



THE INTRACTABILITY OF VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PLATEAU STATE

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria grapples with a number of longstanding conflicts across regions. Plateau State is volatile and suffers episodic violent conflict. The state is trapped in a vicious cycle of violence which has escalated with great intensity especially in the last decade leading to great loss of lives and properties, displacements of individuals from their homes as well as a deeply divided society. All efforts by state and non-state actors to address the lingering conflict appears inadequate. Previous studies relate the conflict to ethno-religious crises, violent intercommunal, sectarian and resource-based conflicts yet, understanding and addressing the complexity of the conflict remains daunting. Hence, this study attempts to address this puzzle by explaining the intractability of the violent conflict in Plateau State. To achieve this, the study examines the dynamics and actors, to the recurring conflict. A case study approach has been applied is carrying out the study using broad sources of data including Key Informant Interview (KII), observation, and secondary sources such as journals, books and official reports. The study suggests that the crises in Plateau State evolved through five phases which are influenced by competing citizens claim, mutual feeling of victimisation and the activities of violent entrepreneurs. It identifies media, ethnic groups, political actors, youth group, arm dealers, security agencies, and government agencies as the major actors in the conflict who are mostly motivated by identity, human needs and, profiteering interests. The Study concludes by advocating for a short, medium and long terms solutions anchored on multi-stakeholder approach.*

Keywords: Intractability, Violent Conflict, Nigeria, Plateau State

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Plateau State has been experiencing episodic violent conflict for about two decades. The vicious cycle of violent conflict in the state began in 1991 and became persistent and even deadlier in the succeeding

years especially from 2001. The conflict has been devastating and exacted a massive toll on the socio-economic development of the state. While there is no accurate data on the total number of casualties recorded, modest estimates however put the figure at



over 7,000 lives. Moreover, it has led to destruction of properties and livelihoods and homes. It has also led to growing sense of fear, mutual suspicion and intolerance across several ethno-religious and communal divides (Plateau Peace Building Agency, 2018; Cinjel & Ugwoke, 2019). Beyond being victims of direct physical attacks, the conflicts led to displacement and increased economic and social vulnerabilities on the daily lives of the local population, especially women and children (Taft, Blyth & Murphy, 2016). As a result of the crises communities are segregated according to ethno-religious divides with several communities living in fear of attacks, reprisal attacks and other forms of criminality (Abbass, 2012; Chidozie, 2016).

Both the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Plateau State government have employed several efforts to address the crises. These efforts include the setting up of commissions of inquiry and the deployment of security operatives to the crisis area (Plateau Peace Building Agency, 2018). Regardless of these efforts, the violent conflict remains a recurring decimal in the state. Moreover, there is a growing trust deficit on government at all levels by the citizens of the state. Furthermore, scholars and policy makers have also attempted to understand the cause and nature of the crises. A number of studies described the crises as resource-based (Danfulani, 2005; Taft, Blyth & Murphy, 2016; Akinyetun, 2016), other studies attribute the crises to ethno-religious tension, intercommunal violence, as well as sectarian and resource-based conflicts. Regardless of the several attempts, the crises remain complex especially as communities are attacked ferociously. Some of the incidence according to anecdotal evidence happen under the radar of the media and public knowledge thereby unaccounted.

As in the case of Plateau State, conflicts in different States of Nigeria such as Benue and Kaduna have existed for over two decades. Over time, the conflict dynamics in these regions have been difficult

to understand as there are divergent opinions about the causes, motivations and nature of the crises. The divergent opinions make it difficult for both state and non-state actors to have a common ground in addressing the recurring conflicts thereby making the conflict intractable.

This study is important because it attempts to examine the intractability of crises in Plateau State. It analyses the Plateau State conflict by attempting to highlight the phases of the crises. It also examines the actors, and dynamism of the recurring conflict in Plateau State. This paper is divided into five sections which include; methodology, the literature on intractable conflict, the perspectives of the plateau conflict, changing dynamics of the conflict, actors and drivers of the conflict and the conclusion part.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This research is an exploratory study that adopts a case study approach using both primary and secondary methods. The secondary sources include published sources such as peer-reviewed journals, official reports and media sources. The primary data include KII and observation. To select our areas for observation, we purposively selected five local governments in the state that are most volatile with violent conflicts of which, we choose one community in each of the selected local governments. One community leader was selected from each of these communities. In total, we selected five key community leaders for a semi-structured interview across five local government areas of Plateau State, these include Jos North Local Government Area (LGA), Jos South LGA, Jos East LGA, Riyom LGA and Barkin Ladi LGA. These community leaders were purposively selected because of their level of influence in the selected LGAs.

As other researches, this study has some limitations, particularly with the interview participants. The identities of interview participants are anonymous because of the security implications and their request not to disclose it because of the



sensitivity of the topic. A number of influential individuals rejected the request of the researcher's proposal to interview them. However, secondary sources were included to address the limitation as well as to triangulate the interview data collected. The data was analysed through thematic analysis with the help of Nvivo QSR software.

3.0 Intractable Conflict

Scholars argue that intractable conflicts are those conflicts that stubbornly persists regardless of continuous attempts to resolving them. Intractable conflicts are protracted, recurrent and destructive. They are conflicts where, conflicting parties as well as the intervention parties have the singular or collective capacity to cause devastating human, social, economic and political consequences. (Coleman, 2000; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003; Kreisberg, 2005). In other words, scholars suggest that intractable conflicts are unyielding and challenging to manage, transform and resolve. Scholars argue that such conflicts holds great catastrophic threat that could devastate a or an entire region with similar examples of; Somalia, Israel and Palestine and , India and Pakistan which has witness decades of conflict (Bercovitch, 2003: 1; Kriesberg, 2005: 66).

Studies have attempted to examine factors that make conflicts intractable. Scholars argue that the original causes of conflicts differ from the factors responsible for protracted conflicts (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005: 5) as such different thinking suggest that intractable conflicts emanate from; identity, human needs as well as profiteering interests of diverse groups in prolonged conflicts (Bercovitch, 2003; Azar, 1990; Zartman, 2005; Crocker et al., 2005).

Previous studies also suggest that what makes conflicts to transform into protracted crisis include; duration, actors, issues, relationships, geopolitics and management (Bercovitch, 2003). The duration of a conflict which spans for a long time makes conflict to

be normalized thereby making conflicting parties adjust to living in hostile environment where they are unwilling to tolerate and forgive each other's fault and embrace peace. Actors in intractable conflicts are either states or non-state actors with age-old historical grievances. Actors could also be individuals who have crass desire for power, wealth and influence and thus, do not want the conflict to end (Crocker et al., 2005).

Issues regarding conflicts are also central to the elongation of crises. The issues could be connected to; Identity, sovereignty, and values or beliefs that are most likely nonnegotiable to all conflicting parties (Bercovitch, 2003). Such cleavages motivates the intensity of the conflict especially, when one or all groups condemn (or dehumanize) themselves. Such examples can be found in longstanding communal or religious conflicts. (Crocker et al., 2005). Issues regarding an ongoing conflict also contributes to the relationship between conflicting parties. The strained relationship before and during conflicts makes actors unable to retract from existing conflicts. Such situation heightens enmity and polarization of individuals and therefore makes resolution cumbersome. (Bercovitch, 2003).

Geopolitics can also contribute to intractable conflicts especially regions or states, where there are competing interests such as the case of Kashmir region dispute between India and Pakistan. In such areas, state actors are either linked to the crisis or become complicit. Such situations make mediation and other form of resolution difficult and even confusing for neutral parties to understand the complexity of such crises (Zartman, 2005; Crocker et al., 2005).

Management of conflicts also contributes to intractable conflicts. The inability to ensure effective resolution strategy, failed ceasefires, sanctions and other forms of interventions can further escalate humanitarian crises and complicate further efforts to mitigating longstanding conflicts (Kriesberg, 2005).



For instance, the Israel and Palestine crises remains a complex situation, where some agreements are contravened. Moreover, both conflicting parties as well as the international community are divided over which sustainable effort to address the protracted crises, especially as arguments are majorly centered on the two or one state solution.

However, some scholars suggest that intractable crises are not entirely unmanageable and irresolvable (Bercovitch, 2003; Kriesberg, 2005). Bearing in mind the peculiarity of every conflict, in this article, I argue that conflicts are intractable when the barriers to stability appear, unsurmountable. Hence, I explore the barriers responsible for the protractedness of the Plateau State crises and seek ways to address the protractedness of the crises. In other words the study attempts to identify such barriers to stability and ending the protracted conflict.

4.0 PLATEAU STATE VIOLENT CONFLICT IN PERSPECTIVE

The Plateau State, conflicts exist for over two decades. The majority of scholars and policy makers hold different opinion about the conflict. Different accounts suggest that it is: 1. Resource-based conflict; 2. Ethno-religious conflict; 3. Communal conflict and; 4. Politically motivated conflict. These accounts, are inadequate in understanding the complex crises. Moreover, the actors and dynamics of the conflict have been under examined. To deconstruct the complexity of the crises and to address its intractability, there is a need for an analysis of the dynamics and actors of the crises. While this study focusses on the dynamics and actors of the conflicts, it will be remiss not to acknowledge that the crises in Plateau State is not motivated by identity conflict. Identity has been the major cause of the conflict particularly the debate about the indigene-settler problem.

The Indigene-settler problem has been a recurring decimal in many parts of Nigeria which threatens the peace and stability. Plateau State, a

multi-ethnic state has over the years been the theatre of ethno-religious crisis in the country as a result of settler/indigene dichotomy. Plateau State is one of the thirty- six states in the Nigerian federation. It is made up of several ethnic groups such as the Geomai, Tai, Berom, Ngas, Afizere, Anaguta, among others. Omotoso (2020), explains that Plateau State is distinctive for its high-level of ethnolinguistic diversity, is populated by a great variety of small groups living in hamlets, and attracted pastoralists in the nineteenth century when its human population was relatively sparse and tin was discovered. This gave rise to the growth of Jos which led to a major expansion of the (farming) population.

Violent conflict in the state is traced to ethnic differences pitting Hausa often referred to as ‘settlers’ with other ethnic groups (Omotoso, 2020). The indigenous tribes have a feeling that the state belongs to them and therefore reserve the right to control it and its abundant resources, while Hausa settlers equally lay claim to a certain part of the state. This has resulted in protracted indigene versus settler battles in some parts of the state. The indigenes are resisting the Hausa settlers in politics and administration of the area. Ethnicity is therefore seen as an important political identity and the ideology of indigeneity is a potent tool of ethnic politics in the state.

Issues of concern that leads to violent conflict in the state include the land issue and use. This is not only limited to Nigeria; land ownership is an issue all over Africa. As such, anything that affects the land affects the people and is resisted by all means. Awa in Omotoso (2020), notes that indigeneity is strong in Nigeria because the land is viewed as a primary form of property in the traditional society and its source as a form of wealth. This is responsible for the deep-rooted animosity between the so called ‘indigenes (landowners) and the settlers’ in Plateau State. The desire of settlers to have access to land at the expense of indigenes has been a major source of concern in the state.



5.0 CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE CONFLICT

phases of the conflict which is indicated in Table 1 below.

In attempting to understand the dynamics of the conflict, it is important appreciate the various

Table 1: Phases of the Plateau Conflict

PHASE 1 1991-2000 KEY EVENTS	PHASE 2 2000-2005 KEY EVENTS	PHASE 3 2006-2010 KEY EVENTS	PHASE 4 2011-2015 KEY EVENTS	PHASE 5 2016-2021 KEY EVENTS
1. Creation of Jos North LGA 2. Violence from Protests over appointments of officials of Jos North LGA 3. Struggle over resource control 4. Claims of ownership of Jos 5. Indigenes vs settlers dispute leading to ethno-religious violence. 6. Chieftaincy tussles	1. Violence over appointment of Chairman of NAPEP 2. Communal clashes in Wase and Langtang LGAs 3. Heightened ethno-religious rhetoric 4. Perceived electoral irregularities 5. Perceived claim of ownership of Jos	1. Violence over alleged electoral irregularities in local government elections. 2. Dogo Na Hauwa massacre 3. Perceived claim of ownership of Jos 4. Chieftaincy tussles	1. Farmer-herder clashes in many LGAs 2. Resettlement issues. Land disputes 3. Suicide bomb blasts in Jos and reprisals 4. Multiple bomb blasts in Jos and reprisals	1. Inter-ethnic tension 2. Farmer-herder clashes in many LGAs 3. Inter-community clashes 4. Attacks on farming communities 5. Destruction of farms 6. Attacks on mining communities

Source: Adopted and modified from Plateau State Roadmap to Peace (2018)

Events since 1991 have shaped the crises in Plateau State. Table 1 below suggests that Plateau State experienced five phases of crises. The table highlights the causes and motivations of crises from 1991 to 2021. The conflict could be traced to the creation of Jos North Local Government (LGA) in 1991 by the then military government led by General Ibrahim Babangida. The citizens saw this action as a collusion between the military government and the ‘Hausa/Fulani’ ethnic groups to occupy their ancestral land. This was mainly informed by the conflict of identity especially by the settler-indigene disputes.

The creation of Jos-North swells the citizen-settler competing claims to Jos. Participant 1 Suggests that; The root cause of this problem is the creation of this Local Government. The creation is as a result of the Hausa–Fulani lobby of the IBB [Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida] led Federal Military Government. Till date our people are not happy. The Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere [ethnic groups] within Jos North LGA vehemently resisted this idea. It was not a fair decision, how can our and the main commercial centre of the state, and the seat of



political and traditional offices, including the palace of traditional leader such as Gbong Gwom be under the control of settlers. This is a deliberate strategy to undermine us.

The participant suggests that with this development, elections and political appointments in Jos North is keenly contested by both the Hausa and the indigenes. The first minor crisis resulting from this tension and resistance was recorded in 1994 leading to the killing of four people during protests while parts of some market areas, as well as an Islamic school and mosque, were destroyed. The Berom and other indigenous groups insisted that the appointment should be given to an indigene (Krause, 2011).

The contest over citizenship and indigene rights and status is also a driver of conflict in Plateau State because of its intrinsic connection to important political, economic, and educational benefits. The exclusion of one group's elite from political offices impedes the group's ability to benefit from patronage networks. The Jasawa population for instance is denied indigene status, despite its claim to have settled in the community for generations. It is suggested that if conflict over indigene rights is addressed, recurring violent conflict in Plateau State will be non-existent (Krause, 2011). It is worthy of note that claims to indigene rights and political control of Jos have equally affected other smaller towns of the state such as Namu, Yelwa, and Wase.

International Crisis Group (2012), notes that identity is used to grant indigenes access to economic and political resources and opportunities while non-indigenes are excluded. Since the Hausa-Fulani population are predominantly Muslim and the opposing group predominantly Christian, whenever there is a political crisis, the ownership struggle takes a religious dimension. Yet, such violence is a smokescreen for disputes over such issues as citizenship, group and individual rights and communal distribution of public resources, which boils down to competition over power and resources.

Civil society activists, scholars, community and youth leaders and conflict transformation experts do not agree that the crisis in Plateau is religious; the common point of view is that religion has generally been deployed as a smokescreen and a ploy to garner clannish sympathy and support.

Phase 2 of the crises between 2000 and 2005 shows similar trend of power tussle and competition for political space by different groups. Phase 3 (2006-2010) indicates a turning point of the struggle for identity as key groups intensified the use of violence towards their interests such the 28-29 November, 2008 LG elections crises which led to 761 casualties (Abubakar, 2008). Within this period several reprisal attacks were carried out against civilians. Phase 4 (2011-2015) worsen the conflict especially with the advent of violent anti-state groups such as Boko Haram and Ansuru. The period was characterised by several bomb blast in the metropolitan city of Jos such as the several bomb blasts of 2012 and the 2014 twin bomb blast in the city centre (The Humanitarian Angle, 2013; BBC, 2014). Participant 3 further buttress this assertion as the participant argues that:

In 2012, the peaceful and beautiful Plateau experienced the first bomb explosion orchestrated by terrorist. The lack of action by government embolden the invaders of our ancestral lands to adopt terrorist's strategy to lay siege on our people. Besides this strategy has continued in different forms- attacks by herders, kidnapping, rapping, attacks of villages at the death of the night, destruction of farms and the economic lifeline of the society.

The participant describes the first and unabated serial bomb explosion in Jos metropolis as a violent and subterranean strategy by other ethno-religious groups to destroy lives and properties as well as to occupy the lands of citizens. We argue, that the inadequate management of the crises in Phase 4 of the Plateau conflict has increased fear and suspicion by



one ethno-religious group against the other as expressed by Participant 2. Moreover, this period aggravated the longstanding identity conflict between groups as experienced in Phase 5 of the conflict especially with the farmer-herder crises (see table 1).

Even though the herders-farmers conflict is viewed as a resource-based conflict by many scholars (Nwanze, 2017; Nasir 2019), others also view the attacks by herders as a means for land grabbing and quest for Fulani expansion and domination. Laying credence to this standpoint, Levtzion & Pouwels (2000), observed that herders are viewed on the surface as people who are so often constantly in search of greener pasture for their herds. They are also perceived as people whose life, survival and tradition are tied to the value attached to herds, and their capacity to do all that they can to protect their herds. On the other hand, some scholars note that, herders in Africa play an important role in Islamic jihad (Levtzion & Pouwels; 2000; Odey & Ajor 2020). This suggest that their choice of terror is pre-meditated and justified by religious ideology and is sometimes politically motivated, depending on the place, time and socio-political context.

Some literatures also support this claim as they suggest that the Herders' violent activities across the Nigerian federation is viewed by a number of ethno-religious groups as a new wave of Jihad and expansionist agenda of Muslims to spread Islam (Adinoyi, 2019; Odey and Ajor, 2020). Participant 5 claims that this narrative is evident in history and memory as many have been killed, injured and displaced from their homelands and their villages, farms and houses were taken over by herders who are predominantly Muslims. The participant argues that this has been the cries of cultural organisations and religious bodies in Plateau State especially against the act that appears to be a genocide and an attempt to forcefully take over and occupy the ancestral land of the entire indigenous ethnic groups in Plateau State.

Data from Participant 2 reveals the other competing claim. The Participant suggest that;

We are perceived as the aggressors while we are reduced to second-class citizens in a place where our parents were born, we were born and our children born just because we are either Hausa, Fulani or because we are all Muslims. We are not happy with what is happening. We are victims; We are victimised from all fronts. Some of us suffer cattle rustling, political and economic alienation, hate speech and condemnation. I am a Nigerian who deserves to live without been demonised in our fatherland.

The above statement suggests the grievances of the citizens of Plateau State who are labelled as settlers. The participant asserts that they are not been given due regard in a land where their genealogy is established as they are marginalised from political and economic goods. Other grievances also include the suffering from cattle rustling and condemnation

The International Crisis Group (2012) opines that identity is used to grant indigenes access to economic and political resources and opportunities while non-indigenes are excluded. Since the Hausa-Fulani population are predominantly Muslim and the opposing group predominantly Christian, whenever there is a political crisis, the ownership struggle takes a religious dimension. Moreover, citizenship, group and individual rights and communal distribution of public resources, which boils down to competition over power and resources.

6.0 Actors and Drivers

As argued above, intractable conflicts may be informed by identity, human needs and, profiteering interests of various groups in prolonged conflicts (Bercovitch, 2003; Azar, 1990; Zartman, 2005; Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005: 6). To buttress this assertion, it is important to understand the nature of the actors their motives, attributes and



level of influence. Table 2 below summarises this argument.

Table 2: Nature of the actors their motives, attributes and level of influence

ACTOR GROUP	CHARACTERISTICS/ INTERESTS	LEVEL OF INFLUENCE
Religious Bodies	1. Corrupt & partisan; 2. Manipulates its blind followers; 3. High mobilization capacity; 4. Strong national and international networks.	Very High
The Media	1. Insensitive to conflict reportage; 2. Largely owned by politicians and used for the interests of owners.	High
Ethnic Groups	They thrive and behave exclusively; primary affiliation is to cultural groups, competitive, self-serving leaderships, heavily influenced by politics and politicians.	Very high. Results in blind followership from youth, elderly and traditional rulers. Their influence surpasses that of politicians and government.
Political Actors	Unhealthy competition and divisive	
Youth Groups	Economically disadvantaged, socially subordinate and politically powerless. unemployed, energetic restless and often used as the agents of violence.	High
Arms Dealers	They are driven by financial gains and other interests which could be	High

	ethnic or religious. Have no fixed loyalty and morality. Are highly connected and secretive	
Security Agencies	Loyalty to the federal tier of government, esprit de corps, coercive, intimidation, conflict merchants, known for gross violation of human rights	Highly influential in and out of office, influential at the high levels, respected in every community
Government Agencies	Very bureaucratic and not effective	Medium

Actors are highly influential to the nature and intensity of the crises in Plateau state. However, establishing the identity of the assailants of various atrocities have been challenging. Nonetheless, attempts have been made to identify the influence of different categories of actors who motivate the conflicts. Agbor (2010), observes that the identity of those perpetrating the violence in Plateau State is a herculean task because there are no recognizable armed groups in the state with an established structure that perpetrate this violence and that no individual or organization has ever claimed responsibility for the killings and destruction of properties in Plateau State. However, about eight actors can be identified to be influential in the crises namely: religious bodies, media, ethnic groups, political parties, youth groups, politicians, and arm dealers.

Religious bodies have great influence in the conflict. These bodies are some of the institutions that are occupied by corrupt and partisan figures with large following who manipulate their blind followers with their preaching and drive for religiosity (Mercy Corps Nigeria, 2016). The content of their sermons is highly polemic and laden



with fringe ideologies that promote violence (Gwaza et al., 2015). Moreover, these religious bodies have strong national and international network where they get both financial and ideological support as solidarity to fight the ‘course of their followers.’ Participant 1 argues that:

The external support we get is to enable us to empower our people economically and to address issues of injustice. While our religion preaches peace, we believe that self-defence and fighting for our rights is mandatory even in secular law.

The above statement suggests that some religious bodies recourse to help outside Plateau State to enable them empower their followers economically and to mobilize their followers to carry arms in anticipation of attacks. This situation could be dangerous as overzealous followers may attack individual of other faith even without been attacked. This kind of thinking could also instigate the opposite religion to follow similar direction. Participant 3 suggests that:

We are not naïve and will never be naïve to watch them destroy us or implement an expansionist agenda, we must encourage our people to defend themselves, our land, religion and future generations.

The above statement reveals that there is a deep suspicion between the divided people of Plateau State of which individuals can easily be mobilised towards violence against other religion.

The media has been complacent to the crises. This include both the traditional and new media. The traditional media has been insensitive to conflict reportage as most of the media outlets are largely owned by politicians who use them for their interest and propaganda which could incite tension in the state. Moreover, social media has also been employed by both politicians and religious bodies for divisive messages. Participants 1, 2 and 3 have identified the media as major incubator of hatred as

it transmits fake news, hate speech and insensitive messages including gory images to create tension. Participant 4 says: I tell you;

I think in the last two years or so, we had to write to the NBC [National Broadcasting Commission] to suspend a radio station here in Jos for intentionally spreading hate speech. It has also come to our notice that, certain people use false names on social media to circulate dangerous messages that spread like wild fire.

The Participant argues that both the traditional and new media (social media) provide platform for spreading of inciteful messages. The Participant said that in the past the NBC as regulator of all broadcasting media outlets in Nigeria had to suspend a particular radio station in the state. The participant also suggest that groups have instrumentalised the social media to share polemic messages.

Plateau State also experience political rivalry in the context of local elections. With increasing tension, and giving the mistrust and mutual suspicion among various groups, the electorate often supports candidates along religious lines. The misunderstanding that often starts as ethnic and political, metamorphoses into a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians with both divides exploiting religion which happened to be an effective way of mobilizing large scale support (Agbor, 2010). Supporting this claim, Perterside (2021) notes that the situation in Plateau took a new turn when those described as “settlers” began to assert and demand political power as “indigenes” because of their extended stay in the State. This action awakens the consciousness of the indigenous people to resist such narratives.

Participant 5 argued that:

With the dawn of democracy in 1999 and after about three decades of military rule, politicians in their quest for power to capture



and maintain state power promoted religiosity and ethnicity to gain public sympathy. They promoted the bitter animosity of ‘we (indigenes) against them (settlers)’. Unfortunately, this narrative was allowed to aggravate, leading to mistrust between people that had lived together, transacted businesses and inter-married for many years, and even converted to each other’s faith in some cases.

The participant suggests that the advent of democracy after about three decades escalated the longstanding divides between ethno-religious groups into violent conflict. He argued that political actors instrumentalise the divide by promoting polemic debates that will gain them popularity among their people. This has to a larger extent ignite increasing tension amongst groups under the guise of “indigenes and settlers.”

Ethnicity plays a significant role in prolonging the Jos crises. Ethnic groups explore the history and memory of the people of Plateau State to promote cultural groups, competitive, self-serving leaderships, heavily influenced by politics and politicians (Anderson, 2016; Plateau Peace Building Agency, 2018). Participants 2 and 3 suggest that a number of ethnic groups in Plateau state are rather peaceful but tend to react because of the threat to their ancestral lands, lives and properties. The participants argue that tension stems from competing historical interpretations and political claims to Jos the capital of Plateau State. That the creation of Jos North LGA in 1991 by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida led Military administration following immensely lobby by the Hausa–Fulani has also been at the root of violence in the area because the new boundaries made the Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere minorities within Jos North LGA and they vehemently rejected the creation of Jos North because they were not duly consulted about the decision to create the new LGA. They hold the view that the balkanization of Jos which is the commercial

centre of the state, and as well, the seat of political and traditional offices, such as the palace of the indigene traditional leader, the Gbong Gwom of Jos into Jos North and South LGAs as a deliberate strategy to give the Hausa population political control over the area. Other groups classified as settlers also hold the opinion that they are denied indigene status, rights and political control of Jos. This kind of thinking equally affected other smaller towns of the state such as Namu, Yelwa, and Wase (Krause, 2011).

Youth also play a significant role in the intractability of the conflict in Plateau State. Interview data from all the participants show that the high rate of youth unemployment and incessant strike actions by Universities have made youth to be available agents of violent atrocities. The participants argue that the youths are controlled through ideological manipulation and, ethno-religious and political affiliations. Moreover, some are pulled into thuggery and violence through pecuniary reward by entrepreneurs of violence who find them energetic and available for violence.

Arm dealers have also contributed to the conflict in Plateau through the circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) (SBM, 2021). In Plateau states, both in the North Central region, locally made weapons are estimated to be used in over 69% of crimes committed whereas 31% are internationally-sourced (SBM, 2021). According to participant 5, the circulation of this weapons is carried out by highly influential dealers who have no fixed customers and because of their intense drive for profit, they sell arms indiscriminately to citizens across religious and ethnic groups. Further inquiries about the circulation of SALWs across Plateau State have been difficult as participants 2 and 3 suggest that it is a clandestine and lucrative business that requires further investigation. Participant 5 believes that conflicting groups benefits from the indiscriminate supply of SALWs that is why the conflict in Jos is prolonged.



Government agencies at both federal, state and local levels have also contributed in the intractability of the conflict. This is mainly due to high degree of bureaucratic processes and inadequate understanding and less-effective interventions to address the recurring conflicts (Animasawun, 2014). This have contributed to the complexity of the crises. Participant 5 alluded to this fact as the participant argues that this has created two narratives that either the government is weak or biased in addressing the lingering conflict. These perceptions serve as a motivation to the conflict in that, they erode the confidence of citizens on government at all levels who are vested with the authority to protect the lives and properties of all citizens.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The longstanding conflict across Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State has deleterious consequences because of the incalculable loss of lives, properties and livelihoods. Moreover, the crises appear intractable because of the complexity of understanding and resolution. This study has attempted to contribute to the numerous efforts towards mitigating the violence by addressing the puzzle. In trying to narrow the gap we examined the dynamics and actors of the conflict in Plateau state that motivates the intractability of violent conflict.

The findings suggest that since 1991 the conflict of Plateau State evolved through five states

The study found out that there are five phases of the conflict first and root cause of the conflict is anchored on contested citizenship which takes form in terms of citizens-settler debate especially with the creation of Jos North LGA. This development escalated heated rivalry leading to the crises between 2000 and 2005. Phase three (2006-2010) signalled the turning point of the conflict as the struggle for identity between key actors intensified with violence particularly in 2008 LG elections. Phase four of the conflict highlights the import of violent anti-state

group such Boko Haram and Ansaru. These groups changed the trajectory of the crises and heightened the existing tensions among ethno-religious groups. The various bomb blasts orchestrated by these violent anti-state groups ingrained hatred among citizens. The fifth phase of the crises is dominated by increasing resource-based conflict which is further motivated by the experience of phase four.

The findings of this study further suggest that the major actors to the Plateau conflict include: media, ethnic groups, political actors, youth group, arm dealers, security agencies, and government agencies. The ability to manage these actors will enable the mitigation of the intractability of the crises. Additional lessons learnt from this study suggest that most groups have some feelings of victimisation claim as each group sees each other as the aggressor. The study reveals that the media was employed as a tool for promoting this narrative especially by the violent entrepreneurs who patronise arm-dealers to provide youth from different ethno-religious groups incentives to engage in violence. The inadequate effort of government agencies over time, to address the root causes, motivations, complexity and, adverse effect of the crises has eroded the trust of government's capacity and position on the crises. We conclude that, as highlighted in the literature of political violence (Bercovitch, 2003; Azar, 1990; Zartman, 2005; Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005), violent conflicts are intractable because of identity, human needs and, profiteering interests of various groups.

On the way forward, we argue for a multi-stakeholder approach to handling the complexity and intractability of the crises in Plateau State. We therefore, proffer a three-phase plan to addressing the intractability of the crises. This include short, medium- and long-term plans. The first phase is to have a committee of inquiry to collect a memorandum for all parties to the conflict and to sustain a genuine purpose and campaign to address



the underlining causes. The medium term requires the harvesting of all grievances and views of actors and setting in motion strategies to destroy the structures that motivate and elongate the conflict. At this stage the ideas of the actors need to be injected into the overarching strategy to addressing the crises. The long term strategy involves the changing of the narratives that promote violence this requires the deliberate attempt by Plateau State government to address the role of history and memory in the overall crises.

Notes

The table below describes all participants. As the identities of the participants remain anonymous, it is important to describe the participants to highlight their relevance to this research.

S/N	CODE	DISCRIPTION AND LOCATION	DATE
1	Participant 1	Community leader, Jos East LGA	May, 2022
2	Participant 2	Community leader, Jos North LGA	May, 2022
3	Participant 3	Community leader, Jos South LGA	May, 2022
4	Participant 4	Community leader, Riyom LGA	May, 2022
5	Participant 5	Community leader, Barkin Ladi LGA	June, 2022

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