

**RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE; ITS EFFECT ON
THE NIGERIA SOCIETY**

BY

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BENIN CITY**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION,
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CERTIFICATION

We the understanding hereby certify that this project Work was carried out by
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DEDICATION

I gladly dedicate this work to the Almighty God; the master of All and to my parents for your endless love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I crave to convey my fathomless gratitude to the Almighty God for his protection, provision, grace and safety He gave me throughout this program. His love over me was and has always been cosmic.

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ABSTRACT

The work revealed that there have been religious conflicts in Plateau State (from the onset of Democracy in Nigeria until recently) and that this has enormously affected the Nigeria Society. These areas of impact include political, economic and social impact on the Nigeria society, some of which are: destruction of human and material resources, unstable educational system, diversion of government resources to security for maintenance of peace, retardation of economic development, weakened of patriotism, disinvestment of local and foreign companies with continuous capital flight and divisions of in social interactions and relationships, etc. Therefore, it was established that religious conflicts in Plateau State do significantly affect social, political and economic developments of Nigeria and is capable of disintegrating the country. The work however, to curtail this, provided some useful recommendations on how to control if not prevent religious conflicts in the country, if the country must remain as an entity and also to developed.

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ABSTRACT

The work revealed that there have been religious conflicts in Plateau State (from the onset of Democracy in Nigeria until recently) and that this has enormously affected the Nigeria Society. These areas of impact include political, economic and social impact on the Nigeria society, some of which are: destruction of human and material resources, unstable educational system, diversion of government resources to security for maintenance of peace, retardation of economic development, weakened of patriotism, disinvestment of local and foreign companies with continuous capital flight and divisions of in social interactions and relationships, etc. Therefore, it was established that religious conflicts in Plateau State do significantly affect social, political and economic developments of Nigeria and is capable of disintegrating the country. The work however, to curtail this, provided some useful recommendations on how to control if not prevent religious conflicts in the country, if the country must remain as an entity and also to developed.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Conflicts in Nigeria in the past decades are characterized by high level of violent confrontations among religious groups all under the influence of

North-South axiom, Indigene-Settler dichotomy and Christian-Muslim debacle. Abdul suggests that the resurgence of conflict in Nigeria has without doubt, been central to the National question and the socio-economic and political process of the country.¹ Undoubtedly, Nigeria has become an epicenter of religious conflicts in which most times, attempts to resolve this violence exacerbate it further, thereby posing a serious challenge to national cohesion, unity, integration, sustainable democracy and development.²

Religious conflict is seen as one of the biggest and perhaps the most complicated problem facing Nigeria. Imhonopi and Urim, posit that the growing number of violent religious conflicts with significant social, economic and political motivations have become a common phenomenon in the Nigerian society.³ However, the causes or motivations of this common phenomenon, which have been attributed to disputes about social privileges, feelings of political domination and exclusion, economic marginalization and perceptions of bias and favouritism, have been mainly along religious lines.⁴ According to Egwu, the primordial inclination of most religious groups toward conflict and the persistent upsurge of violent religious militias and warlords, who pledges allegiance to the values and beliefs of certain

dominant religion and groups, have further aggravated the scale of the damage, and widened its scope in different dimensions.⁵

The prevailing situation, characterized by mass killing, destruction of worship centers and public facilities, communal cleansing, ethnic pogroms, militancy, and suicide bombings, found mostly in the north has destroyed the very foundation of national peace and integration. It has also created a situation of constant panic, fear, apprehension, and anxiety in the minds of Nigerians. The incessant religious upheavals and violent attacks have resulted to wanton damage of infrastructures without which development is not guaranteed.

Plateau State is currently one of the main sites of religious conflicts in northern Nigeria. Situated in Nigeria's North Central zone, with a population of some 3.5 million people and an important mining and commercial center. It has long been considered a melting pot because of its position between the north and south of the country and its ethnic composition, being a home to over 40 ethnic groups of mostly Christian communities.⁶ The violence in Plateau State began after two decades of increasing collective religious

conflicts in other parts of Northern Nigeria, the worst of which occurred in Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi States. Plateau State was largely peaceful during this period, 1980-2000. The first episode of mass violence in Plateau State occurred in 2001.⁷

This past two decades have seen recurrent conflicts across the state, in urban and rural areas. Thousands of lives have been lost in these violent conflicts, there has been extensive damage to property, and the development prospects of the state and the nation at large have been set back. The violence has mainly been along religious lines, between Muslims and Christians, but in some occasions, has been strongly connected with ethnicity and considerable political interests.

Jos, the state capital and a major northern city with a population of some one million inhabitants, is the epicenter of most of the worst conflicts in Plateau State. The conflict has also affected parts of the high plateau and other rural parts of Jos Local Government Area.⁸ Episodes of mass killing and destruction have occurred in Jos from 2001 till date. The situation deteriorated to the point that there was no year, that Jos does not witness a

heavy bloodbath occasioned by religious conflict. According to Krause, no fewer than four thousand (4,000) and possibly over seven thousand (7,000) persons have been killed since late 2001, when the first major violence in more than three decades broke out in Jos.⁹

Against this backdrop, the study is designed to examine the effect of religious conflict on the general Nigeria society with particular focus on the recent incessant religious tension and violence among the Christian indigenes and migrants and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani group in Plateau State.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religious conflicts have seriously and negatively affected the social, economic and political development of Nigeria as a nation. This has negative effects on the country's national security, external relations, stability and integration. The manipulation of religion has been a major obstacle to the country's efforts towards attaining greater height and as a

force to be reckon with, the world over. Religious conflicts in Nigeria have become major boundaries that create divisions among her peoples. Yahaya opines that Religion have also become potent tools for mobilization and manipulation in the country. They have been so manipulated that virtually all institutions in the public and private sectors have been polarized along religious lines.¹⁰ Our religious values should have been a force that will encourage Nigerians to appreciate the great benefits derivable from working together as Nigerians in honesty and for a better future irrespective of our religious differences.

Several efforts have been made to identify, appraise and attempt to solve the problem of religious conflicts by governments, scholars, religious bodies and other humanitarian, nongovernmental organizations in Nigeria. Accounts are replete with detailed records of several incidents littered throughout Nigeria history, most especially in the north. Most scholars have tended to discuss these violent conflicts as conflicts external to, but strongly connected with religion.

Sati, Onwuegbuchulam, among others, posit that it is a political misnomer¹¹ following from pre-independence politics and the actual politicization of religion,¹² while other scholars like Yahaya, Onojo, among others, suggest that it is an ethnic consciousness and bigotry¹³ and economic struggle for dominance and control of resources.¹⁴ These consequently affect the methods and agents they have employed in proffering solutions.

Following from the numerous literature related to this subject, it is pertinent to note that the subject matter has been underscored. There is a need to emphasize and appraise, with its peculiarity, Religious conflict and the various challenging effects it posed and continues to pose to the society. Thus, this research work places emphasis on and seeks to identify, analyse and attempt to solve the problem of religious conflicts, in Plateau State within the context of religion.

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aims at accessing the various conflictual situations found among religious groups in the axiomatic religious Plateau state. The research seeks to achieve this through the following objectives:

1. To review some relevant literature on religious conflict and the profile of Plateau State.
2. To assess the various incidents of conflicts reportedly involving religious groups; the extent of human and material resources destroyed or lost in religious conflict in Plateau State.
3. To unravel the causes (roots and remote) of religious conflicts in Nigeria, and how these conflicts have dictated their ascendancy
4. To rediscover the extent these religious conflictual situations have impacted on the Nigerian society
5. To highlight some policies and measures to curbing the severity of violence among religious groups.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Religion is a very important part of the formation and life of any society and thus conflicts involving religious groups also involves the whole society on every part and level. Thus, this study is significant in Contributing useful means of solving the problem of conflicts, religious and nonreligious, in the society. It will reawaken the minds of Nigerians on the important role religion plays in the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. That is to say, that religion can be a very good tool for fostering national unity, economic and political development when properly handled. On the other hand, it can also be a disruptive instrument and viable tool for conflict if negatively handled. By assailing the causes of religious conflicts, it will serve to provide religious groups members and all member of society with useful non-sectarian approach to peaceful co-existence and co-operations among themselves.

The research will also serve to contribute to the overwhelming and overarching wealth of information that is required for further research in religious studies on issues relating to conflicts. Teachers, students and researchers of religion, economics, sociology and history in Nigerian schools will find the work benefiting to them as it furnishes them with current

information on the country's social, economic, political and religious development.

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research work focuses on the effect of Religious conflicts on the social, economic and political development of Nigeria with particular reference to Plateau states. This is because, Plateau is ranked top among the list of States that have witnessed most perturbing and unprecedented upsurge of Religious conflicts in contemporary times in the country. The research covers all segment of the society that has been affected by religious conflicts. Areas such as political, economic, social coupled with her internal and external identity, stability, and relations; and her commitment to her goals towards unity, peace and progress. The study covers the period after Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 to the present day, that is, the past two decades of the Fourth Republic, 2000 to 2021.

1.6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The research is mainly dependent on secondary source as the research is done or carried out in Benin city, southern Nigeria which poses a challenge for adequate primary data collection; such challenges relating to distance, cost, personnel and security. Data collection will only include incidents in Plateau State.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a historical, analytical and descriptive framework of presentation that provides a simple, straightforward and clear structure, chronology and objectives. Historical and documentary evidences of clashes between Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Christian communities in Jos and extended rural areas of plateau; the analysis of the incidents showing the motivations and effect it has yielded. Sampled survey assessment of perceptions or constructive views about religious conflicts in Plateau State was made. The interview data proved to be crucial in making sense of how ethnic and religious identities are implicated in the religious conflicts in Plateau State. The researcher also obtained data from the secondary sources which include existing Text Books, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers,

Periodicals and Handbills from Libraries and Archives. The Internet was equally a great source of information for the study.

1.8. DIVISION OF WORK

The study is segmented into five major divisions. the first chapter exposes the background, purpose, objectives, its need and uniqueness, methods of the research and provides the usefulness or importance of the study.

The second chapter reviews some relevant literature on religious conflicts and highlights the geographical and historical profile of Plateau State. While the third chapter highlights the incidences of religious conflicts in history and uncovers the motivations behind religious conflicts in Plateau State.

The fourth segment exposes the impact of religious conflicts in Plateau State on the society. To this effect the fifth and last segment summarizes the whole discuss and provides necessary means of solving the problem.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

2.1.1 Conflict

The word ‘conflict’ is a concept that is related to human behaviour in society since man cannot exist in social isolation. This, therefore means that there must be a conflict in the course of interaction with other members of the community. The word conflict is synonymous with crisis, disagreement, war, opposition.¹ It originated from two Latin words *cou* meaning “coming together” and *fligere* meaning “to strike”. Thus, conflict means a state of opposition or hostilities; a flight or struggle; a clash of opposing principles; or the opposition of incompatible wishes, needs or interest.²

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English defines the concept of conflict from four different perspectives. One, conflict is construed as “a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument”; second “is a violent situation or period of fighting between two countries and third is a situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes” and fourth “is a

situation in which it is difficult to choose between two or more opposite needs, influences”.³

Wright contends that the concept of conflict connotes opposition among social entities directed against one another.⁴ Coser sees conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponent is to neutralize, injure and eliminate their rivals.”⁵ Within the context of this paper, conflict is considered in line with the submission of Oladosu as a state in which people, religious groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement which may or may not result in bloody confrontation.⁶

Kirk further gives the above concepts a comprehensive effect. He submits that conflict is a state of antagonism which is the result of disagreements that arise between two or more groups that has produced or threaten to produce loss of life, freedom, land, property, or livelihood, or even a mental or physical abuse.⁷ Conflict exists where there are social interactions among individuals. Therefore, it is an indispensable feature of intra or inter-group relations. Conflicts can take different forms depending

on the groups involved, their principles, needs and interest. It can be ethnic, economic, political or religious. Gotan inferred that conflict is found everywhere in human interaction and it can occur in the family or the home, place of work, between different ethnic as well as religious groups as it is in the case of Muslims and Christians in the middle Belt region of Nigeria.⁸ Without doubt, the greatest threat to peaceful coexistence, economic and political development as well as national security has always been religious conflict.

2.1.2 RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

Religious conflict is a term that has been variously defined by scholars. These definitions are diverse and they all convey the single meaning of disagreement between the two or more religious groups. Hornby defines religious conflict as a situation in which religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument with one religious group and another.⁹ This is a situation in which there are opposition in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes.

Gotan cited a traditional definition of religious conflict as the conceived interactions in which two or more religious adherents engage in mutually opposing action and use coercive behaviors to destroy, injure, thwart or otherwise control their opponents.¹⁰ Also, Salawu considers religious conflict as a situation in which the relationship between members of one religion and another of such group in a multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontations.¹¹ Olite and Olawale agreeably assert that religious conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources, status and power in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize or eliminate their rivals.¹² These concepts very much suit or reflect the conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Middle Belt.

Nnoli asserts that the concept of religious conflict contradicts the peace process arising from perceptions, behaviours, phenomena and tendencies.¹³ Miall also posits that the emergence of religious conflict can be a situation where a clear contradiction exists or is perceived to exist between the participants who view the outcome of such conflicts as extremely

important.¹⁴ It would seem that Miall is stating the fact that suspicion fuels the religious conflict.¹⁵

Sa'id states that a religious conflict becomes violent if physical or emotional force is used to hurt or kill people.¹⁶ Ayandele also postulates that religious conflict is a universal phenomenon and it becomes problematic, open, confrontation and violent if appropriate measures are not taken to curtail it.¹⁷ .From the above, it is clear that religious conflicts occur when people of different religious groups fail to co-exist and corporate with each other by respecting what each other stands for. Religious conflicts are peculiar to Nigeria and is highly prone to violence. Thus, the upsurge of violence resulting from religious cleavages and some elements of religious coloration can be said to be Religious conflict.

2.2. THE GEOGRAPHY OF PLATEAU STATE



The Map of Plateau State showing the 17 Local Government Areas¹⁸

Plateau State is situated approximately in the center of Nigeria in the north-central zone and forms part of the middle-belt, a geopolitical idea which demographically consists mainly of national minorities – most of them now Christian – within the old Northern Region. Plateau State takes its name from the high plateau which dominates the state's topography.¹⁹

Plateau is one of the 36 states of the Federation of Nigeria with 17 local government areas (LGA). The State is surrounded by Bauchi State to the north-east, Kaduna State to the north-west, Nasarawa State to the south-west and Taraba State to the south-east.²⁰ it is self-described as “the home of peace and tourism” and the “most endowed state” and is known for tin-mining and agriculture.²¹ According to the Plateau State Government Official Website, the State's population was estimated at 3,899,856 in 2013, making it the 12th largest in the country.²²

2.3. THE PEOPLES OF PLATEAU STATE

According to the official government website, over 40 ethno-linguistic groups can be found in the state, including indigenous ethnic groups such as the Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, and Goemai, among others. Other ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Ijaw, Bini and Ibibio from across the country have also settled in the state. The indigenous ethnic groups (Berom, Mwaghavul, Ngas, and Tarok, among others) mostly practice Christianity, alongside their various traditional religions, while the Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslim. Equally, other groups in the state, such as the Yoruba, practice Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, while the Igbos

mainly practice Christianity and traditional religions.²³ These diverse religious orientations further illustrate the complexities of inter-group relations in the multi-cultural and multi-religious state. This also brings particular attention to the role of religious institutions since many of these groups are strongly affiliated and committed to their respective religions.

While a report by Human Rights Watch notes that accurate statistics are not available on which group constitutes the majority in Plateau State, with differing views by both Christians and Muslims on their specific numbers, the report estimates that Christians make up the majority while Muslims are a large minority group.²⁴ Modibbo notes that Muslims believe that they make up about 40% of the population in Plateau State, while emphasizing that the issue of statistics is a highly controversial and disputed matter.²⁵ This is reflective of the contentious nature of Nigeria's population distribution by religion. A review of pertinent literature on conflicts in the state has yielded little information on the estimated number of Christians and Muslims in Plateau State.

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CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN PLATEAU STATE

3.1. BACKGROUND TO RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE

Religious relationships in Plateau State date back to the 19th century with the British conquest, the arrival and settlement of the Hausa-Fulani in parts of the state, and the presence of Christian missionaries.¹ As the Hausa-Fulani settled across the state and in the capital city of Jos, and built Koranic schools and mosques, Christian missionaries established missions and rapidly converted indigenes.²

For both Islamic and Christian organizations in northern Nigeria, Plateau state, particularly Jos town, was a centre point for proselytization and it has proved to be a fertile ground for the establishment and development of new religious movements and ideas. This is because Plateau state is neutral, without the long-established traditions and religious orthodoxies in old northern cities like Kano and Zaria.³ This makes it attractive for Muslim reformers, who have been able to establish themselves

more easily the state than elsewhere. The largest Islamic reform movement in Nigeria, Izala (Jama'atu Izalat al-Bid'a wa Iqamat al-Sunna) the Association for Suppressing Innovations and Restoring the Sunna, was started in Plateau State in 1978, promoting its assertions in a more orthodox, scriptural Islam, emphasizing the Sunna and denouncing the supposedly heterodox practices of the Sufis.⁴

Plateau State has also been conducive for Christian missions, from the European missionaries who established their presence with the founding of Jos town, to Nigerian and foreign evangelists in the more recent past. The position of Jos as a bastion for Christianity in the north is enhanced by its location on the neutral side of the core north while being indisputably part of the middle-belt. Initially Jos, Plateau became the most important missionary centre for all of northern Nigeria, a base from which evangelization was organized into areas beyond all other parts of the Plateau, among the heterogeneous non-Muslim populations of central Nigeria who until the 1930s were unconverted to either of the world religions and difficult to access, physically and socially.⁵

Also, with its large southern population, Plateau became more orientated towards Christianity, although Muslims have always had a strong presence in the state. Although religious competition, fundamentalism, and assertiveness have increased in Nigeria and violence occurred elsewhere in the north through the 1980s and 1990s, but large-scale religious violence in plateau still did not seem inevitable. The culture of the people was more cosmopolitan, with tolerance and even friendly relations between the two religious groups which has now been undermined.⁶

Religious reform movements began around the time of an upsurge in communal politics more generally, in the late 1970s. Born-again Christians have at times been strident in their rhetoric against Muslims, and even critical of the principles of democracy.⁷ The same is true of some of the Islamic movements in attitudes towards Christians and the secular state, although the disputes among Muslims themselves have also been intense.⁸

Moreover, the intensification of religious politics coincided with growing socio-economic crisis in Nigeria, prevalent through the 1980s with falling oil revenues and the impact of a disastrous Structural Adjustment

Programme, implemented by Babangida's military regime from 1986. As communal politics became more acute, social and political divisions on the basis of religion increased. Although this does not explain why violence occurred on such a large scale in Plateau state, but discrimination and corruption in government, and the narrow religious politics among both Christians and Muslims increased tension and polarization along communal lines.⁹ Also, social problems at different levels of society including high levels of group inequality and youth unemployment have increased the propensity for violence.

In addition, the dominant discourses in the religious conflicts refer to political exclusion on the basis of religion, on the Muslim side, and fears of religious and cultural domination, among Plateau Christians. There are variations across Plateau State in the way these themes are articulated, but the issues are similar. There is much political propaganda, inciting religious or cultural fears such as of a Muslim conspiracy to Islamize Nigeria that are not necessarily grounded in reality. In most cases Plateau state is a central reference point. A key element of the dispute is over which groups are represented in government and have access to the state resources, with much

controversy over how state and local governments exercise power. Sometimes the behaviour of persons within the political and economic spheres is influenced by religious beliefs. Government decisions may be made to the detriment of those who do not have political power.¹⁰

According to Goshit Plateau State only began to experience religious conflict in the 1990s. Since 1994, religion has been significant in shaping group allegiances, dividing formerly peaceful communities and leading groups to act violently against those of a different religion, deepening existing ethnic divisions.¹¹ The motive and target of attacks usually have a religious element, as evidenced by the attacks on churches, mosques and individuals (based on their religious identity). The conflict transformed from being of a political nature (where there was conflict over political control of traditional and other spaces) to deeply religious polarization and increased polarized religious conflict.¹²

Consequently, more people became directly affected by and conscious of social divisions by the onset of democracy in the new century, and started

articulating their religious allegiances more categorically than they did previously.

3.2. CHRONOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN PLATEAU STATE

3.2.1. The 2001 Jos conflict

On Friday July 6, 2001, Jos town was thrown into a violent religious conflict. According to Magaji, the immediate cause of the carnage was a slight misunderstanding between Muslims and a Christian lady who was said to be passing near a mosque at Eto-Baba, a Jos suburb during Jumaat prayer.¹³ According to Nyam, by 1.45 pm while she was going back to her work place from break at home, she was accosted and beaten up by some Muslim youth for passing through a footpath near a mosque, which is beside her home. When she ran home for safety, the youths followed her in a large number and beat up her father. On hearing the news, her people who were Christians mobilized themselves and set out on a revenge mission.¹⁴ This free for all fight later spread to some parts of Jos town and the ensuing skirmish turned out to be a major conflict.¹⁵

Later in September that same year, Jos the capital of Plateau experienced a very devastating decimation which took lots of lives. The cause of the crises was an opposition by the indigenous groups to exclude a Jasawa from public office. Alhaji Mohammed Muktar, a Hausa-Fulani man was appointed as the coordinator of the Federal Government's National Poverty Alleviation Programmed in Jos North, the indigenes Christian youth strongly protested the appointment on grounds that while he was chairman of the local government, he was charged to court, which he was impeached from the office for among other offenses, falsification of birth records, perjury and, falsehood.¹⁶

The Christian youths also felt aggrieved by the appointment of a person from the minority Jasawa group (Hausa-Fulani) to head such an important office. The resulting violence claimed as many as 1,000 lives in the center of the town, extensive damage to mosques, villages, churches, schools, shops, homes, and vehicles.¹⁷ The crisis resulted in religious segregation within the city center of Jos. The September conflict was the beginning of a series of outbreaks of communal violence, in Jos and elsewhere in Plateau State.

3.2.2. The 2002 Dilimi conflict

Igoh reported another violent religious conflict on April 2002, in which hundreds of people were killed and several houses burnt down broke out in Dilimi, Plateau State. A girl had allegedly tried to cross a barricade erected by Muslims during the Friday Jumaat prayer. She was turned back by the Muslim volunteers who were manning the barricade, but she refused and was attacked in the process. This led to a violent religious conflict that lasted 66 for days.¹⁸

The conflict was said to have been aggravated by the Imam of the mosque. At the height of the mayhem, the Imam was reported to have called for prayers several times at very odd time. When the prayers were called, a large population of young men would rush into the mosque to meet him and to receive instructions spurring them to fight to finish as in the days of the holy Jihad when the Jihadists conquered Mecca and destroyed idolatry.¹⁹

3.2.3. The 2004 Conflicts in Yelwa-Shendam

In 2004 violent clashes broke out more than 1,000 people were killed in attacks against Muslim and Christian villages from February to May, and

250,000 were displaced,²⁰ especially in the town of Yelwa in Shendam.²¹

These attacks revolved around contestations over land and chieftaincy.

According to Obadiah, the attacked was lunched by some unknown armed soldiers on Lyanjit village in Langtang North Local Government Area on February with the full knowledge of the Emir of Wase, Haruna Adullahi Maikano who was believed to be strongly behind it. The emir was reported to have secured the services of armed soldiers from neighbouring Bauchi State through Yuli Bashar Road to help in training the mercenaries, mostly from the neighbouring Niger and Chad Republics at the expense of the emirate council. The insurgents invaded Hamele village on February 12, 2004, having displaced the mobile policemen, mounting security in Wase town and border villages like Duwi, Yaudere, Kirin, Hamele and Tsamiya.²²

Andrew reported another round of religious conflict in Plateau State on Sunday, February 22, 2004. On that faithful day, Yamim village was completely destroyed by Fulani herdsmen who claimed they were chasing cattle rustlers. After the village was sacked, the Fulani militias allegedly hoisted the portrait of Osama bin Laden in Yelwa-Shendam, which was also

declared as part of Zamfara State. Despite moves by the authority of Shendam Local Government Council to impose a night curfew on the area, strong resistance was allegedly made by the influential Hausa-Fulani resulting in a no curfew scheme.²³

Following their success in stalling the imposition of a curfew, the youths in Yelwa-Shendam mounted loudspeakers of all shapes and sizes chanting all manner of Islamic Slogans calling Christians “Infidel”. In the madness that ensued, the settlement of Nshar, adjacent to Yelwa was completely razed down and many people killed. The Nshar yam market, churches, residential buildings and their four health facilities all went up in flames. This was closely followed by the destruction of Aji Kamel, Lukushim, Tumbi, Tukung, Goedo, Mangoro and Kwapjur. The death toll in this conflict stood at 1,500 and 60,000 others displaced in Shendam Local Government Council of Plateau State in the conflict. Most of the victims were either roasted or slaughtered.²⁴

A few days later, 48 people were killed in Yelwa town as hostilities within the Southern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State continued to spread and engulf

more villages. The victims, this time around, included women and children, who had run into Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) in Yelwa to seek refuge where they were allegedly pursued, and brutally slaughtered and set ablaze. It was gathered that the May 9, attack was a reprisal for the COCIN attack. In all, over 200 people were killed in the conflicts.²⁵ However, in May, President Obasanjo declared a 6-month state of emergency in Plateau state and suspended Governor Joshua Dariye, and appointed a major General Chris Alli to be in charge of the administration. He made effort to seize illegal arms from the rural communities in exchange for cash. When the cash carrot yielded few results, house-to-house searches were undertaken in villages and small towns.²⁶

3.2.4. The 2008 Conflict in Jos North

Another violence occurred in November 2008 following a dispute of the local government election in Jos North local government. The previous chairman that was elected in 1999 but left the office in 2002 and election have not been conducted since then due to violence till 2008. The Christian indigenes Berom, Afizere, and Anaputa ethnic groups were in support of the Christian candidate, Timothy Buba, from the ruling People's Democratic

Party (PDP) while the Muslim candidate, Aminu Baba, was supported by All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP).²⁷

It was the declaration of Timothy Buba, as winner of the election that led to the event of the crises. The Muslim believed that the election results have been rigged. During the crisis at least 700 and possibly more than 850 people were killed and over 5000 injured, vehicles, homes, shops, churches and mosque were destroyed.²⁸

3.2.5. 2010 Jos Conflict

On January 17, 2010, according to Kwaja, another violence broke out when a Hausa-Fulani man attempted to reconstruct his home which was destroyed during the 2008 crisis. Christian's youths in the area opposed the reconstruction of the building. They accused the owner of bringing armed men to work on the construction site and that they were insulted, this resulted in serious religious conflicts. Attempts were made to resolve the dispute failed.²⁹ Shobayo reported that the deadly religious conflict in Plateau on lasted from January 17 to 19, 2010. It started on Sunday in

Nassarawa Gwong, a Suburb of the city of Jos the state capital. Over 26 persons were killed on that day.³⁰

The conflict was brought under control by the state government, which imposed a dusk to dawn curfew. The conflict was however escalated when some armed persons reportedly stormed the city in defiance of the curfew. This action made the conflict to spread to other parts of the city like Rikos, Yanshanu, and Barkin Ladi.³¹ The conflict further spread on the third day to other camps that include Sabon Gida Kanar, Gyero, Bisichi, Dogon Na Hauwa, Rayfield, Maiadiko and Rafin Bauna. All structures in these camps were razed to the ground. Other areas affected by the conflict were Kuru Karama, Kuru Babba and Kuru Janta. No house was left standing in these areas. The conflict remains an unfolding tragedy as those affected counted their losses in lives at over 1000 and property worth billions of naira. The injured and displaced people are put at about 40,000.³²

As if that was not enough, the mayhem of March 7, 2010 at Dogon na Hauwa where over 500 people mostly women and children were killed.³³ The December 24, 2010, Christmas Eve, according to Akowe, witnessed a

new and ominous dimension which was added to the lingering religious conflicts in Jos Plateau. That day, bombs exploded in three different parts of Christian domination in the city, killing over 80 people, wounding many more and destroying churches and mosques and property worth millions of naira as a result of the crises that followed it.³⁴

After the 2010 crisis, some residents were still willing to build up their destroyed houses for a second or third time, trusting that they could live peacefully once again among their neighbors of another faith.³⁵

3.2.6. 2011 Conflict in Ladi Local Government Area

According to Weekly Trust, some small-scale violence incidents continued to 2011. Attacks were carried out in Barking Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State, people were killed and the attacks was suspected to be Fulani, among whom is a mobile Policeman, Corporal Uba Ahmed, from Abuja Police Command, were arrested.³⁶ Nigerian newspapers also report cases of public buses being stopped and passengers being selected and killed according to their religious identity, market transactions also sparked violent clashes, and private vehicles being attacked after taking

a wrong turn into settlements dominated by the other religious group. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria stated that Fulani herders in Plateau State had about 219 members killed and 7,000 cows stolen in January 2011; it should be noted that these numbers appear very high.³⁷

3.2.7. Clashes between the Fulani Herds-men and Natives

According to the council on foreign relations' Nigeria security tracker (NST), there have been 785 sectarian related deaths in plateau state alone between May 29, 2011, and June 30, 2013. Between January and June 2013, 481 people were killed; 61% of the total since May 2011 to 2013.³⁸ However, from 2012 till recently, there has been serious clashes between the Muslim Fulani herds-men and the Christian natives, especially the Berom. In the northern part of the state, especially Barakin-Ladi and Riyom local government areas have experienced unprecedented attacks from the Fulani's, leading to the death of innocent people and loss of property worth billions of naira destroyed. Several communal violence also erupted in some local government area of the state which were so deadly and beyond imagination.³⁹

3.3. CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN PLATEAU STATE

Several reasons have been given for re-occurrence of religious conflicts or violence. Although, a good number of these causes have socio-political, economic as well as governance undertones, yet, they are not immune to religious conflicts alone but, they cut across other forms of violence. In Plateau State, Nigeria, among the causes of religious conflicts are struggle over land, fear of dominance, the Shariah law, the politics of religion, division in government, lopsided social interactions, news reports and socio-religious bigotry. When values, norms, beliefs and ideologies are tempered with, conflicts are bound to erupt.

3.3.1. Struggles Over Land

The first major dispute in plateau is the struggle over land. Majority of the plateau state indigenes are Christian tied to the land as peasant farmers and civil service workers while the Muslim minorities are Hausa dry season farmers and the Fulani cattle rearing farmers though some indigenes also rear cattle in the south. The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) brought

about the retirement and retrenchment of many public servant, which make many people return to the farmland and there was great pressure on land resources. Suddenly, land that was available for all became contested. Due to the expansion of agricultural production the increase of farming reduced the cattle herders' access to water for their livestock and changed the interaction between farmers and herders. Land is central to survival hence conflict tends to occur over access to pastoral and arable land.⁴⁰

3.3.2. Fear of Dominance

There have been numerous crises between the indigenes and the settlers for political power. It must be mentioned that Jos North, is the commercial nerve centre of Plateau State, making the Local Government Chairman a powerful political force. Under the military administration of Gen. Abacha, the Hausa–Fulani seek for an establishment of a local government in which they will be dominant group. The new boundaries made the Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere to protests the creation of Jos North, arguing that they had not been consulted and that they had not agreed to it. They view the split of the old Jos LGA into Jos North and South LGAs as a deliberate approach to give full political control over a LGA to the Hausa

population.⁴¹ Since the creation of Jos North LGA, elections and political appointments have led to strong tensions between the Hausa and the indigenes, first in 1994 till recently.

3.3.3. Ethnicity and Religious Bigotry

In Plateau state, religion enter into the question as well, because the Hausa are mostly Muslims and the Plateau tribes are mostly Christians. Generally, religion has become the root of Nigerian politics since the mid-1970s. The Christians in Jos feared that if Muslims win control over Jos North LGA, they will soon control Plateau State as a whole since Jos north is central of Jos.⁴²

3.3.4. Shariah Law

The establishment of sharia law in 2000 led to violent conflicts between Muslims and Christians in northern states, which crumbled trust between the religious communities in Jos. Between 2000 and 2001 sharia law (criminal code) was introduced in northern states such as Kaduna, Kano, and Bauchi. This led to protest among Christians residing in those states, which resulted in deadly inter-religious violence. This development resulted

to a large number of Christians to move out from the northern states into Plateau State. They brought with them stories of discrimination and atrocities, breeding tensions between religious communities in Jos.⁴³

3.3.5. The politics of participation in government by both indigenes and settlers

Issues here include the creation of the Jos South LG out of Jos North by the military administration of Babangida, along religious lines, with the former purportedly for Christians and the latter for Hausa-Fulani Muslims. Moreover, appointments in Plateau State which is predominantly Christian during the long military rule was along religious lines, with the Muslim minority sometimes having more portfolios than Christians. With the return to multi-party democracy, however, the Hausa-Fulani Muslims were left out in the cold, since they lacked the numerical strength to successfully back their candidates.⁴⁴

The Christians were eager to exercise their voting right to wrestle political control from the Hausa-Fulani Muslims whom they regard as “settlers”. In 1999, no Hausa-Fulani Muslim was voted to either to the Senate or the National House of Assembly and only one was voted to the

Plateau State House of Assembly. This heightened the indigeneship, citizenship and settlers syndrome in the area. The recurrent problem constituted by the indigene/settler syndrome in Jos, mostly between the Hausa-Fulani self-styled Jasawa and the traditional natives of Jos town (the Berom, Anaguta and Afisare) constitute a major factor for the Jos religious conflicts.⁴⁵

3.3.6. Lopsided social interaction

The social dimension is also very revealing, since despite their many years in Jos, the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community failed to integrate fully into the Jos Plateau society. The community being Muslim does not tolerate marriage between their daughters and Christian but they do marry Christian girls. Most Jos Plateau Christian communities detest this lopsided mode of social interaction. This has given birth to what the Christians refer to as Hausa-Fulani raini ‘culture of belittling’ and arrogance since they look down with open contempt and lack of respect upon their host community, using such intemperate language and stereotypes as arna, infidels, Sarkin arna, the chief of infidels, kafirai (kafir) to describe them. They exhibit total disregard for the culture, religion and traditional institutions of their host

communities.⁴⁶ This is a fundamental reason that has birthed deep seated bitterness, with far reaching social consequences, that has continued to fan conflict on the Jos Plateau. This has severely breached the laws of communal harmony and interaction.

3.3.7. Claims over ownership of Jos

Indeed, the source of religious conflicts in the Jos also stems from the Hausa-Fulani claim over the ownership of Jos, the chieftaincy stool and other tenuous claims to political offices. This is what has pitted Muslim Hausa-Fulani against such predominant Christian indigenous ethnic groups as the Berom, Afisare and the Anaguta on one hand and other settlers like the Yoruba, Urhobo, and Igbo on the other.⁴⁷

3.3.8. Lopsided partisan news reporting by the media

Issues such as lopsided partisan reporting of the conflicts by both local and foreign media, cow theft or cattle rustling and religious affiliation only served as gasoline added to flames that are consuming dry grass in harmattan season. It should be noted that BBC Hausa Service, DW Hausa and VOA Hausa units covering of the Jos Plateau crises was biased because

the Hausa speakers working for these media outfits are mostly Hausa Muslims.⁴⁸

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CHAPTER FOUR

EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

4.1. SOCIAL EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Religious conflicts have successfully bred suspicion and lack of mutual understanding among groups owing to the fact that proper understanding between Christians and Muslims have not been effectively addressed, hence, it has often led to violent confrontations. As a result, Plateau state have been split down the middle with Christians living in one part while Muslims live in the other.¹ In Jos city, there are some areas where Muslims fear to settle and vice versa. Whenever conflicts ensue between the Christian and Muslim sections, the polity and social landscape of the state became heated up, leading to chaos and religious tension.²

From the observation and opinions of many, religious conflict has a devastating effect on Nigerian social infrastructures such as schools, churches, mosques, and hospitals and death of several of hundreds of

thousands of people, men and women. The destruction of community projects are problems that do not only affect the community involved but compiled the national problem of Nigeria underdevelopment.³ The sad elimination of the breadwinners of families led to increase in begging, prostitution and unemployment. Sadly still, where both parents were eliminated, the children (boys or girls) were forced to assume parental roles at tender ages which also have its negative social implication. In most cases the wounds left in the psyche of these people might not be obvious, but are often said to be mentally, and emotionally far reaching. These children may grow up with their minds fixed on hatred and set for revenge. No meaningful social development can thrive under the circumstances of religious conflicts.⁴

Sani states that religious conflict affects or limits social interaction and harmony and have also affected the social components of associations. In Plateau State, there is a sharp segregation of restructuring of the town in settlement by people along religious divides.¹ Religious conflict has had serious consequences on the social values and norms and has also destroyed viable socio-religious relationships which consequently decimate the

aspiration of producing a harmonious society. The religious polarization of Muslims and Christians in Plateau state due to religious conflicts poses serious social challenges to achieving Nationhood. this has also resulted in the emergence of conflicting socio-cultural groups like Ohaneze, Afenifere or Oduduwa movement and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). These groups now act as socio-political platforms to actualize the aspiration of their adherents. This has prompted Muslim fundamentalists craving to convert Nigeria into a theocratic society governed by Sharia and also prompted Christian fanatics craving to convert Nigeria into a theocratic society governed by the Canon Laws.⁵

Religious conflicts in Plateau state has created internally displaced persons, as thousands of people suddenly become refugees in their localities or elsewhere beyond their shores. Husband and wife usually lose contact resulting from an unplanned and sudden departure from their previous abode. It has also affected the education of children in the families involved. Properties are lost and people displaced. It is clear fact that if a refugee can carry some personal items during forced movement, none can carry fixed assets such as buildings, economic and non-economic crops. Another

disturbing effect of these religious conflicts is that high number of people are usually disfigured, killed, and displaced.⁶ The apparent intractability of this conflict has made it difficult to know the exact figure of IDP's in Nigeria. The Yeldam-Shendam conflict generated large number of IDP's in the history of religious conflict with over 60, 000 IDP's and over 800 women and girls either abducted, raped, sexually assaulted, or turned to slave labour.⁷

Also, the prevalent religious conflicts in Plateau state have also led to psychological problems. Some victims of these conflicts in suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS).⁸ In addition, Onwumah asserts that these conflict periods bring forth the worst instincts and impulses in the people. Socioeconomic vices such as increase level of crime rate and struggle over scarce resources over the past two is well connected to it. In the period following these conflicts, actors in the conflicts have remain reservoirs of religious knowledge of factual or distorted information. The aftermath of these conflicts disrupt social relationship as actors sees no reason to live happily together with one who destroys one family and society. This has created room for subsequent conflicts that followed.⁹ Women has

been more vulnerable to the psychological effects. They are vulnerable as prisoners of wars, abducted, sexually abuse, raped, made slave labor, and sexual instrument. Subsequently, these psychologically depressed individual as a result of religious conflict cannot contribute meaningfully to or make development efforts.¹⁰

4.2. ECONOMIC EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The occurrence of religious conflict has untold effect on the economy of Plateau state and the country as a whole. Obviously Speaking, the incessant religious conflicts across the state has bred insecurity in business, discrimination, loss of businesses and properties, mutual distrust and slow economic development. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the society of needed manpower, resources and services for the growth of its wobbling economy.

Religious conflict in plateau state has grossly deterred sustainable economic development. This is because, apart from the fact that many agile men are seriously affected in the crises which consequently led to their death, the state's source of revenue is equally affected and virtually all steps taken

to check crises have not been economic friendly. For instance, imposition of curfews at every period of conflict brought every economic activity in the state to a halt as it became difficult to move freely from place to place. The whole area therefore would become desolated to economic activities until normalcy is reinstated.¹¹

The climate of insecurity created by violent religious conflict in the state has also deterred investments. It has added to the fear foreign investors are having of the state and the country in general. Cases of kidnapping of economic and industrial expatriates are no more news. One wonders how foreign investors could decide to establish in the war zone. It is a truism that an insecure, conflictual and violence-ridden polity can never attract foreign investment.¹²

In order to resuscitate the economy, former president, Olusegun Obasanjo made it the priority of his government to woo foreign investors into the nation's economy. His passionate appeal yielded little or no result. This is because the security of the investors and their investment could not be guaranteed.¹³ No investor knowing full well that the locality he intended

to invest is a security risk would venture his capital there. And where the polity is scaring away foreign investment, the economy becomes stagnant and the dividends of democracy equally becomes a mirage.¹⁴ Obasanjo, in the plateau state religious conflict observe that:

visitors and investors have fled or are fleeing Plateau State and the neighbouring states have had their economies and social life disrupted and dislocated by the influx of internally displaced persons.¹⁵

Religious conflict has destroyed the state Foreign Direct Investments and also prevent investors from making huge investment in the economy due to their unguaranteed safety from the conflicts. According to Onwumah, the fears of the investors are in two forms. Firstly, the fear that their basic aim of making profit will be hampered in a volatile religious environment. Secondly, the resources they invested already will definitely be destroyed or wasted. Thus, the state is portrayed in a very bad light and is perceived as unsafe and indeed not conducive in terms of security caused by these religious conflicts.¹⁶ In a research report presented by participants of the Senior Executive Course No. 26, 2004 of the National Institute, the economic consequences of religious conflicts were noted as follows:

In addition to the irreplaceable loss of lives, and property (goods, houses and business premises), some survivors have permanently lost all they labored for in their lives. As a result, one can safely argue that the aggregate of such instances negatively impacts on the overall economy of these communities....¹⁷

Jos religious upheaval witnessed exodus of businesses to neighboring states that are safe for their investments.

Unemployment is one of the most challenging economic problem and coupled with poverty has engendered the current trend of crime, starvation, etc. the religious conflicts ravaging Plateau state have contributed in not just expanding the scope of poverty and unemployment in the population, but has also destroyed the efforts made so far in improving the standard of living and economic investments. NIPSS report on economic consequence of religious conflicts in Nigeria further shows that more population of the unemployed, the destitute and highly aggrieved are added in the streets with its attendant consequences and that victims of these religious conflicts are

also generally made and belonging to the economically active segments of the society.¹⁸

4.3. POLITICAL EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Religious conflicts have broken the Plateau society entirely. Communities that co-existed peacefully now treat each other with mistrust. Also, settlement patterns has began to follow the boundaries of religion in these areas so that adherents can be swiftly mobilized in the event of future conflicts. Political instability arising from the religious conflicts that pervades the Plateau does not inspire the confidence of the citizens on the government anymore, and consequently, leave an indelible mark in the mind of the people.¹⁹

The political evaluation has been characterized by periodic instability instigated mostly by the elite's manipulation of religion as a survival strategy. Religious membership and association rather than the political parties selected these candidates for elections. These have also contributed to the electoral violence that we have witnessed in the past recent years. For

instance, in the 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, the violence instigated led to instability the state, among others. The religious polarization of Muslims and Christians has posed serious challenges to administration.²⁰ In essence, the conflicts has breed unstable government, which is very crucial to sustainable development.

The violence also has created hatred among politicians as well as reduce the sense of belonging and solidarity among the citizens. Hence, threatene the corporate existence of the people. The conflicts have very often served as a breach to unity and integration in the Jos-Plateau, for instance, the Hausa-Fulani Muslims have been piqued against Christians instead of confronting Plateau State government in order to resolve their areas of disagreements.²¹ In other words, the conflicts have weakened patriotism, and has given rise to ethnicity and other cleavages which some politicians have continued to exploit for their interest and advantage.

In addition, many lives and properties have been wasted in the religious aggressions. The Plateau state religious conflicts between the Christians and Muslims have claimed thousands of lives, and properties

worth hundreds of millions have been destroyed. Many people loss their kin in the cause of the riot. A good example of this are the clashes between the Muslim Fulani herdsmen and the Christian natives prevalent in Barakin-Ladi and Riyom local government areas, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the Boko Haram insurgency. The actions and activities of this Islamic sect and Hausa-Fulani militia had led to enormous loss of lives and properties in Plateau as well as other northern states. Some of these activities include intimidation, bombings, suicide attacks, sporadic gunfire of unarmed, blameless and innocent citizens, burning of police stations and churches, kidnapping, raping of school girls and women.²²

The severity of the insecurity of lives and property occasioned by religious conflict in the state polity is better explained in the words of ex-President Obasanjo in justifying the declaration of the state of Emergency in Plateau State according to the research report of the Senior Executive Course of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Jos. Obasanjo stated, among other things, that:

Violence has reached unprecedented levels and hundreds have been killed with much more wounded or displaced

from their homes on account of their... religious identification... and property worth much more destroyed.²³

To further stress this point the president said that the Federal Government and the neighbouring states to Plateau State are incurring huge expenses in managing the socio-political and economic consequences of the near collapse of state authority and the breakdown of law and order in some parts of Plateau State and elsewhere.²⁴ Therefore, the various religious conflicts are a critical and potent force against the polity which also portray the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the state security and other security agents. It then means that security of lives and property could not be guaranteed owing to Religious conflict.

The religious conflicts in the Plateau has continued to attract negative attention globally, especially by international right groups and humanitarian bodies like Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HURIWA), who have all written at various times damaging reports on the activities of the Nigerian state. This bombardment of criticism to a very large extent has reduce Nigeria potential among the comity of nations. Apart from the fact that the image of Nigeria has been dented globally as a country which breeds

social miscreant and criminals, Nigerians have also become the first suspects in any scene of crime. They are also exposed to thorough screening at the airport before they are allowed to enter other countries.²⁵

Furthermore, education is very vital in any government sustainable developmental program. However, education has been hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in the various places, as mentioned the previous chapter, where religious conflicts has become an annual event. Apart from this, schools have not been spared in the destructive activities of those participating in this conflicts. Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months. The educations of innocent youths are equally disrupted under tumultuous situations created by this conflicts, as many are forced to emigrate from the area.²⁶ Religious conflicts have serious implication for stability of education programme in the tertiary institutions in the various localities where they are launched.

With the increase on the rate of the religious conflicts in Plateau state and in order to control this, government have pump so much money to the

Ministry of Defence at the expense of other ministries and most especially, for developmental projects. According Crisis Group Africa Report (No. 216), the government, since 2012, has tried to address the challenge of Boko Haram on multiple tracks but especially by increasing the defence budget from 100 billion naira in 2010 to 927 billion naira in 2011 and 1 trillion naira in 2012, 2013 and 2014.²⁷ In essence, resources, which could have been used to improve these amenities and embark on other developmental projects, would have to be used on restructuring and replacing what had been damaged during the conflict. In few cases where government compensated victims of these conflicts, it has gulped millions of naira, which could have been used for other developmental projects.²⁸

Needless to say, no remarkable development could be recorded in an atmosphere of ‘Built, Destroyed, and Rebuild’ as it amounts to cycling within the circle. The gross display of intolerance between Christians and Muslims, and lack of religious respect and understanding, as it has been in Plateau State, will always be a cog in the wheel of progress, development and a conflict-free society until the adherents of Christianity and Islam

imbibe the spirit of tolerance in conflict resolution. As such, peaceful coexistence and purposeful developments are undermined.

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CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made; directed at individual all religious adherents in Nigeria, the Christian and Islamic religions in particular, religious leaders and the government who are perceived as the principal facilitators of Religious Conflict in Nigeria:

1. It is advisable that every individual knows the tenets of his or her religion, and be watchful of the teachings of their religious leaders, because, it was observed that self-seeking and ambitious leaders often capitalize on the ignorance and gullibility of their fellowship to manipulate them to foment trouble with people of other religions.
2. Religious leaders should endeavour to make their preaching persuasive rather than inciting or insulting others beliefs. Emphasis on the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy in churches and mosques delays the peace process and prevents the rebuilding of relationships across the religious divide. On the basis of their importance and value, and the fact that

individuals respect and strive to abide by their precepts, religious leaders should strongly rely on the content of religious texts in their preaching. As James remarks, teaching faith emphasizes key principles like justice, compassion, reconciliation and stewardship, which are equally important in managing conflict.¹

3. Dialogue should be used as an effective weapon in resolving these conflicts, between Christians and Muslims, as well as other religionists. When dialogue is adopted with full determination for peaceful coexistence, conflicts can be prevented to a great extent. Also, The Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria must continue to reach out and sustain the dialogue processes and seek every opportunity to educate its followers and others on the ills of violence and the alternatives to the culture of retaliation.
4. The government must have the political will to make public the reports of the various panels that were established to investigate past religious conflicts. Some of these include the Niki Tobi Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Plateau State Disturbances, Sankey Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Wase and Langtang Disturbances and Justice Disu Judicial

Commission of Inquiry into Plateau State Disturbances and lately the Ahmed Lemu Investigation Panel on the 2011 Election Violence.²

5. Furthermore, where some people are indicted, the Nigerian authority should make sure that such people are prosecuted and duly punished. This will deter some perpetrators from furthering these unpleasant situations that have caused huge loss of human lives and property, thereby making the Nation unsafe.
6. There is the need to discourage politicians from manipulating religious identities for political gain. Therefore, Christian and Muslim communities must reject the manipulative acts of some political leaders, who constantly seek ways to inflame the nation with violence under the guise of religious patriotism, for their selfish political interests. It is only sustained efforts in these directions that will help to stop the conflicts.
7. It is important for religious leaders and institutions to abide by and preach principles and values of social justice, compassion, reconciliation and forgiveness. Islam and Christianity, for example, identify the need for love. In fact, various verses in the Bible call for loving one's enemies, encouraging harmony and sympathy³ and Martin Luther King Jr., as

cited by Kunhiyop, opines that it is necessary to realize that the forgiving act must always be initiated by the person who has been wronged, the victim of some great hurt, the absorber of some terrible act of oppression.⁴ Islam is equally described as a religion of unity because it 'acknowledges the individual and group work for the purpose of uniting the society.'⁵ Also, Christian and Muslim leaders should endeavour to impress on their followers the teaching on the solidarity of humankind which is hinged in the common teachings of religions that all humanity have one source of existence, the creative act of God. This common existence, as Nwaomah opines "is founded on the essential image of God in every person".⁶ A recognition and active cultivation of this solidarity will enhance regard for fellow human life, promote, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness. The relevance of these values can be used by religious leaders in exhorting their congregations and communities since many of these values are shared across both religions. This will make it easy to find areas of convergence and unity.

8. The Nigerian government should also begin a process of the inclusion of courses on civic responsibilities and patriotism in the university

educational curriculum. These courses should be made compulsory for all students irrespective of religious and cultural affiliations. The contents of these courses should include but not limited to the common heritage we share as Nigerians, principles of nation building and the impact of violence on national development.

9. Religious leaders are well placed to promote the idea of tolerance in society based on the values and ideals of their religions. Religious institutions and leaders can reverse the tide of conflict and promote peace through inter-religious activities. Inter-group celebrations of specific religious holidays and ceremonies like Christmas and Ramadan have also been pivotal in positively changing the relationships, attitudes, and behaviours of adherents of the two dominant religions, and should be encouraged. In doing this, individuals can learn to respect the views of others. They can also encourage their members who are political leaders, to work together on issues that affect the whole country.
10. There is also the need to increase the frequency of consultative meetings between religious leaders to share information, exchange views and perspectives on the threats that face their communities, and how these

can be resolved. Borrowing from the Bible, particularly Acts 15, Best suggests that the most effective way to achieve accord and harmony among Christians (and in this case between Muslims and Christians) is to bring leaders and scholars together to achieve consensus on problems they face and agree on the way forward.⁷ For him, this would include inviting leaders to a meeting; articulating the problem by allowing input from all sides; reaching a consensus in a culturally appropriate manner; publishing the results in a clearly written statement; distributing the letter to those affected; holding constituents responsible for its implementation.⁸

11. Christian and Muslim leaders can work together on social problems, like fighting corruption, calling for political change, and addressing various social, health and environmental challenges in their communities. Religious leaders can also continue to speak out against perpetrators and engage more with the youth in preventing further conflict. In Plateau State, there are examples of how Muslim and Christian clerics have shifted from a view of disliking the other to preaching non-violence, and the importance of working together to promote peace.⁹

12. As advised by the National Peace Policy, government actors at all levels need to encourage inter-group dialogue and interests and commit to the strengthening of structures that contribute to peaceful coexistence.¹⁰ This is in line with Smock's view that faith-based mediation processes cannot work without 'secular and political processes and authorities,'¹¹ as exemplified by the work of the Plateau State governor in ensuring that the peace agreement from the Yelwa-Nshar process was endorsed and given government approval.¹² This cross-sector engagement speaks to the fact that political leaders and institutions must be held accountable for their role in exacerbating religious conflict.

5.2. SUMMARY

In summary, this research shows that Religious conflict in Plateau State have been detrimental to the Nigeria society; to Nigeria's peace, unity and progress. Religious conflicts have been a major problem in the history of Plateau State. Since the onset of this century, the religious tension that developed between the Christian indigenes and migrants and the Muslim Jasawa settlements heightened by the spate of intolerance, sectarianism, polarization of religious identities, strive for dominance, resource control

and marginalization, religious politics, citizenship/settler issues, and ethnic cleavage, resulted in the religious conflicts that have ravaged the state throughout these years.¹³

As a matter of fact, the feeling of discrimination on the part Muslim Jasawa by the Christian indigenes over key political post and the fear domination of the Christians by the Muslim (Jasawa), coupled with sharia law clashes between the Muslim and Christian¹⁴ in other states engendered gross religious conflicts throughout the last two decades (2001 – 2020) in Plateau State during which many lives were lost and properties running into billions of naira were lost.

These conflicts have negatively affected the social, economic and political sectors of Nigeria society in the last two decades. Socially, the increasing brutality of the conflicts over the past two decades have had a traumatizing impact on the population and social development of the country in general. It has resulted in a breach of social interaction and harmony between the religious communities, dispersion of families and population. These have also resulted into major religious restructuring of settlements or

town with people congregating in areas where their religious faiths have majority of inhabitants in the Northern part of Nigeria. The crises have also resulted in the sharp increase in the number of widows and orphans leading to prostitution, begging, unemployment, etc.

Economically, the Nigerian economy experiences a retardation of economic development and destruction of economic manpower and resources, depletes the Nigeria economy through the cost of controlling the conflicts in the affected States, particularly Plateau State. The crises have also discouraged economic growth in the sense of industrialization and modernization as both local and foreign investors shy away from investing in the country.

Politically, the country is now divided along religious lines because of such crises. These have affected the voting and campaign patterns, democratic value and norms. The conflicts also delay viable political transition and consequently, the aspiration of producing a nation state,

destabilized the Nigerian polity, and created a bad of the country in international affair, etc.

Nevertheless, salient measures are therefore recommended to the government and all actors in politics, religious leaders and all individual member of religious groups which will serve a useful means of curbing the problem as well as maintaining a harmonious social, political and economic environment that is conducive for building a nation.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

No doubt, violent religious conflict is a major problem in Nigeria today. In Nigeria today, no issue is as important as how to find lasting solutions to the ever-increasing rates of violent religious conflicts that have been a clog in the wheel of progress in all spheres of the Nigeria society. This perennial religious conflict between the major religions (Christianity and Islam) in Plateau State have resulted into dwindled economic development as well as social and political instability. In fact, these incessant conflicts have to a large extent ridicule Nigeria in the comity of nations, as no individuals or corporate body would want to invest in where safety of their investment is

not guaranteed. It has also resulted in mass destruction of properties, lives and exodus businesses leading to increase internally displaced persons (IDPs), poverty, unemployment, degradation of the socio-religious values and norms, psychological breakdowns, dislocation of social groups – families – and society, among other. Thus, religious conflict in Plateau and its impacts on the Nigeria society leaves nothing to write about under the glaring light of the Nigeria situation.

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