states in northern Nigeria. It is one of the states that make up the North Central region of Nigeria, and over the years, it has evolved in culture, religion, and belief system. During the Twentieth Century, when the British began colonial dominance in Nigeria, much of Plateau State was part of Bauchi Province, and in 1926, Plateau Province, which comprised Jos and Pankshin Divisions, was carved out of Bauchi Emirate (Fagbite, et al., 2018). In 1967, Benue and Plateau Provinces were merged to form Benue-Plateau State. Following the creation of more states in 1976, Plateau State was created out of the Benue Plateau to cover the area of the original Plateau Province. In 1996, the state was further subdivided to create Nassarawa State out of Plateau State by the Sani Abacha regime.

The state has seventeen (17) local government areas, distributed among the Plateau North Senatorial District, made up of Jos North, Jos South, Jos East, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa local government areas. The Plateau Central includes Mangu, Pankshin, Bokkos, Kanke, and Kanam local government areas, while the Plateau Southern Senatorial District comprises Wase, Langtang North, Langtang South, Mikang, Qu'an Pan, and Shendam local government areas. The state has over fifty-eight tribes and borders with several other states like Kaduna, Bauchi, Taraba, and Nassarawa State. The state is generally referred to as the "home of peace and tourism."

The name "Plateau" is derived from the picture square "Jos Plateau," a mountainous area in the northern region with attractive rock formations. The original name of Jos, the capital of the state, was "Gwosh" in the Izere language (spoken by the Afizere, the first settlers in the area), but was wrongly pronounced "Jos" by the Hausa/Fulani people who lived in the area, which is now a trading centre. Plateau State is the melting point of the Middle Belt or the headquarters of the North Central Region, and because of this, other states in the region and around it want to be associated with the socio-economic activities and politics of the state. Tribes such as Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Tiv, and many other tribes from different parts of Nigeria are all involved or want to be involved in the politics of the state (Bingel, 1978).

According to the 2006 national census, the population of Plateau State is about 3,206,531, with an area of about 30,913 square kilometers. Among the popular ethnic groups in the state are Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, Irigwe, Ngas, Tarok, Jukun, etc (Izeogu, 2018). The state capital, Jos, which has three local government areas—Jos North, Jos South, and Jos East—is dominated by the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta, who are the indigenous tribes; and the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, and Tiv. Meanwhile, the discovery of tin in Jos, Plateau, in 1902 by the British imperialists led to the gradual movement of people to the area for a better life. By 1943, tin mining on the Plateau was at its peak, and there were about 80,000 African workers earning their living in about 180 mining companies supervised by the Royal Niger Company. As a major foreign exchange earner then, a railway was constructed to link Lagos and Port-Harcourt for the exportation of this mineral to the western world. By 1960, Jos had become the sixth-

largest producer of tin in the world. The discovery and mining of tin led to the influx of Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and other ethnic groups into the state for greener pastures. The area that constitutes Jos today was predominantly dominated by British and African tin miners. The indigenous people of the state—Berom—because of their refusal to work in the mines were pushed to the outskirts of the town. When the value of tin ore decreased following the discovery of crude oil in the 1950s and its export in commercial quantity, the Hausa and Fulani turned their attention to commerce in the central part of Jos city. Maybe this is the reason why they have always claimed they owned Jos (Fell, 1939).

The scrambling for scarce resources has always been the cause of conflict in Plateau State, especially in Jos. The flourishing tin business during colonial rule led to the migration of different tribes to the state. The result of this is a scarcity of land and other means of livelihood. In an attempt to remain relevant, conflict has set in, and this conflict is between the indigenous people of the state and the settlers, especially the Hausa/Fulani, who feel they are major stakeholders in the Plateau project and have contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the state.

CONCEPTUALISING INDIGENOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

The Concept of Indigenous People

Indigenous people are referred to as the owners or native inhabitants of an area that has been colonised by Europeans in Africa, Asia, America, and Australia. Indigenous peoples are a common denominator for more than 370 million people and can be found in over 70 countries around the world. Indigenous or tribal people have their own cultures, languages, customs, and institutions, which distinguish them from other parts of the societies in which they find themselves. The indigenous people or populations were recognised and adopted for the first time in international law by the International Labour Organisation in ILO Convention No.107 of 1957 for the protection and integration of indigenous and tribal populations in independent countries. Etymologically, the word indigenous is derived from two Greek words: "indo," meaning inside or within, and "genous," meaning birth, born, or race (Swepston, 1990; Udo & Udoh, 2023). This then means "native." Literally, especially in the English lexicon, they are people, ethnic groups, or communities seen to be indigenous people of that particular region and claiming a particular tribal land. Other concepts that underline indigenous populations are aborigine, original, first, and hereditary owner in indigenous law (Jones, 2012).

Various definitions have been adduced by different authors for international and national outlook. However, the international or national definition of the term is most appropriate here. They see indigenous people "as people having a set of specific rights based on their historical distinctiveness from the populations that are politically dominant." This legislation was based on the assumption that some indigenous populations are vulnerable to exploitation, marginalisation, and oppression by the nation-state from the colonising populations or by the politically dominant different groups within the framework of those categorised as indigenous people, in the context of the advent of colonial rule in Africa until decolonization. The concept was used to refer to all non-European white people as "natives" in the environment in which they were colonised by the European colonisers in Africa, Asia, America, and the Pacific.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the indigenous people suffer from one form of hard and discriminatory conditions that increase their high mortality rate as a result of a lack of social and physical welfare and wellbeing, infant mortality, nutrition, health, housing, education, and employment. This is what indigenous people faced in countries such as Australia, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the Americas and Pacific. Indigenous people are faced with a diverse range of concerns as regards their status and interaction with other cultural groups, as well as changes in their inhabited

environment. Other challenges faced by indigenous groups are linguistic preservation, land rights, ownership and exploitation of natural resources, political determination and autonomy, environmental degradation and incursion, poverty, health, and discrimination. A disturbing phenomenon is that the relationship and interaction between indigenous people and non-indigenous societies throughout the history of mankind have always been complex.

Political marginalisation and socio-economic deprivation are some of the major issues indigenous peoples fight against to liberate themselves. They strive to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as a people. In Plateau state, the Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere are accusing the Hausa/Fulani of trying to force them out of their land because of their numerical strength and connection to the government at the federal level and in the North (Nwagwu, 2016).

RIGHTS TO FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian constitution is the highest body of law in the country. Section 42(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provide that--

a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic groups, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person (a) 'be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion are not made subject', or (b) 'be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to the citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion. In the same vein subsection 2 stipulates that "no citizens of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth (The Nigerian Constitution, 1999).

The Nigerian Constitution has been very explicit on who is a Nigerian and who is not, as it states that any person born in Nigeria before October 1, 1960, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belong to or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria, has a special attachment to the use of their traditional land. In this case, traditional land and territory are of fundamental importance for their collective, physical, and cultural survival as a people due to an experience of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession, exclusion, or discrimination due to their different cultures, ways of life, or modes of production, which may be different from the national hegemonic or dominant model. The term "son of the soil" for the African man implies that he can trace his origins to a particular indigenous family, a specific clan, or a particular ethnic group with an ancestral history.

The historical and ancient connection to lands and territories is very crucial in determining an indigenous people. The indigenous people have a right to determine their identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. They also have the right to determine the structure and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their procedures. They can also obtain citizenship in the state where they live. There are cultural procedures through which indigenous people assimilate and acculturate the settlers into the host communities for harmonious co-existence. Rural communities and classes are ruled by their respective traditional rulers and chiefs in the area, and the indigenous people are tied to the belief system, culture, mores, and politics.

Due to the system of land ownership, the dead are buried on their lands and not anywhere else. Therefore, any attempt by the traditional chiefs to change the status quo will result in losing its legitimacy.

Conflict is incubated if settlers refuse to assimilate or obey the laws of the communities, try to lord over the host communities, dominate the host communities, or try to infringe on their rights as a people. The natives will definitely resist the incursion of the settler (Okide, 2021a; Okide, 2021b). In every community, indigene have a significant right or advantage over settlers (in Nigeria) over socio-political and economic issues, and it is the local government authority that determines who is an indigene and a settler through the provision of a certificate of origin. The national government or federal government have no jurisdiction in this regard. The state and local governments can reject any attempt by the federal government to meddle or accept the outcome of any recommendation from the central government. Even the Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into this matter cannot rule in favour of the settler because the law is explicit on this any time a crisis erupts (Campbell, 2012; Adetutu, 2012; Okide, 2020).

INDIGENE/SETTLER CONFLICT IN NIEGRIA: THE CASE OF PLATEAU STATE

The indigene/settler phenomenon in Nigeria has been one of the lingering contradictions among the same people who lay equal claims to Nigerian citizenship and who have engaged in cultural, religious, economic, and political exchanges for over 100 years. In Nigeria, the settlers constitute a critical part of society where they engage in worshipping, socialising, trading, paying taxes, and marrying the so-called indigenes, but when it comes to sharing of resources, including ownership of land, they are resisted. When this happens, the indigene/settler sentiments are whipped up, and the so-called settlers often suffer gross injustice or discrimination.

In Plateau State, indigene and settler problems have threatened the peace and tranquilly of the state for over twenty years now. The state is currently grappling with an ethno-religious crisis due to its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural postures. The state became attracted to pastoralists in the nineteenth century, when its population was relatively small, and following the discovery of tin, the Jos area began to expand exponentially through farming by the indigenous population and cattle rearing by the Hausa/Fulani settlers. The conflict in the state can therefore be traced to the differences between the local population of Berom, Anaguta, and the Afizere (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani settlers (Okoliko, 2024). The indigenes in the state feel the state belongs to them and therefore should control it, but the Hausa/Fulani settlers are equally laying claims to Jos metropolis, saying they have equal rights to share the economic, political, social, and even the resources that come out of Jos. Their argument is that when they migrated to the area, the name Jos was not in existence then and that their contribution has helped in no small measure to the development of the state capital (Bliench and Dendo, 2004).

The argument by the Hausa/Fulani that Jos, the Plateau state capital, belongs to them is hinged on their belief that when they came to the area, there was nothing like Jos at the beginning of the 20th century. What constitutes Jos now is a virgin land, which they helped develop into a modern city. They see Jos as part of the old Bauchi Emirate, which they used as a transit camp when they were coming for business trips from the north to the south. Bauchi Emirate, as it were, was very prominent following the Udman Dan Fodio jihad, which began in 1804, and they therefore felt they had authority over Plateau or Jos (Yakubu, 1993). They feel that, due to their long stay in Jos, they deserve all the benefits that are due to citizens of a state. Consequently, the Hausa community in Jos has been agitated for the Sarkin of Jos or even the Emir of Jos. The Jasawa, as the

Hausa, Kanuri, Terawa, and Fulani are referred to, are claiming that, because of their long stay in Jos, they should be allowed to get a certificate of origin from Jos North local government area since they cannot get it from where they migrated from many years ago. According to Ostein, (2009),

No local government area in Hausa-land any longer recognizes them. They are no longer part of them. So if Jos North too denies them indigene certificate, they must do without the vital document in Nigerian life, and thus suffer many disadvantages and hardships as they attempt to make their way in the world. Even if they can get indigene certificates from local government areas farther north, this help them little in practice. In Jos and Plateau where they reside, -- their certificate are not from there. In the local government areas farther north from which the certificates come, the people actually resident there will have their own problems to deal with; emigrants living afar will get little consideration from them (pp. 8-9).

The Hausa/Fulani claim to the indigene of Plateau is hinged on their argument that, having lived so long in the state, paid taxes, owned a lot of businesses like manufacturing, trade, and transportation, and even increased in prosperity in and around the state, they deserve to benefit from the indigenship of the state. They see the recognition of only Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta as unfair and unlawful, citing sections 41 and 43 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which allow Nigerians to reside and acquire properties anywhere in Nigeria, as their justification. On the other hand, the indigenous tribes of Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta, or Plateau indigenes, are arguing that the Hausa/Fulani argument does not hold water as they were never conquered during the Jihad; in fact, they repelled it. Plateau and Pankshin Provinces were given to the Bauchi Emirate for administration on trust, and once the trust expired, the Plateau area was given full autonomy for self-administration in 1956. The coming of the missionaries in the twentieth century opened up the Jos Plateau to immigrants across the country and beyond, including the Hausa and Fulani. The coming of the colonialists and the missionaries and the conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity set the stage for the influx of other Nigerians into Plateau. This influx led to the occupation of a part of the state by the Hausas, and upon arrival, they started working in mines, farms, as artisans, and trading.

This argument and counterargument by the indigenous communities and Hausa/Fulani in Jos Plateau led to the organisation of various conferences aimed at resolving the conflict. One such conference was the 2004 Plateau Peace Conference. Central to the discussion during the conference was the issue of the ownership of Jos. In the 167-page report, especially sections 7, 2, and 2, and I on pages 31–33, which focus on indigeneship issues, the conference arrived at the following recommendations:

1. The conference delved into the problem of Jos and affirmed the conclusion of the 1994 Fiberesima Commission, which identified the true indigenes of Jos as Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta.
2. Delegates also advised that people should be proud of where they are from and should learn to assimilate themselves into the places of their origin.
3. The conference also opined that, with proper understanding of one another, integration and assimilation will ultimately come without intimidation and antagonism.
4. The 1999 Constitution gives every citizen the right to contest for any elective position, but appointive positions anchored on representation should be done within the ambits of the Federal Character Principle based on indigeneship.
5. Local governments should only issue Indigene Certificates to indigenes of the respective local government areas in Plateau State, as defined by the Conference.

6. Other Nigerians who may be non-indigenes in a place of residence should be issued residence certificates backed by an enabling law.
7. The federal government should include a definition of indigene in the Constitution. Such a definition should be mindful of minority rights as well as consistent with the Federal Character Principle.
8. Non-indigenes should desist from making frivolous demands on issues that are not their heritage but the exclusive preserves of the indigenes, notably traditional rulership and traditional rites of indigenous communities.
9. To allow for effective integration, assimilation, and development, indigenes are not to discriminate against other Nigerian citizens but should embrace them (PPC, 2004).

The Hausa or Jasawa community was not comfortable with these recommendations, as their appeal to include them as indigenes of Jos Plateau was rejected (Nwagbo & Okide, 2017). This was based on the fact that other long-term settler communities elsewhere in Nigeria were still being treated as non-indigenes. Because their interests were not included in the Peace Conference, the Jasawa delegates refused to sign the Conference Report, just as the representatives of Jamato Nasru Islam (JNI) did.

It is of note that the indigene/settler controversy in Plateau State has over the years created so much tension in the state. It was this dichotomy, which has always resulted in violent conflict, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the state in 2004 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. This was as a result of the pogrom on the Muslim communities by the indigenous communities during that period. The president blamed the then governor of the state, Joshua Dariye, for failing to act fast to end the cycle of violence between the Muslims in the state and the Christian communities. The president blamed the governor for being so indecisive and not intervening to stamp out the sectarian violence that led to the massacre in the small town of Yelwa. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, over 600 Muslims were killed by Christian militants wielding guns and machetes.

The two May 2004 attacks on the Hausa and Fulani communities in Yelwa by militants of the predominantly Torak tribe sparked revenge attacks a week later on Christians in Kano State. Police said not less than 51 Christians were killed, but Christian leaders in the city claimed more than 600 people were killed in the attack by Muslims, and a further 3000 were missing. These killings continued unabated in cities in the north, all in the name of revenge in the period under review. Since the incident that led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the state, successive governments in Plateau State have not derailed from Dariye's position that Jos Plateau and indeed the state belong to the indigenous tribes. Jonah Jang, who took over from Dariye as a Berom man, believed in the right of the Berom nation to control the territory that is its heritage and its birthright, insisting that the Hausa/Fulani are not and cannot claim indigeneship of Jos or Plateau state.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper adopts the theory of pluralism, considering the heterogeneous nature of the state. The pluralists' theory states that power in a state is shared among different groups, while at the same time, varied ideas, opinions, and expressions on social issues arise in the process. As more interests, ideas, and opinions arise, there is a need for the aggregation of these varied interests together with the representation of all groups for peace, order, and stability to thrive, and almost all smaller groups within the larger society aim to maintain their unique identities, values, and practices. Representation, according to the theory, is done by the elite of these groups; they speak for their ethnic groups, take decisions, and get back to them (Conolly, 1995; William, 2008). With the

multiplicity of various ethnic groups in Plateau State, both indigenous and settlers, scattered in all the various local government areas, with different cultural backgrounds, it has been difficult to reach a compromise when issues of representation come in because of fears of domination and marginalisation in economic, political, and natural resource distribution.

Politics as a Driver of Conflict in Plateau State

Social relations, politics, and other endeavours of Nigerians lives are partly occupied by the indigene/settler and ethno-religious psyche for non-other reasons than ethnicity. It also has to do with sharing history, a sense of identity, and cultural roots. Chauvinists, ignorant of history and attempting to dominate, perpetrate hatred among people based on religious or societal beliefs. This mentality has led to an ethnocentric, superior-and-inferiority complex, and it always goes with mass societal aggression, denial of access to opportunities, and, in most cases, the use of abusive and disparaging remarks that depict tribalism. This breeds divisive relationships among Nigerians. The indigene/settler psyche has so much occupied the minds of Nigerians that it has become a major force in the spheres of life of the citizens (Jega, 2007).

Heterogeneities such as racial, linguistic, and geographical factors Geographical factors threaten the social and political stability of societies, even in so-called advanced nations. In advanced western political and economic nations such as Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, Canada, etc., issues relating to racism and immigration are issues affecting and determining policy issues. On the contrary, crises in Plateau state have always assumed ethno-religious form, especially in Jos, the state capital, where there have been about six violent conflicts between the indigenes, or sometimes Christians, population in the state and the Hausa/Fulani Muslim population between 1994 and 2012. As it plays out in Jos, that is how this conflict affects the adjoining local government areas and other parts of the state where the Hausa/Fulani population is huge (Rodee, 1975:213).

In Plateau State, the major sources of conflict include, among others, poor leadership, poor communication, limited resources (especially land), role conflict, differences or misperceptions, inequitable treatment, and individual attitudes. The indigene/settler and ethno-religious conflicts have been most pronounced since the return of democracy in 1999. As pointed out by Alubo (Alubo, 2006), between 1994 and 2012, there have been violent clashes in Jos, Yelwa in Shendam, Wase, Bokkos, Barkin-Ladi, Barkin-Ladi, Bassa, and Bassa, and Riyom, and these crises have been between the indigenous population of the state and the Hausa/Fulani settlers. A critical look at the indigene/settler conflict in the Plateau reveals a causal relationship among all the parties. Conflict has negative and damaging effects that linger even after the conflict. There is the feeling of defeat and the demeaning effect of defeat on the losers; there is also a distance between and among the conflicting parties; and there is increased mistrust and suspicion among people. There is a tendency to concentrate on individual rather than collective defence.

Drivers of conflict

The major cause(s) of indigene/settler and ethno-religious conflicts are interrelated and interwoven. Generally, indigene/settler and ethno-religious conflict is very common during democratic regimes, as can be seen during the Olusegun Obasanjo regime. There were more than forty ethno-religious clashes, and again, between 1999 and 2007, there were more than 89 recorded cases of indigene/settler and ethno-religious violent conflicts in the country. These conflicts, when examined critically, were linked to land, ethnicity, politics, religion, access to natural resources, and other associated causes such

as fear of dominance, failure of the state, and constitutional dysfunction affecting citizen or indigenous status. More than 50 of the conflicts mentioned above occurred in the North, with Plateau and other North Central States accounting for over half of those conflicts in the Northern region (Alubo and Ilu, 2011).

Ethnicity: The heterogeneous nature of Jos and the state in general has been identified as a key factor in the incessant conflicts in the state. This aside, ethnic identity frequently coincides with religious affiliation in the state. While the indigenous people are mostly Christians, the Hausa and Fulani are predominantly Muslims. This is why the clashes in the state between the two groups are often seen or perceived through the lens of religion. The majority of indigene in the state are peasant farmers and civil service workers, while the Muslim minorities are Hausa dry season farmers and Fulani cattle rearing farmers, though some indigene also rear cattle in the southern part of the state. The migration of Fulani pastoralists to the state and the renewed emphasis on agriculture for food production have made land so contested in the state. This expansion in agricultural production through farming has reduced cattle herders access to water for their livestock, thereby changing the interaction between farmers and herders (Blench, 2003).

Politics: There have been numerous crises between the indigene and settlers, especially the Muslim (Hausa/Fulani) for political power. All the crises in Jos since 1994–2012 have been for political power. Other parts of the state where politics has been the driver of conflict in Plateau State are Yelwah Shendam, Wase, Quan-Pan, and Kanam. In these local government areas, access to political power through party ward congresses and local government elections has always resulted in crises. Examples of this crisis were in 1994, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2008 in Jos and adjoining council areas (Best, Willie, and Saidu, 2007).

Religion: In Plateau State, religion comes into question any time there is conflict in the state, thereby making the conflict in the state ethno-religious in nature. This is so because the Hausa/Fulani are mostly Muslims, and the indigenous tribes from the state, the settlers from the South, and most Middle Belt states are also Christians. Generally, religion has become the root of Nigerian politics since the mid-1970s. In 2000, many states in the North established Sharia law, and this led to violent conflicts between Muslims and Christians in those states. Christians in those states felt the Sharia law was an attempt to progressively Islamize public life and force discrimination against Christian minorities, thus the deadly inter-religious violence in those states. This incident led to a large number of Christians moving to Plateau State from those states. They brought with them stories of discrimination and atrocities they passed through in those Sharia states, thereby breeding tensions between religious communities in the state, especially Jos (Krause, 2011).

As noted by Segun and Jegede (2013), the fear among the indigenous population is that if the Muslims are allowed to control Jos North local government and area, they will try to assert control of the state since Jos is the centrepiece or central part of the state. Christians in the state see the conflict as a campaign to forcefully bring down Christianity in order to impose Islam on the people of Plateau State. During the 2008 crisis, over forty-six churches were burned down, and some clergymen were killed. There are also trends of blocking roads during worship services and the indiscriminate use of loud speakers, which further accentuate violent conflicts in the area.

Land Issue: In Nigeria, indigeneship is associated with land ownership. It is not only in Nigeria but everywhere in Africa. Therefore, anything that affects the land affects the

people and must be resisted by all means. Indigeneity is very strong in Africa because people see land as a primary commodity or property in traditional society and a source of wealth. This has generated a great deal of animosity between the indigene (land owners) and settlers in Plateau State. The desire of the Hausa/Fulani settler to have access to the land for grazing at the expense of the indigene has generated a lot of problems in the state. As peasant farmers, the indigene need land for farming. The crisis is intractable, and the indigenous population is insisting that they need constitutional interpretation for these lingering quagmires, as their hospitality has been abused by the settlers, especially the Hausa/Fulani settlers, who have consistently made claims for rights and privileges in the state. This land dispute always results in ethno-religious conflict. This can be seen in the farmers-herdsmen conflicts over the destruction of farmlands and farm products, usually by cattle from the herdsmen.

The Nigerian Constitution: The intractable conflict in Plateau State and parts of Nigeria has opened a new vista on the renewed debate on the use of the terms “settler” and “indigene” in the Nigerian constitution. In the 1979 constitution, the phrases “indigene” and “settler” were meant for a community of indigenous Nigerians. This can be seen in the definition of citizenship in Section 23, Sub-section (a), while the phrase “Federal Character” as recognised in the same 1979 Constitution signifies the principle of minority group inclusion and recognition by the federal government in all its affairs. In the same vein, Section 147(3) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution also mandates the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to appoint at least one minister from each state who shall be an indigene of such state, thereby recognising that there are indigenes or settlers in Nigeria (Adetutu, 2012).

Meanwhile, Section 25 (1a) recognises every citizen born in Nigeria on or before the date of independence as an indigenous person of Nigeria. Despite the retention of the concepts of indigeneship and federal character in our constitution to protect minority interests, their fear still remains unabated. This is because the constitution has not been clear on this matter, as the so-called majority tribes still believe that they have rights in the area where they reside. Ostein (2009) opined that the federal character in Nigeria was meant to foster national unity and national loyalty and give Nigerians a sense of belonging wherever they find themselves in Nigeria. Even Section 14(4) of our constitution asks all the states and local governments in Nigeria to recognise the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Nigeria as well as its diversities for equitable representation of all persons in government. The recurrent crisis in Plateau State since 1999 made former president Olusegun Obasanjo, in a 1993 seminar by the African Leadership Forum (ALF) on conflict prevention and management, state that –

the concept of settler or non-native syndrome has of recent hardened into a theory of ethnic exclusiveness and molded and propagated to foist a pejorative meaning to advance economic and political control among competing elite groups of interest during democratic regimes (Final Report, 1993).

The bogus nature of the Nigerian constitution has made Plateau State a key flash point where indigene/settler confrontation has raised or is raising dust in Jos between the indigenous tribes of Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere and the Hausa/Fulani settlers. There is also the indigenous Wase against the Torah and Jukun Hausa/Fulani settler. In Yelwa, the indigenous tribe fought against the Goemal and Jarawa Hausa/Fulani settlers in Shendam, Bakin Gyawa, Kadako, etc.

The Nigerian constitution has not been explicit on the status of “settler” in Nigeria, and this has bred conflict (Imbua & Tabi, F. O. (2019). Thus, it has remained a fertile ground for exclusion and permanent contestation in the state. Despite the fact that the

settler may have lived in an area for years and even contributed to the social and economic development of the community, they are consistently reminded of their status as settlers and technically discriminated against in terms of land ownership, education (scholarship), political offices, and employment.

TRENDS AND DYNAMICS OF INDIGENE/SETTLER CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF PLATEAU STATE

Nigeria has experienced armed conflicts of great magnitude since the late 1990s. These conflicts, based on strict observation, have their own trends and dynamics. Findings show that these conflicts have religious, political, ethnic, social, and economic triggers. The cause(s) of these conflicts as identified include, among others, religious fanaticism, intolerance, and extremism; an obstructive and destructive mode of worship; government patronage of a particular religion and marginalisation of others; sensationalism in media reportage; illiteracy; unemployment; ethnicity; nepotism; bigotry; and armament. The sociological consequences of violent conflicts can be very disastrous, with the ultimate potential being untold hardship, displacement of citizens, lack of peace, and the prospect of living in a badly deteriorated environment. The intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic, intra-religious, and inter-religious conflict in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999 has brought with it devastating human and material losses. Therefore, it will not be out of place to say that Nigeria has become a battle field where ethnic, religious, political, economic, and social contestations play out, and the worrisome aspect of these violent clashes is their zero-sum nature by the actors and players, where a win for one is automatically a loss for others (Woriboko, 2016).

The heterogeneous and complex culture of Nigeria has made conflicts multi-dimensional, and there is a preponderance of religious conflict in Nigeria. This is so because most times, conflict starts as political, ethnic/tribal, economic, or even social, and from there, it escalates to accommodate religious sentiments. This type of conflict is very common in northern Nigeria. For example, out of the 178 violent clashes that took place in Northern Nigeria between 1980 and 2004, 104 were related to religion. In Nigeria, ethnicity and religion have been identified as the major drivers of conflict because they are the major source(s) of identity for most Nigerians as they fight for economic and political control (Ndum & Tabi, 2021).

It has been asserted that religion and ethnicity are being consistently manipulated to serve the interests of the people, especially in Northern Nigeria, by religious bigots and conflicting patrons. Boko Haram, it has been argued, is more political than religious, considering its modus operandi. Also, the violence that has rocked Plateau State since 1994 cannot be said to be purely religious. The Hausa/Fulani and the government at the centre have been severally accused of instigating violence in Jos Plateau in order to gain territorial control in the state. This is so because each time there is a crisis, mercenaries will come from states in the far north to fight for the Hausa/Fulani in the state. The Yelwa-Shendam violent clashes of 2002–2004 and the 2010 Christmas bombing in Jos by those who identified themselves as Boko Haram fighting for their people are typical examples.

Causes of conflicts in Plateau State can be seen through the lens of ethnicity, religion, crave for resource control, tribalism, economic deprivation, the activities of conflict patrons and entrepreneurs, the activities of unscrupulous and despicable desperate power-hungry politicians, poverty, unemployment, etc. The fragility of the state's institutions (security and judiciary), which cannot ensure appropriate sanctions for culprits, has further exacerbated rather than mitigated conflicts in Plateau State and Nigeria.

In Plateau State, judicial panel of inquiry reports have not been implemented, thereby entrenching impunity among perpetrators of violence and conflict in the state. It is a known fact that before any conflict escalates, there are always early warning signals. Some of these early warning signs include sending letters informing the community of an impending attack, holding nocturnal meetings, setting up roadblocks, etc. The security forces have never leveraged all these early warning signals to nip an impending conflict in the bud.

Some of the social impacts of conflicts on people are:

- (1) Instability and division as a result of loss of lives and property and fear of reprisal attacks in other parts of the state or country.
- (2) Displacement of people and refugees' problems.
- (4) Mass exodus from vulnerable or volatile areas: people normally desert any area that is prone to incessant conflicts.
- (5) Diversion of scarce resources for compensation of victims of violent clashes. These are resources that could have been channelled into developmental projects for all.
- (6) Fear, suspicion, intolerance, and disunity among a segment of the country. This can lead to a segregated residential, educational, and social environment, as is currently the situation in Jos.

Lastly, in Jos, the trend and dynamics of indigene/settler conflict have assumed ethno-religious form, as can be seen from the character of the parties in the conflict: the indigenous communities, the non-state actors, and the state actors (state and federal governments). In the case of the central government in Nigeria, it has been observed that the federal government of Nigeria, because of the domination of governance by the Hausa/Fulani in the last 37 years, always deliberately creates confusion and acrimony in communities housing Hausa/Fulani against the host communities. The federal government has on many occasions denied Plateau indigenes their constitutional rights based on the principle of federal character, or quota system. This can be seen in the appointment of Aminu Mato, a Hausa/Fulani, as the Caretaker Chairman of Jos North Local Government Area in 1994; the appointment of Ado Ibrahim as Jos North Local Government Area Education Secretary in 1996; and the appointment of Muktar Mohammed as Jos North Local Government Area National Poverty Eradication Programme Coordinator (NAPEP) in 2001 (Nwagwu, 2016).

The favour of the Hausa/Fulani rather than an indigene of Plateau for the position of Director-General of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic, Kuru in Plateau, and the crisis that followed were part of the reasons for the declaration of a state of emergency in 2004. Also in 2009, former President Musa Yar'Adua nominated a Hausa/Fulani resident in Plateau State as a Minister of the Federal Republic, a slot meant for Plateau indigenes. This was a violation of Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The relative dominance of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group in political offices at the central government accounts for why the federal government, in its attempts to jeopardise the efforts of the state government, always constituted parallel judicial panels of inquiry for all the crises in Plateau State.

EFFORTS AT RESOLVING THE INDIGENE/SETTLER CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE.

Following the 1994 crisis in Jos, quite a number of judicial commissions of inquiry have been set up to investigate the remote and immediate cause(s) of the violent conflict in the state. Among these are:

1. Justice Aribiton Iberesima Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the 1994 Jos crisis, the reversal of the appointment, and the restoration of order and peace by the security agencies.
2. September 7th–13th, 2001 Jos crisis: deployment of security forces to stop the crisis and restore peace; imposition of curfew; presidential visit to assess the extent of damage and console the victims; and Nikki Tobi Judicial Commission of Inquiry.
3. May, 2002 Jos crisis: deployment of security forces to quell the crisis.
4. 2002–2004: communal crisis: Justice Sankey Commission of Inquiry, deployment of security forces to the area, and setting up of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission in the local governments.
5. June 2002 Yelwa crisis: convening of peace initiatives and workshops for stakeholders, a peace conference of ethnic nationalities and other interest groups, and the declaration of a state of emergency. These were done by the state government and civil society groups.
6. May, 2004 Yelwah crisis: the declaration of a state of emergency in the state by President Olusegun Obasanjo, the setting of a special peace committee, and the constitution of the Plateau peace conference.
7. November Jos 2008 crisis: the imposition of 24 hours' curfew in the city of Jos and its environs; the Hon. Justice Bola Ajibola-led Commission of Inquiry by the state government; the Emmanuel Abisoye Paul panel of investigation into the Jos crisis by the federal government; and the Ad-hoc panel by the National Assembly.
8. January 2010, Jos crisis: creation of a special joint task force for the maintenance of peace in the city and the imposition of a 24-hour' curfew.
9. March, 2010 Jos crisis: setting up a Presidential Committee to look into the cause(s) of the crisis and make recommendations for conflict resolution. It was headed by former Governor Solomon Lar.
10. December 2010 Jos Christmas Eve Bombing: the appointment of a special adviser on terrorism by the federal government and the creation of an anti-terrorism bill by the National Assembly (Sayne, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Violent conflicts among indigene and settler communities as a result of ethno-religious differences in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria, leading to the wanton destruction of livelihood and property, have become a recurrent decimal in our socio-political landscape. What is most worrisome is the trends and dynamics in which these conflicts are carried out by parties involved, including conflict patrons, security agencies, and the government, both federal and state, to mitigate or exacerbate conflict. The tendency by governments, both federal and state, to tilt their support towards a particular party in conflict calls into question the commitment of the government to protecting lives and property. This can be seen in the setting up of a parallel Judicial Commission of Inquiries by both the state and federal governments with conflicting reports rather than putting heads together to reach a common ground. It has also been asserted that differences or nonchalant attitudes by security agencies have often, in most cases, aided in reducing conflict to full-scale violence in the state, as the partiality or impartiality of regime responses during conflict is a distinguishing factor in conflict management.

The institutional mechanism of government plays a crucial role in conflict avoidance, prevention, and resolution, as the maintenance of peace and orderliness is very essential in ensuring the security of lives and property (Eba, et al., 2015). In a situation where the institutions of government remain quite unconcerned, indifference, or nonchalant, there is the possibility of conflict progressing to a full-scale explosive conflict scenario. On the

other hand, where the government and its institutions are sensitive and responsibly responsive, the possibility of conflict flaring to an explosive level will be very remote. It can therefore be submitted that the indigene/settler crises in the state serve as a political tool to whip up and mobilise ethnic sentiments to sustain stability in these conflict-ridden zones.

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