

Identity Conflicts in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Implications

Charles Berebon

Email: charles.berebon@ust.edu.ng

Department of Philosophy, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Received:
May 2024
Accepted:
May 2024
Published:
June 2024

Abstract

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is characterized by a complex tapestry of ethnic, religious, and regional identities. This study examines the roots and dynamics of identity conflicts in Nigeria, focusing on historical antecedents and contemporary manifestations. It explores the intricate interplay between major and minor ethnic groups, the role of religion in conflict mobilization, and the socio-political implications of these conflicts. Using the Plateau North Senatorial District, specifically Jos North Local Government Area, as a case study, the research delves into the historical relationships between the Hausa/Fulani and minority ethnic groups, the impact of colonial and post-colonial state formation, and the recurring patterns of conflict and displacement. Through a combination of historical analysis and field research, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the persistent identity conflicts in Nigeria and suggest pathways for conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

Keywords: Identity Conflict; Ethnic Groups; Religious Mobilization; Jos North Local Government Area

INTRODUCTION: IDENTITY CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is located at the West African region bordering the Gulf of Guinea between Benin and Cameroun. The Nigerian state emanated from a conglomeration of many distinct independent ethnic groups. The recent population figure was put at 166.5 million people (National Population Commission 2012), making it the most populous in the African continent. The number of ethnic groups are numerous with different languages, traditions and belief system and scholars have not agreed on the exact number of ethnic groups and this is partly because the way in which ethnic groups are constructed and named are often contested (Bonkat, 2015; Akpan, 2015). For instance, Alubo (2006), put the number of Nigeria's ethnic groups at 370, Bangura as cited by Mustapha (2004) put it at about 470 (Mustapha 2004), while Hoffman as cited by Otite (2000) argued that it is about 394 (Otite 2000). However, the most populous and politically influential ethnic groups are Hausa and the Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%. This no doubt suggests a very complex and pluralistic setting in Africa and one of the most complexes in the world (Crozier and Blench 1992). These ethnic groups occupying different geographical zones have no common history, customs, languages or historical background and according to Tekna and Tamuno as cited in Akinwumi (2004), these ethnic groups have not at any time recognized themselves as homogenous before the imposition of British rule (Akinwumi 2004) that forged them under one political entity.

Nigeria has a hierarchy of official languages with English as the national language used for government business, there a number of regional languages such Hausa, (North), Yoruba (South), and Igbo (East). The two dominant religions are Christianity and Islam with few traditional worshipers spread across the country. Christians and Muslims have followership that are roughly equal in number (Boer 2003; Akpan, 2013), while Best & Hoomlong observed that the proportion of Christians to Muslims can only be speculated as no official current statistics are available and this is partly because the state is aware of the possibility of conflict if such statistic are officially available and thus decided not to ask about religious affiliation of people during head count (Best & Hoomlong 2011). The constitution of Nigeria made it clear that no religion will be adopted as state religion, thus, Nigeria is at best a secular state but some states in the North such as Zamfara, Sokoto Niger, Jigawa Kano, Bauchi, Borno Yobe and some part of Kaduna have introduced the Islamic legal codes based on Shari'a in 1999 (Ostien *et al* 2005). It should be noted that before the advent of colonialism, Nigerian people lived under their traditional political systems ranging from centralized, monarchical and village democratic political systems peculiar to them. However with the advent of colonial system, Nigeria has undergone changes in terms of political development.

Within the Nigerian context, ethnicity and religion are the principal identities around which conflicts occur and this does not suggests that there were no conflicts caused by other factors in other parts of the country, but for the purpose of this work, conflicts along religions and ethnicity lines especially in the core North and North Central (Middle Belt region) parts of the country is analyzed and this is because understanding these conflicts along identity line and their expectation is key to the understanding of political and intergroup relations in the Nigerian context. Consequently, ethnicity in conflict is used in Nigeria to denote categories that share a common cultural thread such as language, being the most significant parameter and who are mobilized for political ends. Religion in conflict on the other hand is used for faith based forms of identity when mobilized for political ends. Best & Hoomlong (2011) argued that of these two religious identity, principally Christianity and Islam, have had the more crucial role in mobilizing people for urban violence since the 1980s (Best and Hoomlong 2011) in Nigeria.

Islam and Christianity are by no means the only religions in Nigeria, the African Traditional Religion (ATR) has existed before the advent of Islam and Christianity into Nigeria however, it was overshadowed by Islam and Christianity and aspirant of ATR today have reduced to just 1% (Best & Rakodi 2011) spread across Nigeria. In other to understand how ethnicity and religion have been mobilized for urban violence such as the case under study in this research work, there is need to understand how the two major religions Islam and Christianity came into Nigeria and how such identities have been enshrined into the Nigerian state and politics and the relationship between the minority groups and majority in the North before and after independence.

Historical Perspective of the Relationship between the Hausa/Fulani of the North and Minority Groups in the North Central (Middle Belt)

It has been pointed out that before colonialism and hence Christianity in Northern Nigeria, Islam had existed and the relationship between the Muslim in the far North and the minorities in the north sometimes referred as the 'Pagans' who later embraced Christians in the lower North was not cordial but one characterized by sharp division and antagonism along these identified identities thus, the work of Galtung (1991), Huntington (1997), Hasenclever & Rittberger (2000) of conflicts between diverse civilization found expression here. It was a history of fierce struggle

and hatred against the Jihad system because it was oppressive, overtaken by extortion, exploitation, slave raids, and Islamic political hegemony in non-Muslim/so called pagan territories (Miller 1948, Logams 1985). Boer 1979 quoted Karl Kumm, a German evangelist who led the Sudan United Mission as cited in Best & Hoomlong (2011) 'Islamic faith was more dangerous than heathenism and he called for speedy commencement of evangelistic activities to stop non-Muslim tribes from taking advantage of peace imposed by British rule to convert to Islam (Best & Hoomlong 2011), thus the pagan communities became a major source of slave organized and carried out by the Hausa/Fulani rulers. This struggle between the two groups, Hausa/Fulani and pagan identities later crystallized into Christian/Muslim identity conflicts in the North.

The British colonial system in Nigeria gave undue advantage to the Hausa/Fulani rulers and in fact the emirate system was nurtured in the North during colonialism through the British colonial policy of indirect rule system. This was so because one of the criteria for accepting British rule in the North was based on the understanding made in 1903 between the colonialist and the Hausa/Fulani leaders (Best & Hoolong 2011) that colonialism was not going to interfere with the Islamic traditions and way of life of the people. Thus the colonialist limited the activities Christian missions and shielded the Islamic strong centers from penetration by Christian missions (Turaki 1993, Kasfelt 1994, Crampton 2004) in other not to sever the understanding between them and leaders of the caliphate. This was well captured by Osaghae & Suberu (2005),

'British colonial policy also fostered the uneven socio-economic and political development and mal-integration of the various Nigerian people. The more damaging aspects of the British colonial policy of uneven development included the exclusion of Christian missionary activities and the highly prized mission-sponsored schools from the predominantly Muslim areas of the north. This imbalance continues to haunt the Federation; the discouragement of any official political contact between the north and the south was evident until 1947 when politician from the two regions sat together for the first time in the central legislative council. The official promotion of segregated residential settlements patterns-the so called 'Sabon Gari' meaning 'stranger's quarters' to which reference has already been made –and inflexible land tenure systems, both of which reinforced discrimination against migrants communities, and the lopsided recruitment of Nigerians into the army and police (Osaghae &Suberu, 2005, p. 16).

It should be noted this did not cause any conflict at that time but was later factored into history of inter religious tensions and violence in Northern Nigeria. The Jihad of Usman Danfodio of the 18th century under the Fulani Emirate rule advances to subjugate the people of the Plateau were resisted and halted at all time.

Mangvwat observed that throughout the colonial period including the postindependence period down to the 1980s, Islam in Northern Nigeria was relatively harmonious and stable. But from the 1980s, starting with Maitatsine Kano city, Maitatsine in Kano again in 1982, followed by the Bulunkutu and Kaduna 1982, and others down to the recent Boko Haram (in Miduguri, Yobe and Adamawa) and Bauchi 2009 and Kala kato in Niger state (2009). Islam in Northern Nigeria began to witness violent radical challenges from within. These was argued to have been connected with the similar global development (Larab 2009) in places like the Arab countries s responsible for financing and facilitating their activities.

In Nigeria, Muslim and Christian divides tend to coincide with geo-ethnic divides as well as socio-economic divides (Logams 1985, Whitaker 1970, Dudley 1968, Sklar 1963). While the lower North (middle belt) predominantly Christians, the North was dominated by Muslims. Again it should be noted that in the lower north, the pockets of Muslim communities within it are largely made up of settler migrants from the far north. Colonial British rule left an environment such that political arrangement immediately after independence have tended to favor the far North (Logams 1985, Whitaker 1970, Dudley 1968, Sklar 1963), and as such this power arrangements is reflected in the economic arrangement and development of the region. (Mangvwat 2011).

Geography and People of Plateau State

Plateau State as the name implies is a table land with the height of 1200 meters above sea level even though other specific high highlands such as the Shere-hills around the Jos area, peak over 2500 meters above the sea level. The entire area of Plateau state has the area of about 26899 sq km, rises from the plain of River Benue (South) and descends towards Bauchi State (CAPRO, 2004). Located in the Middle Belt, North Central geo political zone of Nigeria, Plateau state bounded by Kaduna and Bauchi State in the North, Taraba State in the East, Nasarawa State in the South, Kogi State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in the West, all these states were part of the Northern region during colonial administration and the early independence period.

In a study carried out by Action Aid Nigeria 2010, the state is a product of half a century of boundary adjustment arising on the one hand, from the ambition of the colonial masters to create a province which consisted largely of non-Muslims under one resident, in order to protect the railway line being constructed at that time and guarantee the sustenance of Tin mining activities which began in 1902 and the strong desire of the people in the area for political self-determination on the other hand (Action Aid Nigeria 2008, Gofwen 2011).

Plateau State was created in 1976 carved out from the former Benue-Plateau state. And it has the population of more than 3 million people and with mineral resources such as tin and columbite which put the state in the industrial world in the 1950s to 1970s before the discovery of oil which later got prominence over these two natural resources in the economy of Nigeria (CAPRO 2004, Action Aid Nigeria 2008). Plateau state is one of the middle belt states which were a political movement aim at freeing the minorities from the domination of the Hausa/Fulani in the Northern region. It is a conglomeration of minority groups in the Northern region before and after early days of independence and now in the north central region who felt marginalized during colonial and early independence days. Using the middle belt identity which emerged in the 1940 and gain wide support after independence in response to political domination of by the Muslim part of the North (Krause, 2011).

Plateau State has over 50 different indigenous tribes (Gofwen 2011; Best 2008), and Some of these ethnic groups are almost unknown nationally and internationally (Best 2008), perhaps due to their number and distinction in nature and each with their distinct language and cultural heritage. There are also other ethnic groups such as the Hausa/Fulani, Urhobo, Igbo, Yoruba, Kanuri etc who arrived and settled in the area during the tin mining in the 1920s. Politically, Plateau State has a total number of 17 Local Government Areas spread into three Senatorial District namely, Plateau North comprising of Jos-East, Jos North, Jos South, Bassa, Ryom , Barkin Ladi. Plateau central comprises of Mangu, Bocos, Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam while Plateau South comprises Local Government Areas such as Langtang North, Langtang South, Shendam, Qua'an Pan, Wase, and

Mikang. The geographical scope of this study is in the Plateau North senatorial district with specific emphasis on the Jos North Local Government Area of the state. Mangwat (2014) as in Fwatshak and Akinwumi (2014), observed that the Jihad which founded the Sokoto Caliphate was not able to successfully penetrate the middle belt region except in a few instances Wase, Kanam, Lafia, Keffi Nasarawa, and Ilorin and this was due to stiff resistance put forward by the communities of the Middle Belt (Fwatshak and Akinwumi 2014)

Evolution and Development of the Jos City

What is today known as Jos, was established around the period of 1915 (Gofwen 2011;11), and in its early history taking consideration of the tin mining which came and met the people of Afizere, Anaguta and the Berom as indigenous occupant of the area and thus began mining in 1920s, significant number of groups such as the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo,Urhobo, Yoruba, Kanuri, Nupe and a host of other groups have migrated into this area for the purpose of tin mining activities. Before the discovery of tin ore, Jos was administered under the Bauchi province from 1902-1926 (PIDAN, 2010) but in 1926 the Plateau provinces comprising of Jos and Pankshin divisions was separated from Bauchi provinces (Action Aid Nigeria 2008;3). The first headquarters of Jos was located at Naraguta village, six kilometers north of Jos (Best, 2007; Goshit 2006). It has been observed by Mangwat (2013), that the various people who inhabited the Jos area of Plateau area at the beginning of the twentieth century had been living there for several hundreds of years (Manvwat, 2013), this suggests that there were people occupying the area before the advent of tin mining by the colonialist as well as before the migration of any other group into the area who came for tin mining purpose. Discovery of tin ore and the subsequent migration of different groups into the area causing huge population increase, this suggest the transformation of Jos into a cosmopolitan city (Plotnicov, 1967). Another factor that account for the rapid expansion and transformation of the city was the extension of railway line from

Kaduna in 1927, making Jos a terminus (PIDAN 2010). It should be noted that the British favored the recruitment of mine worker from the Northern parts of the country such as Sokoto, Kano and Maiduguri (Action Aid Nigeria 2008), it can be argued that this pattern of labor recruitment and pre Jihad period explains the heavy concentration of the Hausa population in the city of Jos. Meanwhile, the colonial administration of indirect rule system between this period relied on the established political and administrative structures of the emirate system, administered Plateau provinces as part of the Bauchi provinces due to proximity of the two areas. But in 1926 the Plateau provinces comprising of Jos and Pankshin divisions was separated from Bauchi provinces (Action Aid Nigeria 2008). Consequently, while development in mining activities thrived, the colonial administration desire to bring order and better control over the people through the indirect rule system, divided the entire area into units and one of it was the Hausa settlement with a title Sarkin Hausawa Jos, a position that was reverted to Wakili (representative) by the 1951 and 1955 colonial decision (Best et al 2011) and in 1947 the pagan administration with Rwang Pam as the chief of the Berom was made the chief of Jos (the *Gbong Gwom* Jos), as a result of protests led by the Berom Progressive Union (BPU). Rwang Pam was subsequently named paramount chief of Jos Native Authority (the equivalent of today's local council), a position which made him politically superior to the district chiefs in Jos division and gave him political authority over non-Berom villages. To counter growing Berom influence, the HausaFulani leaders increased their claims, particularly between 1910 and 1954, over the political control of Jos and its environs,

with this, the British sewed the seed discord and resentment in the future (Mangvwat 2014) and perhaps these are the root causes of ethno religious conflicts in the area.

In 1960, when Nigeria got independence from Britain, there were three regions in existence, the Northern region, Western region and Eastern region respectively and later in 1963 the mid-western region was created. At this time, religious confrontation between the emirate system and the communities in the Middle Belt was relatively low as the northern leaders were firm in their desire to protect the north against the western and the eastern civilization. Following the collapse of the first republic and the subsequent tension over the desire and agitation of ethnic groups to unite themselves under one self-independent government, in May 1967, the Benue Plateau provinces were merged to form Benue Plateau state. This was one of the 12 states created by the Military government under General Yakubu Gowon in order to allay the fear of minority groups and to create a sense of balance between the North and the South and to save the country from total disintegration which was imminent from the polarization of the country along ethnic lines after the bloody military coup of 1966 and the subsequent crisis which led to the abortive secession by the Eastern Region (Action Aid Nigeria 2008).

Meanwhile the population of Jos continue to grow with constant migration of the Hausa Fulani ethnic group and in 1994, the military regime of general Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida created the Jos North Local Government Area, and at that time the population of the Hausa Fulani had outnumbered those of the indigenous group (Alubo2008). It should be noted that at the time of creation of the Jos North Local Government Area, the Afizere, and the Anaguta requested for the creation of Jos East, and Jos west Local Government area which could have diluted the Jasawa advantage. The Hausa Fulani used their influence in the Babangida administration to facilitate the creation of the Jos North and Jos South local Governemnet area and by this singular act, the Hausa Fulani had numerical advantage over the indigenes (Alubo, 2008). The creation of the Jos North Local Government Area was opposed by the indigenous group.

It can be argued that it was the political control of Jos North Local Government area that further exposed the huge differences that existed among the people and which became the major source of conflicts in the area. This development took ethnoreligious dimension which has resulted in violent armed conflicts bringing with it huge number of internally displaced persons. Major flash point of conflict on which partitioning becomes more visible such as Jenta Adamu, Jenta Mangoro, Utan, Alheri, Rikkos, Bauchi Road, Anguwan Rogo were all cosmopolitan in nature with Christians living side by side with Muslims.

Historical Perspective of Conflicts and Contestation over the Jos City (2001-2010)

The series of low intensity conflicts that started in the mid-1990s which reach its peak on the 7th of September 2001 and subsequently 2004, 2008, 20010, 2011 with deadly confrontation between the indigenous ethnic communities in the Jos area, the Anaguta, Afizere and the Berom on one hand and the Hausa/Fulani community who are generally regarded as ‘settlers’ did not happen in isolation. A proper understanding of the inter group relations between the minorities in the North who later in their struggle against Northern emirate domination found the Middle Belt movement as an identity to project their interest and resist Northern domination. This unbalanced relationship between the middle belt people and the old Islamic Emirate system which had been introduced into Nigeria by the Usman Danfodiyo Jihad of the 18th century and had it stronghold in the Northern region, the divide and rule policy of the colonialist, military dictatorship and

domination of the polity of Nigeria by the Northern political as well as military elites would factor in understanding conflict in the study area. Best (2011) rightly observed that;

'the historical context of the relationship between group identities in the form of religion especially between Christianity and Islam is very important to understanding of the nature of the violent ethno religious conflict in the North and the North Central part of Nigeria. The relationship between the Hausa/Fulani pre-colonial leadership formed after the Jihad of Usman Danfodiyo in the 18th century and other non- Muslims Communities that later found the 'Middle Belt' as political identity and how the colonial state played major role in group identity formation (Best 2011), also, the role of the Military regimes and its impact on ethno religious crisis in Nigeria is crucial to the to the understanding of the conflict in Jos and it environs.

The Jos area is not the only area that experienced conflicts, there were other parts of the state that experienced conflict. One thing was observed to be sure that the conflict in Jos spilled over to other parts of the state. For instance, the 2001 conflict has been observed that occurrence of conflicts in other parts of the state has been either a response or a defensive actions against the ethnic or religious kin of the Hausa people of Jos and sometimes Fulani communities within the state. This is because the Hausa/Fulani communities are found more in number only in the Jos North area but due to spilled over effects of conflicts that erupted in the Jos North area, many of their mosques and houses in other places within the state such as Langtang North and South, Pankshin and Amper were burnt and destroyed.

ROOTS AND REMOTE CAUSES OF THE CONFLICTS IN JOS

Understanding the Basis for the use of Religious Identity as tool for Mobilization During Conflict

The emirate system introduced in the Northern Nigeria thrived well and existed over the period of century before the advent of colonial powers in Northern Nigeria in the 1900. And consequently when the colonialist arrived in the Northern region, the system of indirect rule dependent on those administrative and political structures already established by the Emirate leaders and thus the continuity and successes of the Indirect Rule system in the North was based on the mutual understanding that Indirect Rule system was going to preserve the traditional Islamic value system of the entire Emirates and in turn, the Colonialist shielded the Islamic strong centre from penetration by Christian Missions and did not prevent the expansion of Islam into non-Muslim communities and these was perceived by the Muslim leaders as abetting the growth of Christianity (Best 2011) thus helping Islam to spread freely. Mangwat (2014), observed that the Jihadist did not make any serious headway among the Middle Belt communities until the advent of the colonialist and in Northern Nigeria, colonial conquest and rule was accompanied by the onset of Christian Missionaries and Missions and while Lord Lugard and his successor encouraged missionaries to work only among the Middle Belt communities rather than the Emirate for fear of rebellion by the Emirate leaders over Indirect rule system from the time of their arrival to 1950, but when the Nationalist Movement had begun, the Christian missionaries had established schools, medical centers, cottage industries farm centers, etc which has won the heart of the communities and as a result many of them were converted to Christianity and a host of Christian elites were

produced at this time who became aware of the intention and desire of the Emirate leaders to impose Islam on their people (Mangvwat 2014).

An important factor worthy of note is the fact that the Northern region and the post Danfodiyo Jihad Caliphate had maintained commercial relations with North Africa members such as Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and etc and participated in the trans Sahara slave trade with oppressive and stiff taxation policy imposed on non-Muslims/Pagan communities who in turn resisted (Miller, 1948, Logams 1985). Ayu (1987), observed that the history of the North has been that of fierce class and nationality struggles, a history of the oppressed versus the oppressors (Ayu 1985). The struggle between the Muslim in the North and the Pagan communities in the North central Nigeria took an exploitative dimension and often the pagans who resisted Islam were the object of oppression and slavery.

The introduction of Shari'a law by some Northern states after the return of democracy in May 1999 is another issue to be noted. This was viewed with suspicion as Christians worried over what may happened to Christians who are indigenes of these states concerned or who are residing in these state for different reasons. Even when all the above suspicion were observed by Christians as threat, there were no violence recorded at any point but these issues further created consciousness based on religion, generated religious animosity and suspicion, and further sharpen the boundaries between faith based identity groups and also subsequently serve as triggers for urban violence (Best 2011). Furthermore, the scenario that emerged from the above mentioned state of affairs between Christian and Muslims in Nigeria has led to escalation of several urban violence such as the ones in Jos.

Christian leaders have continued to argue that the conflicts in Jos is religious because of the belief that the Hausa/Fulani Jihad vow to conquer and Islamize the entire Plateau people and hence Nigeria which the Danfodio could not achieve. In regard to the 2008b conflicts, Krause (2011) quoted former CAN Chairman;

'we were taken aback by the turn of events in Jos. We thought it was political, but from all indications it was not so. We were surprised at the way some of our churches and properties were attacked and destroyed and some of our faithful clergy killed. The attacks were carefully planned and executed. The questions that bogged down our minds were why were churches attacked and Clergy killed? Why were politicians and political offices not attacked if it were political conflicts? Why were business premises and properties of innocent people destroyed? We strongly believe that it was not political, but premeditated act under the guise of elections' (Krause, 2011, p. 31)

The Creation of the Jos North Local Government Area and Claim over ownership and Political Control of the Area:

It has been observed by most scholars that the main ethnic group found in Plateau North Senatorial District (Jos North, Bassa, Jos East Local Government Areas) and are relevant in the social and political life of Jos metropolis, as well as the contestations over rights and access to power and resources include the Berom, Anaguta, Afizere, Buji, Amo, Rukuba and Irigwe (Action Aid Nigeria 2008). The Jos North Local Government Area was created under the military leadership of Gen. Ibrahim Badamassi Babangida in 1991 as a ploy to create an area for the Hausa /Fulani to have political control due to their majority in the area. This is widely shared among

Christian indigenous group. Thus the creation of Jos North became the major source of conflict in the area. This is further buttressed by PIDAN (2010), 'the creation of the Jos North has remain a sore thumb in the political history of Plateau State' (PIDAN 2010).

The complaint and grievances often cited by the indigenous ethnic group on the Jos against the Hausa/Fulani community are, the domination of the social and economic life of the area, the subtle imposition of Islam on a predominantly non-Muslim population, the possessive attitude of the Hausa/Fulani community and their historical account of the evolution of Jos town which seeks to prove the ownership of Jos town by the Hausa/Fulani. Other complaint include the use of derogatory terms such as 'arna' and 'infidels' to describe the Christian community. The Hausa/Fulani community on the other hand complaint was centered around their exclusion from social, Political and civic life in the Jos metropolis despite the long history of their residency and their clear demographic strength in several wards within the city, their exclusion from the issuance of Jos North Local Government certificate of indigeneship, the attack and molestation of the Hausa/Fulani by the indigenes and their denial of the office of Chairman, Jos North Local Government and other important political posts (Action Aid Nigeria 2008).

Indigene/Settler Issue

In Nigeria, given the multi ethnic and pluralistic nature of the state, people have deep attachment to their places of origin regardless of whether or not they are residing there. The concept of the Nigerian state does not offer much attraction to the people of Nigeria. This because what gives them hope and future mostly is their ethnic groups to which they owe more allegiance to. With ethnic groups numbering over 370 and as such it is consequently bound to exist in conflicts particularly when these groups had lived under different political systems (Oтите, 1990). Again Kaza –Toure 2004 observed that there are many countries in which various indigenous groups were put together and they still live in peace (KazaToure 2004). Alubo (2008) on the other hand opines that identity in a multi ethnic space is important, but has been subverted and turned into means of access to and denial of opportunities (Alubo, 2008) and consequently, it has become major means of discrimination and denial of right of people perceived as non indigenes. This is the source of conflict in many part of Nigeria.

In respect to Nigeria, Adesoji and Alao (2009), rightly observed that there are myth and realities associated with issue of indigeneship and citizenship. He argued that no matter the number of years a settler lived in a place he will continue to remain a settler and that the dividing line between being an indigene and being a settler is very thick as it is very difficult for a settler to become a native. On the contrary, they argued that the dividing line between indigenes and settlers is very thin because an indigene somewhere could be a settler in another place in which case the rights enjoyed, as indigenes are limited or non-existent as settlers, this is because the constitution guarantees citizenship rights as against indigeneship rights (Adesoji & Aao 2009).

The indigene settler issue before the return of civil rule in 1999 had not been a problem in Jos, but in the aftermath of the 1999 period, the issue of indigene settler has manifested itself and constantly the indigenous groups have continue to argue that the Hausa/Fulani are settlers and therefore they are not supposed to enjoy certain right like acquiring indigene certificates, having access to scholarships, employments, appointments, etc. the basis for this argument is that the settlers do not belong and that therefore, they should not enjoy certain rights same as indigenes (Sha, 2005) in the Jos area. Best (2007) further added that the indigene have argued that when they

go to such states where the Hausa/Fulani came from, they can never get the rights and privileges the Hausa/Fulani are agitating for (Best, 2007).

The Hausa/Fulani on the other hand have consistently argued that they have settled in the area for a long period of time and they have found and nurtured the area to what it is today, and as such they do not have anywhere to go. In the same vein, Krause (2011) pointed out. that the Hausa/Fulani settlers in Plateau state cannot claim indigeneship from these Northern states because they do not have ancestors from those states, as such, they are not able to claim indigene rights and they are regarded as ‘stateless citizens’ and as such they are disadvantaged, having no access to college or university education, or employment in the civil service, the military or the police service. This explains why the Hausa/Fulani are now seeking indigene certificates from Bauchi and Kano states (Krause, 2011).

It should be noted that while the Hausa/Fulani group are not the only group that have moved into the Jos area and settled and are denied certain rights by the indigenes, but settlers from the igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo and others but unlike the Hausa/Fulani, these other groups have never agitated or try to assert themselves for political positions as they are contend with identifying themselves with their states of origin. Ostein (2009), asks whether what the Jasawa are as for in Jos is obtainable by (Non Muslims) others in the states from which they came from (Ostein, 2009). This is far from being yes due to the introduction of Sharia penal code where indigeneship and rights are defined on the basis of being Muslim, this excludes all non Muslims. This is the main problem causing conflicts in Nigeria and especially in Jos. Thus there is need for the issue to be addressed from the angle of the constitution.

Communal Conflicts Induced Displacement

Communal group here may be seen on the basis of varying attributes such as ethnicity, religion, language, region of origin, race, or historical experiences (Ibeanu 2003). Group of people who have such attributes as mention above in common are bound together and they can easily be mobilized for the defense of those things that bound them together. Communal conflict in Nigeria have peculiar characteristics that affects the number, type, and quality of displacement that they generate. These conflicts are especially violent, fought with a great deal of emotion and tend to be protracted and difficult to resolve. Consequently, those fleeing from them are often displaced for a long time. Just as mobilization is crucial to the creation of communal groups, it is also crucial in the genesis of communal conflicts (Ibeanu 2003).

Ethnic and religious based Conflicts Induced Population Displacement

This emanate from I contradiction of religious, ethnic and other communal identities. In a number of cases, identity based conflicts have been among members of the same ethnic groups living in the same state (Ibeanu 2003). This is more prone in the northern part of Nigeria where religion and ethnicity are been mobilized during conflict. Though there is no agreement among scholars as to the exact number of ethnic groups in Nigeria, Nigeria is doubt the most complex society where individual and group behavior are determined by the imperatives of cultural symbols and strategic social institutions. The existence of these multiple nationalities does in itself constitute a problem but rather the process of social change that interest of ethnic groups get elevated to the political realm (Babangida 2004). A disturbing trend in ethnic conflict in Nigeria is the increasing incidence of the phenomenon in rural areas. Its rural manifestation not only suggests the expansion and depending of ethnicity, but it has led to a rising tide of internally

displaced people who receive little or no support (Ibeanu 1999). In the urban centers, the pattern of migration and settlement tends to encourage the concentration of different ethnic groups in different sections of the city (Imobighe 2003). It should be noted that ethnic conflict in Nigeria is characterized by hostility arising from the contradiction between ‘indignity’ and citizenship in the 1979 and subsequent constitutions. The diversity of the people of Nigeria is also reflected in religious faith, within three main religions. These are

Christianity found mainly in the South and Middle Belt area, Islam found mainly in the North and traditional religion found in every part of the country (Oтите 2004). The country has often contended with a number of religion induced conflicts on the account of the fundamental disposition of a number of faithful. Radical Muslim sect such as the Maitasine and Boko Haram group initiate these conflicts targeting both Christians and other Muslims sect. they are not only ultra conservative in approach but accept holy wars as divinely ordained (Ibianu 1999).

Resource Based Conflict Induced Displacement

This has to do with the clash of interest in access to land and resources. Land is a very important and highly priced resource. Human sustenance is derived from land, hence there is attachment to it by all human societies. Consequently, alienating people from their land is like removing them from their root (Imobighe 2002). The dominant strategy of rural economic transformation in Nigeria which centers on large scale agricultural projects and oil mineral exploitation has translated to the displacement of peasant from the land. Population squeeze and dwindling production arising from primitive agricultural practices have elicited a resort to a cultivation of more land. These have brought more pressure to bear on available land.

In the oil producing areas, the quantum of land degradation associated with oil mineral exploitation has contributed to the squeezing of peasant off land. Consequently, there has been an unprecedented rise in a number of rural communities over border land, fishing waters and other natural resources. Especially in the Niger Delta, monetary compensation by oil companies and government have also catalyzed violent conflicts as villagers contest the ownership of land on which oil is found. Certain practices by the different ethnic groups have added to conflicts over land. For instance, the Tivs, as farmers practice extensive shifting cultivation with their movement bringing them in conflict with their neighbors (Best et al 2004). The grazing pattern of the fulanis is based on the controversial open access grazing system. Since they depend on grazing from natural pastures, they are frequently on the move in search of green pastures and in the process run into problem with farmers on account of destruction of their crops where the animals are not properly guided (Imobighe 2003).

CONCLUSION

The identity conflicts in Nigeria, particularly in regions like Jos North, underscore the complexities of managing a pluralistic society. The historical antagonism between the Hausa/Fulani and minority groups in the Middle Belt, compounded by colonial legacies, continues to influence contemporary struggles over political power and resource allocation. Understanding these conflicts requires a nuanced analysis of ethnic, religious, and political identities. Addressing these issues necessitates inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and robust conflict resolution mechanisms. Through comprehensive historical and qualitative analysis, this study contributes to the discourse on national unity and the quest for enduring peace in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Adesoji A.O. & Alao (2009). Indiginship and Citizenship in Nigeria: Myth and reality. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 2(9)
- Akinwumi O. (2004). *Crisis and Conflict Nigeria: A History since 1960*. LIT VERLAG Munster: Transaction Publishers
- Akpan, I. F. (2013). Re-packaging primary science curriculum to meet the challenges of globalization and climate change in Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 20(1), 17-23
- Akpan, I. F. (2017). Reform and quality science education in Nigeria: The needed benchmark for sustainable national development. *African Journal Of Educational Assessors*, 4(1), 91-97.
- Alubo O. S. (2006). *Ethnic and Citizenship Crisis in the Central Region*. Ibadan program of Ethnic and Federal studies.
- Alubo O. S. (2008) 'Understanding the issues in Citizenship: Indiginship Crisis in Nigeria' An Invited Paper for the National Dialogue with speakers of House of Assembly and Judges of the Northern states of Nigeria.
- Ayu I. (1987). Towards a Revolutionary Revolution of the Mafia Problem' Takaya B. J and Tyoden S.G eds. *The Kaduna Mafia, A study of the Rise, Development and Consolidation of a Nigerian Power Elite*. Jos, University of Jos Press.
- Babangida I. B. (2004) 'Ethnic Nationality and the Nigerian state: The Dynamics and Challenges of Governance in a Plural Nigeria: in Alubo S. O. and D. A Briggs, eds *Agenda for a Better Society. Reflection from the National institute*, Kuru. National Institute Press.
- Best S. G. (2008) 'Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State Nigeria. Ibadan Spectrum Books.
- Best S. G. (2011) eds 'Religion and Post Conflict Peace building in Nigeria'. Ibadan:
- Crozier, D. & Roger M. B. (1992). *Index of Nigerian Languages*. Dallas Sil.
- Falola, T. (1998). *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Fwatshak S.U and Akinwumi, E. (2014). eds '*The House That Lugard Built: Perspective on Nigeria's First Centenary' The Pains, the Gains and the Agenda for the Future'* Jos University Press No. 15, Murtala Mohammed way, Old Campus, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
- Galtung J. (1991) 'The Emerging Conflict Formation' A Paper for the Spark M.
- Gazetters of Northern Province (1972) . The Highland Chieftaincies (Plateau Provinces). London: Published by Frank Case and Company.
- Gofwen, R. (2011). A Historical Overview of Ethno Religious Conflict in Plateau State: Government Intervention and Strategies. In J. Para Mallam eds. Finding Durable Peace in Plateau'. A Publication of NIPSS, Kuru
- Goshit Z. I. (2006) 'Economic, Politics and Ethno Religious Relations in Jos, Plateau Area During the Colonial Period'. In Akinwumi and Okpeh O.O. and Gwamna J.D. eds. *Intergroup Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Century*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers.
- Hasenclever, A. and Rittberger V. (2000). Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to Impact of Faith on Political Conflict. *Journal of International Studies*. 23
- Ibeanu O. (1999). Conflicts and internal population Displacement in Nigeria. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12(2); 161-179.

- Ibeanu O. (2003). Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Nigeria: An Exploratory Analysis 'in Nnoli O. eds *Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Nigeria*. Enugu PARCEP Book Series.
- Ibeanu, O. (2000). Globalization and Refugee Policy in Africa' Reflections on Contemporary Humanism, being final Research Report for the CODESRIA Multinational Working Group on 'Globalization and Social Policy in Africa'.
- Imobighe T.A. Bassey (2003). *Threat Assessment: Text of a Lecture Delivered to the National War College*. Abuja: course 11 March 2003
- Imobighe T.A. Bassey and Useni J. B. (2002). *Conflict and Instability in the Niger Delta*. Ibadan spectrum Books.
- John Archers (publishers) Ltd
- Krause. J. (2011). *A Deadly Circle: Ethno Religious Conflict in Jo, Plateau State Nigeria*. Geneva Declaration No working Paper 2.
- Logams P. C. (1985). *The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development*. University of Keele . Unpublished Ph.D Thesis.
- Matsunaga Institute for Peace Conference, University of Hawaii Honolulu 2-5 June 1991
- Norwegian Refugee Council (2000). ' Definition of Internally Displaced Persons' Global; IDP project London Earthsean Publication Limited.
- Nowrogee, B. (1998) 'Human right and UN Programmes for Internally Displaced People : A Kenya Case Study in Davies W. ed Global IDP survey, Right Have No Borders, worldwide Internal Displacement . Oxford Parchment Press.
- Oluyede P.A.O. (1992) 'Constitutional Law in Nigeria'. Lagos, Evans Publishers Nigeria.
- Otite O. (1990). *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Ibadan Shaneson Limited.
- Otite O. (2000). Nigerian Peoples and their Culture. Ajaegbu H. I. St. Mathew-Daniel J. and Uya E. O. Nigeria a People United and Future Assured. Abuja Publishing Company and Federal Ministry of Information.
- Otite O. (2004). Conflict, Their Resolution, Transformation and Management' in Otite O. and I. O. Albert eds *Communal Conflict in Nigeria, Management, Resolution and Transformation*. Ibadan Spectrum Books Limited.
- Plotnicov, L. (1967). *Strangers in the City: Urban Man in Jos, Nigeria*. Pittsburgh: University of pittsburgh Press.
- Samuel O. et al. (2011) ' The Challenges of Post Conflict Partitioning of Contested Cities in Northern Nigeria; A Case Study of Jos North LGA, in Best S.G. eds. Religion and Post Conflict Peace building in Northern Nigeria. Ibadan. John Archers (Publishers) Ltd.
- Sha, D. (2005). *The Politicization of Settler-Native Identities and Ethno Religious Conflcit in Jos, Central Nigeria*. Ibadan Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Sklar, R, L. (1963). *Nigerian Political Parties*. Prinston: The University Press Spectrum Books Limited.
- Turaki. Y. (1993) 'the British Colonial Legacy: A Social Ethical Analysis of the Colonial and Post Colonial Society and Politics in Nigeria. Jos: Challenges Press.