

The Quest for Peace in Nigeria's Plateau

Tola Odubajo

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, South Africa Research Chair Initiative: African Diplomacy
and Foreign Policy, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract

The distinctions between the rights and privileges of various categories of resident individuals arising from the opposing views of the conceptualisation of 'indigeneship', continue to stimulate intellectual discourses. For Nigeria, where a constant quest for accommodation and sense of belonging are critical to unity and stability, identity politics continues to engender divisions. The various cases of settler/indigene conflicts are indicative of the artificiality and fragility of Nigeria's famed aesthetic unity. The paper focuses on prescribing solutions to the incessant identity-based conflicts prompted by the settler/indigene divisions and religious differences in Plateau State, Nigeria. Jos, the capital of Plateau State, was the centre of attraction for locals and foreigners alike, as a consequence of its moderate weather, cosmopolitan outlook and tendency for accommodating diversity. For over a decade, however, Jos and various parts of rural Plateau State became theatres of war. The incessant violent conflicts were instigated by crisscrossing distinctions over rights and privileges between the indigenous peoples and the settlers. With the aid of a qualitative method, a content analysis of data gathered from secondary sources was undertaken. In the final analysis, a three-pronged source of conflict can be identified in Plateau State: the individual, group and social system levels of interaction. In making recommendations for enduring peace, we would apply three of Johan Galtung's theories on peace: 'The Intra-personal Model', 'The Inter-personal Model' and 'The Intra-social Model'; to provide the platform for devising peaceful coexistence, stimulated through social harmony, on Nigeria's plateau.

Introduction

It is evident that the segmental cleavages in Nigeria have found expression in the pervasive settler/indigene crises in Plateau State. The Plateau State conundrum is a classic reminder of the failure of the Nigerian State to engender a peaceful and

harmonious coexistence among the various ethnic groups on the one hand, and the religious groups on the other. Without an iota of doubt, the combination of ethnic harmony and religious tolerance is an essential ingredient for the attainment of national unity and integration, because of the cross-sectional character of both identity symbols in the Nigerian case. Conversely though, the Nigerian State appears to have accentuated ethnic differences by sustaining the institutionalisation of the indigene-settler dichotomy through poorly contrived attempts at providing equal opportunities for all groups, so that minority groups, in particular, may not be excluded in political representation and economic opportunities. The character of identity politics in Nigeria therefore allows ethnic conflicts to reinforce religious antagonisms and vice-versa.

Incidentally, Plateau State appeared immune to the various ethnic and religious conflagrations that used to erupt in other parts of Northern Nigeria, until 2001 when 'the first episode of mass violence in Jos since the anti-Igbo pogrom of 1966 occurred ...'.¹ For over a decade thereafter, Plateau State was transformed from 'the home of peace and tourism'² to an arena where deadly and barbaric tendencies were displayed.

The analysis commences with the introduction, which is followed by the framework of analysis. In arriving at the three models of peace theory used as tools for seeking peace in Plateau State, we shall examine the concept of conflict, and indeed, its violent option, since this captures the Plateau State conditions. The paper concludes with a pragmatic application of the peace models to the Plateau State scenario.

Framework of Analysis: The Conflict Paradigm

Conflict is a constant phenomenon in the system of human interactions. It can be 'defined as a property of the action-system which obtains when there is no overlap between acceptability-region and compatibility-region'.³ It 'refers to overt and coercive behaviour initiated by one contending party against another'.⁴ The act of conflict is ubiquitous and hence permeates all systems of individual and group interactions; it makes no distinction between formal or informal relationships, just as it is a dominant force in political, economic and socio-cultural relationships. Its character is of elastic variability, sometimes occurring as a consequence of the struggle for power, at other times employed to reinforce allegiances, or to either weaken or fortify the positions of contending parties. By nature, contending parties incur high costs, yet conflicts 'have been accepted as an inevitable part of the pattern of human interactions'.⁵ Invariably,

conflict is inherent in human nature and indeed 'the very presence of conflict is at the heart of all human societies'.⁶

Within societies, taken here as 'a structure and [where] the essential characteristics are the nature of the interaction relation and the interaction structure, not the nature of the individuals and sets of individuals',⁷ conflict manifests itself as a group phenomenon. This, however, does not negate the possibilities of conflict at the individual level. Albeit, the unavoidable pervasiveness of group interaction results in constant group conflicts because of the 'incompatibility between their goal-states'.⁸ The incompatible goal-states can be categorised into economic, value, and power differences.⁹ Group conflict behaviours are particularly dangerous to any society or political system, especially when it concerns the authoritative allocation of value',¹⁰ but as Remi Anifowose¹¹ opines:

... while conflict is endemic in any political situation and all politics involves group conflict, ... not all conflicts escalate. Although violence is one of its results, it is not the only action consequence of conflict. The latter may take a number of forms, including bargaining and compromise ...

On the other hand, the escalation of group conflict could be a catalyst for such negative tendencies as racism, xenophobia, genocide, ethnic-cleansing, and religious bigotry.

There is, however, a submission that the instances of group conflicts— as highlighted above —degenerate into violence because:

... the parties may have (or believe that they have) incompatible goals, they each may have achieved high solidarity, they may have organised for conflict, they can mobilise their conflict resources, they may be hostile towards their opponents, and they may have sufficient material resources ...¹²

In effect, inherent in violent conflict situations among groups is the interplay of intention to impose the will and the resistance against imposition or infringement of spaces. The higher the stakes, the higher the mechanism to either impose or resist, thereby allowing conflict situations to degenerate into violent confrontations. There is the contention that destructive and violent conflicts are not merely responses to 'misperception and misunderstanding,¹³ but are the results of real differences between groups in terms of social power, access to resources, important life values, or other significant

incompatibilities'.¹⁴ They are fanned by 'the subjective processes individuals employ in seeing and interpreting the world, and in how groups function in the face of differences and perceived threat.'¹⁵

Violence as a Conflict Variable

Group violence is the consequence of a besmirched political, economic and social order. It occurs as a result of the inability of the system to manage its processes and procedures to comply with minimum conflict management standards.¹⁶ Violence, either in its 'direct or structural form'¹⁷ is patterned to amplify extant discontent among individuals or groups. Conflict should not necessarily lead to violence; its occurrence is a clear indication of the lack of capacity of the system. The grave consequence of group violent conflict is, therefore, a motivation for governments to provide measures and mechanisms for preventing its occurrence. Despite the various conscious integrative efforts, however, group violent conflicts are a recurring decimal on Nigeria's political landscape. There are three complementary models that are broad enough to represent the causal factors of group political violence. These models are: the relative deprivation, rising expectations and frustration-aggression hypothesis¹⁸; the systemic hypothesis; and the group hypothesis.¹⁹

The relative deprivation, rising expectations and frustration-aggression hypothesis lays the blame for violence on the subsisting psychological mind-set of individuals in the society. The submission is that a critical mass of the people are deprived of the benefits of basic necessities of life, and are thereby compelled to wait perpetually on the state for the fulfilment of the 'social-contract'. When no reward accrues from the prolonged wait, the individuals become forlorn, while the risen expectations turn to frustration, and eventually lead to aggression. At this stage, all the symbolisms that presumably aggravate the deprivations suffer outright attacks.

The systemic hypothesis focuses on the social environment as the catalyst inducing group violent conflict. By implication, the system's ability to promote group violent conflict is real. The culpability of the system may possibly arise from the mismanagement of the relationships among groups, and in the process of coordinating rewards and benefits of belonging to the same political system. For instance, in a heterogeneous society, the system would provide the enabling environment for group

violent conflict when socio-economic benefits are unjustly and unfairly allocated among the groups. In other words, unless the patterns of accommodation and integration approaches are devoid of social marginalisation, political alienation and economic deprivation, the clement terrain for group violent conflict may have been laid.

The group conflict hypothesis is relevant to the analysis of group violent conflict in a political system composed of a mosaic of groups with a cross-sectional character. Often, there is a sense of an Us/Them dichotomy among such groups, because 'the major locus of political identification and socialisation has been, not the nation, but sub-national communities with substantially different institutions, cultures and history'.²⁰ The situation is even more worrisome when the groups contend for political and economic spoils within a confined spatial area.²¹ Inevitably, the conflicts among such groups result in 'collective violence'.²²

The Desirability of Peace

The attainment of a relative state of peace is a fundamental requirement for societal advancement and development. Groups in any society are rarely able to coexist in the absence of peace. Peace, though, has multiple characterisations, and therefore, 'peace is an umbrella concept, it serves as the ultimate goal in very many chains of justification and rationalization'.²³ The continuous quest for peace is, however, an essential element of group relations. Johan Galtung²⁴ buttresses the position by asserting that:

Since the search for peace is concerned with the relations between groups, it obviously divides into a negative and a positive part: the search for the conditions for the absence of negative relations, and the search for conditions that facilitate the presence of positive relations.

The positive relations referred to includes, but is not limited to, the presence of cooperation, freedom from fear, freedom from want, economic growth and development, absence of exploitation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism and dynamism.²⁵ Instructively, the attainment of any of these positive relations does not translate into the absence of conflict, but rather the existence of mechanisms to manage and prevent conflicts from degenerating into violent confrontations.

Johan Galtung's three models of peace explain the processes through which the system of positive relations can be realised. These models bear direct relevance to our interrogation of the Plateau State conditions. They are: the intra-personal model; inter-personal model; and the intra-social model.²⁶

The intra-personal model of peace is concerned with both the latent and manifest behaviours of individuals as members of groups in the society. In effect, the inclinations of individuals would inform the tendency to either embrace peace or engage in violent confrontations. The inter-personal model concerns the dynamics of influences engendered among individuals at the micro-level, while the intra-social model explicates the quest for peace at the macro-level—this level of social relations subsumes all interactions among major groups and institutions.

Apparently, these three theoretical viewpoints are intricately connected. The aggregate of individuals' drive (either for peace or violent conflict) would form the basis of conditions at both the micro and macro levels of social relations. By implication, the quest for peace or group conflict management should focus on a tripod: positive nurturing of individual mindset; working the structure of interpersonal relations; and the quality of interpersonal relationships impacting effectively on intra-social relationships.²⁷ Perhaps, if the age-long held views of antagonisms between the indigenes and the settlers in Plateau State had been settled through mutually beneficial relationships, the drive for violent conflicts may not have arisen.

Plateau State as an Ethnic Mosaic

The current geographical delineation of Plateau State is a result of the state-creation exercises undertaken by erstwhile military administrations. The first of such exercises was the creation of the Benue-Plateau State from the broader Northern Region in 1967. This was followed by the creation of Plateau State in 1976, and the last adjustment was made in 1996 when the existing Nasarawa State was extracted from the former Plateau State.

The present Plateau State is composed of approximately 3.2 million people.²⁸ The majority of residents in Plateau State are from the indigenous groups, which include the influential groups of Berom, Afuzere and Anaguta (BAA). There are also the less influential indigenous groups, such as Piapung, Buji and Chip, among others. The second category of residents in Plateau State is the various settler groups, comprising of ethnic

groups from all the other geo-political zones in Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani people from the northern part of the country are the most populous and influential set of migrants, while the other groups from the south, which include the Ibo, Yoruba, and Efik groups, are relatively reticent.

Within Plateau State, Jos (the capital city) holds the greatest attraction for migrants. The allure of Jos to non-natives was inspired by the opportunities created by the budding tin-mining industry of the early twentieth century. According to Africa Report,²⁹ 'Nigerians from across the country as well as a sizeable number of Europeans were attracted to the then famous Jos industrial-scale tin and columbite mines between 1904 and the 1980s'. While the influx of southerners to Plateau State, mainly Jos, is a twentieth century development and a fall-out of the industrial development, the Hausa-Fulani relationship with Plateau State dates back to the pre-colonial era, and subsists till today.

The Hausa-Fulani group's interest in settling in Plateau State commenced before the creation of Jos in 1915.³⁰ It began with the incursion of the Jihadist movement around the mountains surrounding the Jos Plateau in the 19th century. The incursion was, however, resisted by the natives who held on to their beliefs in the various traditional African deities. The people later embraced Christianity when the first set of Christian missionaries gained access to the rural Plateau.³¹ The futile attempt through religious incursion did not dissuade the Hausa group from settling in Plateau State through other means. As pastoralists, their cattle grazed along the Plateau planes, hence the need to set-up shelters along the route. During this period, today's rural Plateau played host to the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen who proudly practised their Islamic religion.³² Accordingly,

Muslims established more settlements and had a more extensive presence in the lowlands than on the high plateau – at least going back to the nineteenth century in Wase, and perhaps earlier in Kanam, the two emirates within Plateau State.³³

The economic development of Jos in the twentieth century attracted more Hausa-Fulani-speaking people to the area, such that they enjoyed population preponderance over other settler groups in Jos. It turned out that in the early twentieth century, the Jos area was dominated by migrants, the majority of whom were the Hausa-Fulani, while the indigenes made up less than two per cent of the city's population.³⁴

Ambe-Uva's³⁵ description of the features of Plateau State provides justification for the state's reputation as a haven for settlers. According to the author, 'the high fertility rate of the land' coupled with 'the near temperate climatic conditions', 'availability of water and the absence of livestock threatening diseases', encouraged farming and livestock rearing respectively. Furthermore, the temperate climate also boosted tourism, especially European presence. Lastly, the facilitation of commerce through the various modes of transportation – road, rail and air – all added to the allure of Plateau State, and Jos in particular.

Plateau State thus emerged as the epicentre of Nigeria's heterogeneity. Located approximately in the middle of Nigeria, it is one of the six states in the North-central geopolitical zone, which also includes the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. By implication, the presence of the various ethnic groups in substantial numbers is indicative of a multi-religious setting in Plateau State. While the majority of the indigenes are Christians, the majority settler group is made up of Muslims. The settler groups from the South are mainly Christians, except for a minority Muslim population from the Yoruba-speaking areas. Plateau State therefore represents an interlocking web of ethno-religious diversity.

With the emergent character of Jos and rural Plateau, it was apparent that only the drive for accommodation and tolerance could sustain the peaceful and harmonious coexistence that made Plateau State a destination of choice for several decades. Though the first set of cracks were experienced in 1994, the process of shattering the seeming relative peace and tolerance erupted in 2001, and the process of turning Plateau State into a horrific mine-field continued with the crises of 2002, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

The Content and Context of Violent Conflicts in Plateau State

The Plateau State's perennial conflict is an offshoot of the indigene-settler antagonism that bedevils Nigeria. It emanated from clashes between the recognised indigenous groups and a segment of the settler groups, while the members of the various less populous and less dominant settler groups have become victims of circumstance. The violent conflict is the reaction of the belligerent groups to the complex nature of identity-based relations in Plateau State. The challenge is further compounded by the ambiguous characterisation of the indigene status by the political class, since there are

no constitutional provisions that explicitly define an indigene of Nigeria, despite according reverential recognition to indigenes in political appointments. According to Section 147 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

... the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State.³⁶

Since the definition of the indigene label is largely at the discretion of state and local government authorities, there continues to be flagrant abuse that has 'fostered deep socio-economic inequalities, given that indigenes enjoy preferential access to land, schools, development spending and public jobs'.³⁷ Unfortunately, the indigene-settler debacle is worsened by the exhibited intolerance of religious differences. Rothman³⁸ opines that: 'When people's essential identities, as expressed and maintained by their primary group affiliations, are threatened or frustrated, intransigent conflict almost inevitably follows.' A critical assessment of the Plateau State condition through a conflict analysis method would provide an exposition of the origin, dimensions and possible solutions to the Plateau State imbroglio.

Conflict Actors

The actors in the conflict can be divided into two broad groups. On one side are the indigenous groups made up of Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, Amo, Buchi, and Challa, among others. The combined effort of the Berom, Afizere and Anaguta is, however, the most prominent in wresting the soul of Plateau from the 'supposed' intrusive settlers. The opposing side is the settler group made up mainly of the Hausa-Fulani group of Northern Nigeria. The other segment of the settler group (those from Southern Nigeria) is not reported to be in conflict with the indigenes. This is understandable. For one, the migrants from the south, namely the Ibo-, Yoruba-, Efik- and Ijaw-speaking peoples, among others, have never been in contention for political offices with the indigenes. This is coupled with the fact that their basis for migrating to Jos was to tap into the economic potential of the city. Perhaps the most important factor is the fact that the majority of the migrants from the South are Christians (except for a negligible number of Yoruba-speaking people who are Muslims). This is a most critical factor in identity-driven conflicts based on the fact of multiple identities for each individual whose discretion it is

to acknowledge the most important as dictated by extant situational demands. On many occasions during the various violent confrontations, the Muslim Hausa-Fulani have attacked their migrant co-travellers from the South, who are often grouped in the same category as Plateau State indigenes as enemies because of the difference in religious beliefs with the former and commonality with the latter.

Conflict Causes: Structural/Root and Proximate

The eruption of violent conflicts in Plateau State after Nigeria's attainment of democratic status in 1999, is a result of deep-seated acrimony that has historical roots in the veiled politics of exclusion that defines the visible ethno-religious entanglements of the state. The conflict situation in the state is a concomitant of the 'political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion on the Muslim side, and the fears of religious and cultural domination, among Plateau Christians'.³⁹ The indigenous Plateau people are mindful of the overbearing influences of the Hausa group on their ethnic identity, religious beliefs and socio-political and economic advancement. While it took sheer determination to ward off the Jihadist incursion into Plateau in the nineteenth century, the same level of resistance could not be applied when Plateau was placed under the political and administrative control of the Bauchi Emirate by the British colonialists during the period of the Indirect Rule System.⁴⁰

The domination of the Hausa-Fulani people over the indigenous Plateau groups extends to the economic arena. In the aftermath of the creation of Jos, the Hausa-Fulani group flooded the city and dominated the commercial activities of the area, becoming the most populous group in Jos North. In turn, this situation gave weight to their demand for, and creation of, a local government area. Also, in contemporary geo-strategic consideration, Plateau State falls under the North-central geo-political zone, thereby becoming a minority group under the majority of the very influential Hausa-Fulani-speaking people of Northern Nigeria.

The above conditions are a constant source of paranoia among the indigenes about the possibility of the Hausa-Fulani group riding roughshod over them on their territory. The return to democratic rule in 1999 presented an avenue for the indigenes to exert their dominance through the capture of political offices and invariably reduced the presumed overbearing influences of the Hausa-Fulani group. The indigenous groups

exploited the opportunity by taking control of the various levels of government, except for a few positions that were not considered strategic.

The emergent dynamics of political and social interactions within the state became tense, for while the indigenes were content with taking charge of political control of the state, the Hausa-Fulani settlers resisted the drastic transformation that would reduce their ability to remain relevant in the high politics of Plateau State. In effect, the violent conflicts erupted because of the Hausa-Fulani group's resistance to both anticipated and real 'marginalisation', and the indigenes' unapologetic stance on taking over political control of Jos and the whole of Plateau State. The exclusionist's tendencies of the BAA group were openly exhibited on various occasions, while the Hausa-Fulani group's uncharacteristic manner of contending for liberty and equality is legendary. It is worrisome that the politics of exclusion in Nigeria is given an immense boost through the jaundiced application of the ambiguous 'indigene' concept. In all cases, the application of the indigene rule short changes those regarded as non-indigenes or settlers.

In the final analysis, the mutual mistrust occasioned by the newly acquired political might of the indigenes against the survivalist instincts of the Hausa-Fulani, cascaded into outright violent conflicts through specific triggers, fierce political contestations and religious intolerance.

Conflict Triggers/Drivers

There have been several cases of eruption of violent conflict in Plateau State since 2001. They may have been characterised by distinct scenarios, yet they were all triggered by similar broad factors. These factors have been grouped into 'competing historical interpretation and political claims; the creation of Jos North LGA; citizenship and indigene rights; rural land conflicts; regional influences; and the religious dimension'.⁴¹ In effect, the common denominator is the interplay of political contestations (especially in Jos) and economic struggle (especially in rural Plateau State), which are used to accentuate the other differences in society—specifically religious and ethnic differences—to foster a reign of fierce and deadly antagonisms that have left a once vibrant multicultural and multi-religious society debased and emasculated.

The claim to the ownership of Jos is one of the major sore points in the relationship between the indigenous BAA group and the Hausa-Fulani group. The struggle for the soul of the city is not unconnected to its strategic importance in the development

of Plateau State as a whole. The Hausa-Fulani argue that Jos was virgin land, discovered by them and transformed into a modern cosmopolitan city as a result of their resourcefulness. The Hausa-Fulani position further states that the indigenes and migrants from the South became attracted to the allure of Jos after they (the Hausa-Fulani) had turned the land into a city. To this end, 'Jos grew as a town of migrants who arrived there from all parts of Nigeria'.⁴²

Though the BAA group does not contest the discovery of Jos by the Hausa-speaking people, the indigenes claim that since Jos is part of Plateau State, the Hausa-speaking people remain settlers, and therefore do not possess rights over Jos. The potential for conflict over the ownership of Jos informed the creation of Jos North Local Government Area in 1991 under the military government of General Babangida. The move was meant to give the majority Hausa-Fulani people a sense of belonging in that part of Plateau State. Understandably, the BAA group was infuriated by the development, which meant that they became a minority group in the Jos North Local Government Area, and their consequent protest caused the position of Chairman of the local government to remain under perpetual disputation. The dawn of democracy created the opportunity to again contest the political leadership of Jos North Local Government Area. The Hausa-Fulani group was determined to reclaim power in an area it regards as its base, while the BAA group's anxiety to take political control of the area exacerbated violent confrontations.

The other important trigger to the conflict is the antagonistic relationship between the BAA people and the Hausa-Fulani cattle owners, whose cattle grazing activities in rural Plateau reportedly cause devastation to the farm lands. This has led to the seizure of cattle, in addition to the invasion of the Hausa-Fulani homes by the affected indigenous rural dwellers. The Hausa-Fulani people have equally reacted through counter attacks on churches and dawn raids on the homes of the indigenes in the locality.

Another important conflict trigger is the depressed economic circumstances of the critical mass of the people. The condition of the masses in Plateau State is a reflection of the growing and deepening poverty in the country as a whole. Growing youth unemployment is at the highest, which makes for a restive youth population. A large percentage of the youth are unemployed and easily available, which makes them ready tools in the hands of members of the political class seeking offices in government through the use of identity-driven devices. The negative tales of ethnic and religious

sentiments trigger the reaction to occupy the streets and unleash mayhem across ethnic and religious lines.

The triggers are fundamentally driven by the contending groups' quest for power. As Coleman⁴³ notes: 'Most conflicts directly or indirectly concern power, either as leverage for achieving one's goals, as a means of seeking or maintaining the balance or imbalance of power in a relationship, or as a symbolic expression of one's identity.'

Conflicts and Conflict Aggravators

The prelude to the post-1999 era violent conflicts in Plateau State has been traced to the violent clashes of 1994.⁴⁴ The clash between the BAA and the Hausa-Fulani groups led to the death of a number of people and the destruction of property.⁴⁵ The stage was then set for future conflicts, because it became clear that despite the numerical preponderance of the Hausa-Fulani group in Jos North Local Government Area, the BAA group would not tolerate the Hausa-Fulani political leadership of the area.

The 2001 clash was the first full-blown crisis since the display of mutual suspicion between the indigenes and settlers in Plateau State. Much like the 1994 incident, it was caused by the appointment of Mukhtar Muhammed as the coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The BAA communities rejected the appointment of a Hausa-Fulani Muslim to such a highly placed government position, and were bent on overturning the appointment.⁴⁶ With the pent-up anger generated over the appointment episode, tension increased in the area and the people retreated into identity cleavages. It was only a matter of time, however, before the Hausa claimed provocation. This happened when a female Christian was accused of trespassing, because she walked through a barricaded street leading to the mosque during Friday prayers.⁴⁷ The clash that emanated from that provocation resulted in the death of over a thousand people and the destruction of property worth millions in naira.⁴⁸

A similar scenario was recorded in April 2002 during the ward election in the Naraguta community, Jos North Local Government Area.⁴⁹ The result of the elections did not favour the candidate of the indigenous Berom group, and therefore a rejection of the results was exhibited through attacks on the opposition party members, who were mainly the Hausa-Fulani group. The notion is affirmed that both cases of alleged irregularities in elections and the denial of rights to participate in the electoral contest, would lead to a violent conflict situation in an area contending with identity politics.⁵⁰ The Hausa-Fulani

group responded to the development with violence that led to a loss of human lives and the destruction of property.

The desire for political domination also account for the 2004 crisis in the town Yelwa, Shendam.⁵¹ As during the previous crises, thousands of people were killed, property worth millions in naira was destroyed and places of worship were torched. The wanton killings and destruction of property warranted the declaration of a state of emergency in Plateau State by the Federal Government. This was meant to allow a neutral Federal Government-appointed team to take charge of the machinery of government in the state for six months, a time presumed to be sufficient for normality to return to the state.

The emergency rule did not dissuade the antagonists from engaging in violent conflicts some four years later. In 2008, another large-scale crisis erupted after the election in Jos North Local Government produced a controversial result, which gave the victory of the election to an indigene who observers had alleged had been trailing the defeated candidate of the settlers with 26 000 votes at some point.⁵² The reaction of the Hausa-Fulani group to the election result was a direct assault on the non-Hausa-Fulani populace, but the indigenous groups responded in equal measure, leading to thousands of deaths and loss of property on both sides.

The 2010 trend changed slightly from the earlier occurrences. Towards the end of the year 2010, the bombing method that had become regular in parts of Nigeria's Northern zone was activated in turns in various parts of Jos. According to reports, multiple blasts rocked the metropolis on Christmas Eve, killing thirty-two people, while seventy-four others were hospitalised.⁵³

According to International Crisis Group,⁵⁴ '2011 was a particularly bloody year'. Clashes leading to killings, and reprisal killings, became the order of the day. The year also recorded the killings of high-profile political figures, namely Senator Ayang Dantong and Honourable Gyang Fulani.⁵⁵ The dangerous trend of the crisis led once again to the direct intervention of the Federal Government. Accordingly, a 24-hour curfew was imposed on Barkin-Ladi, in addition to the declaration of a state of emergency in four local governments: Jos North, Jos South, Barkin-Ladi and Ryiom.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, but quite expectedly, the hasty decisions and half measures of the Federal Government did not produce the desired results.

The year 2013 was equally regaled with its dose of violent conflicts. On 30 March 2013, Wase Local Government Area provided the terrain for the crisis between the Tarok people and Fulani herdsmen that led to the death of 35 people.⁵⁷ The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that between March and mid-April 2013, 135 people had died and 12 051 people had been displaced in a series of clashes in north-central Plateau State.⁵⁸

Following in the tradition of sporadic violence, the year 2014 also recorded cases of ethno-religious violence in Plateau State. In August of that year, there were reported cases of deadly midnight attacks on the residents of Jalin village, Jos East Local Government Area, and the Fulani community of Yelwanshendam, in Southern Plateau. In addition to the deadly attacks on humans, was the 'rustling' of more than a hundred cows.⁵⁹

Similarly in July 2015, two bomb explosions occurred on the premises of both a mosque and a restaurant, leading to the death of 42 people. In apparent retaliatory attacks, two churches were torched to revenge the detonation of explosives at the mosque. Under the circumstances, the Plateau State Governor formally requested the Federal Government to restore the various checkpoints that were a part of everyday living in Plateau State.⁶⁰

Conflict Inhibitors (Responses)

The persistent cases of violent conflicts in Plateau State and the long-term implications for national cohesion must have informed the Federal Government's direct intervention in efforts towards ending the violent conflicts. Thus, in order to stem the tide of flagrant disregard for law and order, and nip the incidences of violent conflicts in the bud, the Federal Government has responded to the situation through a variety of measures. These responses include the fortification of the security apparatuses in the state, the imposition of emergency rule and the setting-up of commissions of inquiry.

As the various outbreaks of violent conflicts in Plateau State further exposed the inability of the Nigeria Police Force to maintain law and order, the Federal Government reacted to the security situation in the past by fortifying the state security process with the setting-up of the Special Task Force, recently renamed 'Operation Safe Haven'. In reality, the involvement of the military has been significant in limiting the spate of violence; however, the end of the military engagement and subsequent withdrawal, partly

provide the avenue for the renewal of confrontations. In effect, the role of the Special Task Force has been episodic, so that periods of success are short-lived. The overall assessment of the situation in Plateau State is that the Nigeria Police institution has not provided the requisite security for the people.

As mentioned earlier, the 2004 violent conflict in Plateau State led to loss of lives and wanton destruction of property. The glaring inability of the state government to enforce law and order propelled the Obasanjo administration, acting under Section 305 (1) of the 1999 Constitution,⁶¹ to impose and declare emergency rule in the state, thereby preventing all democratically elected officials from performing their public functions for six months. In their place, retired General Chris Ali was appointed as the Administrator of the State, and expected to ensure the return of peace to Plateau State within a period of six months. Indeed, peace reigned for this period, but Plateau State eventually reverted to its violent past. Similarly, the solution to the outbreak of violence in 2011 also involved the declaration of a state of emergency by the Jonathan administration, but shortly after it was called off, the belligerents re-emerged from their tents and continued the assaults against one another. The lesson here is that the violent conflicts in Plateau State have defied hasty and ill-advised solutions.

Another remarkable response from both the Federal and Plateau State governments has been the inauguration of commissions of inquiry whose terms of reference are usually to highlight the causal factors of crises, identify perpetrators, and present suggestions on how to tackle the problems. Some of these are the Justice Niki Tobi, Justice Felicia Dusu and Justice Bola Ajibola Commissions of Inquiry. A most common complaint among commentators on the Plateau State situation is that the government never implements the recommendations of the commissions of inquiry.⁶² This, perhaps, informed the refusal of the Hausa-Fulani representatives to participate in the sitting of the last commission of inquiry. Unfortunately, the works of the various commissions of inquiry have not hindered the perpetrators, neither have they solved the problems of Plateau State.

A retrospective assessment of the various measures initiated by the Federal Government explains the reasons why the crisis continues unabated. The measures have merely been stopgaps, and not actions that were carried through on the basis of well devised mechanisms and processes for placating the stakeholders –being just and fair, and being perceived to be just and fair. As shown in the Plateau State case, the negative

effects of identity-based relations must be systematically extracted from the processes of acquisition and retention of political power. The solution lies in the creation of a peace process ensconced in the interpersonal and inter-group relationships of the people of Plateau State – indigenes and settlers alike.

Conclusions: A Working Peace Process for Nigeria's Plateau

The growth and development of any society hinges on enduring peace and harmony among the various groups that cohabit. As already exemplified by the Plateau State experience, the attainment of peace within societies characterised by ethnic and religious diversity is a process that must be solidly built on mutual trust, respect, tolerance and understanding. It is definitely not attainable through the works of one-off and ad-hoc committees, neither is it possible through the use of force. In effect, the attainment of sustainable peace and harmony in Plateau State must be erected on concrete political and socio-psychological measures that must de-emphasise the importance of ethnic and religious identities in issues of political and economic development.

Having identified the inconsistent interpretation of some sections of Nigeria's constitution as one of the factors fanning the embers of group antagonisms, it is essential to revisit the constitution and effect fundamental changes. This onerous task was undertaken by the National Assembly under the Jonathan administration. The constitution amendment processes at the time showed that the majority of Nigerians clamoured for the obliteration of all clauses that may aid the deepening of the complexities of the indigene question. As discovered from the constitutional amendment exercise, Nigerians are desirous of deeper integration within their societies. There is no more eloquent testament to the desire for integration of groups within Nigeria than the 'YES' answer provided by the majority of respondents in the constitutional amendments exercise to the question: 'Should indigeneship of an area be defined to include persons who have resided in an area for a continuous long period, and therefore, entitled to accruing rights, duties, and privileges?'⁶³

Nigerians must, however, be mindful of the fact that an amendment of the constitution cannot singularly guarantee a lasting solution to politically driven identity-based problems, either in Plateau State or elsewhere, in the country. An analysis of this route would show that, even if the sections glorifying ethnicity-based political relations

are expunged from the constitution, and the settler-indigene question is resolved, the other significant line of identity (religious identity) would remain a divisive force, despite the emphasis on the religious secularity of the Nigerian State in the constitution.⁶⁴ In effect, stakeholders must coalesce to initiate and implement a broad-based peace plan in order to bring the objectives of an amended constitution to fruition in Plateau State and elsewhere in the country.

The fundamental objective of the peace plan must be the establishment of a mechanism for the resurgence of a sense of accommodation and tolerance within Plateau State. The mechanism must focus on the transformation of people's negative stereotypical perceptions of one another, such that enmity can turn to good neighbourliness. The mechanism would also provide the platform for the principles of fairness, equity and justice to be held sacrosanct in the allocation of values. These tasks are people-focussed, and must, therefore, work on the psyche of an already battered and disgruntled people.

Plateau State can provide a practical expression for Johan Galtung's⁶⁵ models of the peace process in the attempt to initiate and implement a people-focussed agenda for enduring peace. Since identity conflicts, such as that of Plateau State, are rooted 'in complex and multidimensional psychological, historical, and cultural factors',⁶⁶ the first port of call for solutions must be a focus on the psychological mind-sets of individual actors. The intra-personal model which is 'concerned with personality structure, with what is filled into the individuals',⁶⁷ therefore has direct relevance to efforts geared towards the renewal of the mindset of individuals in Plateau State. This is even more so, because the Plateau State conflict falls within the class of those 'intangible and hard to define conflicts, because they arise from the depths of the human heart rather than the material world'.⁶⁸

Based on the experiences of over a decade of long and bitter conflicts, the initiation of a high-quality re-orientation programme, focussed specifically on the fundamentals of tolerance and accommodation, and the positives that can be derived from interpersonal relationships, should be the focus of governments. Understandably, there exists biases along identity lines; thus, a peace-process must fundamentally address the issue of accommodation and tolerance, so that the two antagonistic religious faiths in Plateau State can build an overarching, collaborative relationship, that would transcend religious beliefs, and would embrace the sense of common humanity.

Similarly, the ethnic cleavages must be smoothed to allow for strong inter-ethnic interactions, along cultural, economic and professional lines. The various ethnic organisations must submit to a broad-based, high-powered, inter-ethnic group, that should be responsible for coordinating inter-ethnic relations. These processes can only be achieved when the thinking of individuals have been directed away from the Us/Them dichotomy and swayed to focus on the ideals of common humanity.

A positive intra-personal mind-set would encourage the birth of a positive inter-personal relationship across the society. The inter-personal model is 'concerned with how relations between individuals at the micro-level are structured'.⁶⁹ In the case of Plateau State, there is the need to rebuild the relationships soiled by the more than a decade-long crisis of identity, fomented by the desire for public office. Specifically, the various streets/area blockades, campaigns of calumny, propaganda, and all similar activities that often inflame the emotions of the groups, should be systematically dismantled, so that a platform for the realignment of common societal goals can be created. Invariably, the renewed intra-personal mind-set should ginger the possibilities of renewed inter-personal relationships.

Finally, the intra-social model is one 'that deals with the macro-level of social relations, particularly with the relations between major groups and institutions'.⁷⁰ Since individual and group relations make up social relations, the micro level of interaction defines the character of relations at the macro level of social interactions. It needs no further reiteration that the various ethnic and religious groups can be assured of peaceful and harmonious relations at the macro levels as long as the relationships at the personal and group levels of relations are peaceful and harmonious. Plateau State deserves a renaissance.

It is essential that Plateau State, and other states in the country with similar circumstances, redress their situations by forming solid bases and foundations that would withstand the weight of conflict without resort to violence. The sub-units of a relatively humongous heterogeneous state like Nigeria have no option but to seek panacea to conflicts without recourse to violence.

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