

The Jos Peace Conference and the Indigene/Settler Question in Nigerian Politics

(Draft)

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Labels such as ‘settler’, ‘native’, ‘non-native’, ‘host community’, ‘foreigner’, ‘native foreigner’, ‘stranger element’, ‘squatter’, ‘non-squatter’, ‘immigrant’, ‘migrant’, ‘indigene’, ‘non-indigene’, *mbák*, *Gambari*, *Hausa-Fulani*, *nyamiri*, *nasara*, *ngwa*, *arna*, *kirdi*, and *baro* among many others are used daily in Nigeria to describe, stigmatise or stereotype the “other” as a category who “does not belong”.

Introduction

Nigeria is a very highly complex, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious polity, with a diversity of cultural groups, having some 395 ethnic groups. However, three quarters of these groups are from the Middle-Belt of Nigeria, thus making it a polyglot region, exhibiting almost unparalleled diversities in culture and social organisations. Fifty-four of these are from Plateau State, where *Bantu* and *Kwa* sub-families of the Benue-Congo and the *Chadic*-sub group of the Nilo-Saharan or Afro-asiatic family (to which Hausa belongs) meet.¹

Rather than nurture harmony and unity, these complex diversities tend to give birth to crises, such that conflicts have become commonplace in Nigeria’s fledging civil rule that it borders on the miraculous that the country has not plunged into civil war or returned to military rule.² The vicious cycle of violence continues to oscillate between various ethnic groups involving minority and dominant groups. At other times, the religious card is flashed, as is characteristic of Muslim/Christian conflicts throughout most of the north, which is usually about anything (politics, economic control and competition after scarce resources, ethnicity) aside from religion.

In fact in a recent survey, Ellsworth discovered that ethnicity and religious affiliation are the two highest ranked identity makers for a vast majority of Nigerians than other indices such as state, national, ECOWAS and African identity. Though the research results revealed that *northerners* (people in the defunct northern region) are more tenaciously inclined towards religious identification, and *southerners* (people in the defunct Western, Mid-Western and Eastern regions) were more likely to rank ethnicity first, ethnicity was discovered to be the second highest ranked identity country-wide after religion, with state and national identity coming third and fourth, respectively.³

It must be stated that this is currently exhibited in Nigeria, in the growing tendency for crisis to emerge between those who are perceived as so called “indigenes” and those who are regarded as “settlers” and are therefore considered “outsiders”. This presentation raises such pertinent questions as: Who or what makes for a “settler” and who or what constitutes an indigene? Which Nigerian is an indigene and which Nigerian is not? What factors make for indigeneship/indigeneity and which ones make for citizenship? When will a “settler” become a “native”? These questions are paused in terms of distinction

¹ Herskovits, 1982:8; James, 144; Crozier and Blench, 1992; Frajzyngier, 1991, 1993; Hoffman, 1976, Jungraithmayr and Ibrizmov, 1994; Newman, 1979, Plateau State of Nigeria Gazette 2004: 11.

² James, 144.

³ Ellsworth, 1999: 11-19, passim.

between “indigenes” and “settlers”, thus taking us back to the labels provided at the beginning of this paper. However, before we proceed with the examination of these concepts and how they became topics for discussion at the Jos Peace Conference, some basic information should be gleaned about the Jos Plateau and the crises that gave birth to the Peace Conference.

The Jos Plateau Ethno-religious Crises, September 2001 to 2004

Location of Jos

Jos town is situated on a pear-shaped plateau composed of undulating hills known as the Jos Plateau in Nigeria. This upland mass stretches for approximately 104 kilometres from north to south and 80 kilometres from east to west, covering an area of about 8,600 square kilometres or 860,000 hectares. Characterized by impressive ridges and isolated rocky hills separated by extensive plains, the Jos Plateau exhibits a variety of land forms possessing beautiful landscape which provide excellent picnic resorts and is attractive to lovers of nature. It enjoys a near temperate climate, averaging 22°C (75°F) daily, with an average humidity of 60% and average annual rainfall of 1,400 mm (56").⁴ It maintains an average height of 1,200 metres (4,000 ft) above sea level, and reaches its highest peak in the Shere Hills where it stands at 1,766 metres (5,829 ft).⁵ This gives it a generally cool temperature against the backdrop of enchanting scenic beauty and alluring cool weather, which make it a haven for Nigerians and foreigners alike. These factors altogether account for Jos having the largest concentration of Westerners in Nigeria outside Lagos according to the 1963 national population census figures.⁶ Situated almost at the geographical centre of Nigeria and about 288 kilometres from Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria, Jos is linked to the rest of the country by road, rail and air.

Concerning its people, the Jos Plateau is dotted by a cluster of hamlets and villages which lend colour and beauty to the landscape. These settlements together with the farm plots are, in many cases, demarcated by cactus hedges or trees. It was against the backdrop of the peaceful nature of the over fifty-four ethnic groups that the Nigerian Road Safety Commission gave the state the motto: “Home of Peace and Tourism”, and it has elsewhere been referred to as “Plateau: The Beautiful”. Jos is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria on account of the mass migration into the area during the tin mining boom at the turn of the 20th century. It attracted a large population of other Nigerians and foreign nationals.

The town of Jos, the Tin City was established in 1915 as a tin transportation camp and its early history was closely linked to the prosperity of the tin mining industry. According to the 1952 census figures, Christians formed 84.5 per cent of the population of Jos town, with Muslims making 12 percent and adherents of traditional religions the remaining 3.5 percent.⁷ Today, Plateau State enjoys a majority Christian population of about 95 per cent, while Jos town itself is overwhelmingly Christian. In 1967 it became the capital of the defunct Benue-Plateau State and was transformed into the capital of

⁴ Steed, 1991.

⁵ Plotnicov, 1967, 28; See also Danfulani and Fwatschak, 2002.

⁶ Plateau State of Nigeria Gazette, 2004:1.

⁷ Ekanem, 1963; cf. Yahaya and Ali, 1991, Udo, 1968, Daramola and Arowolo (eds.), 1982, Arikpo 1988, Suleiman, 1991, Dudley, 1968.

Plateau State in 1975, thus becoming an important administrative and commercial centre, thus there are people of different backgrounds living together in Jos. With a population of between 800,000 and 1,000,000, Jos remains one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria.⁸

The Jos Ethno-Religious Crises

Signals pointing towards the manifestation of contentious issues between Muslim settlers and Christian indigenes started emanating in the 1990s amongst residents. This culminated in 1994 into open clashes mainly between the Berom indigenes and Hausa/Fulani settlers over farmland and local chieftaincy titles. Jos metropolis, the capital of Plateau State registered a great deal of crises beginning on dark Friday 7th September to 14th 2001 and again on 2nd May 2002 in the Etobaba, located within Jos town, followed by numerous attacks by marauding Hausa-Fulani Muslim militias on citizens living on the countryside in the Northern Senatorial Districts of Plateau State. The scene of attacks on both sides switched to the Southern Senatorial District which eventually culminated with major crises that killed hundreds of citizens, first in Yelwa in February with the massacre of about a hundred Christians, 67 of them in COCIN Church Yelwa and later again reprisal killings in Yelwa with revenge killings by Christian who massacred between 650 and 700 Muslims in May 2004.⁹ The outcry by Muslims against the latter killings led to the declaration of a State of Emergency (SOE) on Plateau State by the President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Remote Causes

The crises on the Jos Plateau are first and foremost a struggle over land. Majority of Plateau State indigenes are Christians tied to the land as peasant farmers or workers in the civil service, while the mainly Muslim minorities are Hausa dry-season farmers and cattle raring Fulani, with the Igbo, Urhobo, Yoruba and Hausa dominating the business life of the metropolis. Some indigenes, particularly from the Southern Senatorial district are also cattle herders. The land thus remains an important emotive factor to a region that is predominantly inhabited by peasant farmers (frustrated over lack of fertilizers) and cattle herders, who usually are mutually conflict prone. Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) brought about the retirement and retrenchment of many public servants, semi or low educated-petty company workers and military personnel (most who actively participated in the civil war) occasioning their return to the farmlands thereby exerting great pressure on land resources.¹⁰ Thus:

Suddenly, land which used to be available to those who used or needed it became a prized possession. Both the host communities and settlers alike began to rationalise their inability to acquire and possess land to the presence of the other group, thereby undermining the imperative of their co-existence and the basis of consensus and

⁸ Plateau State of Nigeria Gazette, 2004:1; Plateau State, Nigeria's most endowed state:

<http://www.plateaustategov.org/history/>; Adapted and updated by Dan Inusa, University of Jos Nunet.

⁹ For details see Mwadkwon, 2001; Danfulani and Fwatshak, 2002; Bagudu, 2003:84 ff, 2004: 82 ff; Plateau Patriots, Volumes 1 & 2; Human Rights Watch, December 2001, May 2005 and Best and Von Kemedi, 2005, 29-37.

¹⁰ Onoja, 1996:10; James, 147.

confidence building. These factors probably account for the preponderance of land disputes as an index in the perennial communal conflict profile of the Middle-Belt.¹¹

Land is central to survival, hence conflict very often occur over access to pastoral and arable land. Differences in ethnic nationality and religion between Plateau ethnic groups and the Hausa-Fulani only serve to compound these economic problems. The collapse of the once thriving tin mining industry in the state and the arrival of petro-dollars gave birth to attendant dislocation and job losses. This unfortunately coincided with period of Shari'ah expansion in the northern states.

The second cause of the Jos Plateau crises is centred over 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 (mis)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. This coupled with the issue of ethnicity coalesce to cause Muslim Hausa-Fulani minority, who used to be in the centre of political activities to feel that they are losing control. 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 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 crises.

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. 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.

Indeed the source of tension in the Jos settler/indigene relationship also stems from the Hausa-Fulani claim over the ownership of Jos, the chieftaincy stool and other tenuous

¹¹ James, 147-148 ; it should be noted also that this occasioned a great deal of litigations in the courts over land ownership between ethnic, clan, and extended family members over land. It also occasioned the skirmishes between the Fier and Mupun, Fier and Mwaghavul and the Mwaghavul and Bokkos.

claims to political offices. This is what has pitted Muslim Hausa-Fulani against such predominant Christian indigenous ethnic groups as the Berom, Afizare and the Anaguta on one hand and other settlers like the Yoruba, Urhobo, and Igbo on the other.¹² Issues such as lopsided/partisan reporting of the crisis 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.

Immediate Causes

The immediate causes of the September 2001 ethno-religious crises in Jos are three, namely, struggle over political appointments, blockage of street for the purposes of praying, elsewhere referred to by this author as *street praying*,¹³ and the expansion of *Shari'ah* laws that introduced rather severe punishments for *hadd* crimes in twelve northern states of Nigeria.

The Jos April 12th 1994 conflicts between the Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Anaguta, Afizare (Izere) and Berom centred on the appointment of Alhaji Aminu Mato, a Hausa-Fulani as Jos North LG Chairman of the Caretaker Committee by the military. When Alhaji Muktar a Hausa-Fulani again became coordinator of the Federal Government initiated Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, tensions resume immediately between along the old lines of ethnic and religious divide. Thus, contestations over economic and political space constitute one of the immediate causes of conflicts in Jos in September 2001.¹⁴

Another cause of the crisis is *street praying*, that is the blocking of a major street for the purposes of religious worship or rituals. Some Muslim zealots boldly beat up Miss Rhoda Haruna Nyam, a young Christian lady ostensibly because she was walking on a major street, the only access to her home, while the street was 'closed' for the Juma'at prayers.¹⁵ According to Rhoda, on 7th September, 2001, 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. This free for all fight later spread to some parts of Jos town.¹⁶

The expansion of *Shari'ah* in twelve northern states forced a great deal of Christians to flee from the core north. Most of them sought for and found refuge in Jos, which they considered a safe haven. Likewise, a number of liberal Muslims fleeing from a more strict form of Islam sought refuge in Jos. However, the remnants of the followers of *Maitatsine*, a Muslim fundamentalist, whose followers caused mayhem across the northern Muslim states of Nigeria from 1980 to the 1990s have been living in the Angwan Rogo and Kona Shagari area of Jos for many years. These militant elements also wanted *Shari'ah* law imposed in Plateau State. Naturally, fleeing Christians felt they should not give an inch to Muslims in a "Christian state". So,

¹² Plateau Patriots, volume 1, p. 14.

¹³ Danfulani, 1998.

¹⁴ Gora, October 23, 2001:2-3

¹⁵ Plateau patriots, volume 1, p. 16 ; cf. Danfulani, 1998.

¹⁶ Nyam, 2001 :1-5 ; cf. Danfulani, 1998.

The September 7, 2001 crisis in Jos is commonly believed to be a spill out of the Shari'ah fervour [sic]. As the Shari'ah law was adopted in surrounding state in domino-fashion, religious passion became inflamed in Plateau State. The President's complacency in the face of the grievous infringement of Nigeria's secularity not only emboldened some Muslims to demonstrate defiance for constituted authorities elsewhere but encouraged them to nurse particularistic religious sentiments for the Shari'ah even in areas where they constituted a minority population of settlers.¹⁷

The ineptitude of government in dealing with the Zamfara declaration of State religion sent the wrong signals across the nation. Obasanjo's position was that being a political Shari'ah, given time it will fizzle out and disappear in thin air.

Judicial Commissions aimed at brokering peace

Following the spade of violent crises in Plateau State, government attempted to resolve the crises and broker peace between warring factions through a number of ten initiatives from 2001 and 2004. Government at the state and federal levels set-up the following peace initiatives and Judicial Commissions of Inquiry:

1. Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Clashes in Wise Local Government Area, headed by Justice Jummai Sankey, submitted in May, 2001.
2. Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crisis in the Langtang North Local Government area, headed by Justice Jummai Sankey, submitted in May 2001.
3. Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crisis in Shendam Local Government Area, headed by Justice Jummai Sankey, submitted May 2001.
4. Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the crisis in Quaan Paan Local Government Area, headed by Justice Jummai Sankey, submitted May 2001.
5. Justice Niki Tobi Judicial Commission of inquiry into the Jos civil disturbances of dark Friday 7th to 14th September, 2001, which submitted its report in September, 2002.
6. Hon. Justice C. Okpene, federal Judicial Commission of inquiry into communal conflicts in Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau and Taraba States, 2002.
7. Revd Dr. Pandang Yamsat High Powered Committee on peace and security in Plateau State submitted in 2002.
8. Private Peace Initiative on Southern Senatorial District of Plateau State headed by Alhaji Shehu Idris, Emir of Zazzau, 2002.
9. Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the civil disturbances in Shendam, Langtang North, Langtang South and Wase Local Government Areas, headed by Justice Felicia K. Dusu, submitted in June, 2003.
10. Presidential Peace Initiative Committee on Plateau State, headed by Alhaji Shehu Idris, Emir of Zazzau, submitted in May, 2004.

At the end, all these efforts failed because government both at the state and federal levels was not ready to arrest and charge culprits to court for sentencing. Moreover, the State Commissioner of Police, a Muslim from Zamfara State, who was implicated in the crises was never charged to court or punished in any way for his prominent role in the crises. Finally, none of the reports and recommendations submitted by any of these panels that

¹⁷ Plateau Patriots, Volume 1, 13.

carried out excellent jobs was published or gazetted in a white paper for implementation. Thus the situation in Plateau State was left to gradually deteriorate until the revenge killings of Muslims by Christians in Yelwa caused the president to declare a *State of Emergency* (SOE) on Plateau State for six months from Tuesday 18th, 2004. However, his action was condemned by a number of constitutional lawyers and prominent Nigerians because he dissolved the democratic structures that were in place by suspending the governor, deputy governor and the Plateau State House of Assembly and appointed a retired military general as sole administrator to govern the state. The majority of the citizens of Plateau State vehemently rejected the SOE, viewing it as the extension of Hausa-Fulani hegemony on them, since they concluded that the president acted under the influence of the sultanate.

The Position of the 1999 Constitution on the Indigene/Settler Question

The settler problem is not peculiar or unique to Plateau State. It has caused similar problems in Modakeke/Ife, Sabongari/Kano, Sabo/Ibadan, Zango/Kataf, Urhobo/Itsekiri, Jukun/Tiv, Kuteb/Jukun-Chamba and Hausa/Shagamu. The dominant Christian population in Plateau State is saying that until the problem is given a constitutional solution, “the hospitality of the people of the state should not be abused by settlers who make outrageous and bogus claims for rights and privileges which do not exist anywhere else in the Federation”.¹⁸

The crisis in Plateau State has renewed the debate on the use of the terms “settlers” and “indigenes” in the political lexicon of Nigeria. From the President’s speech of May 18th, 2004, one is left with the erroneous impression that these terms, which are household terms in Nigeria, were invented or coined in Plateau State. The issue of “indigeneity” is a constitutional one. Section 147 of the 1999 Constitution has this to say among other provisions governing the appointment of Ministers: “Provided that in giving effect to the provisions aforesaid, the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such a State”. Thus the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria recognises that there are indigenes/settlers in Nigeria.¹⁹

This conflicts with its notion of citizens. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 25.1(a) clearly defined citizenship in Nigeria as “every person born in Nigeria on or before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grand parents belongs or belonged to any community indigenous to Nigeria”. It is clear that in order to allay the fears exhibited by minority ethnic groups on the eve of independence, the constitution retained both the concept of indigeneship and Federal Character to protect minority rights.²⁰ It is aimed at redistributing opportunities and limiting the tendency and/or temptation of mega ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo (the so called WAZOBIA parlance) to dominate and monopolise national benefits that some of them have come to regard as a matter of right. Many governments regard the federation as the exclusive balance of interests of these three major ethnic groups. However, the imperative of achieving national unity, social equity and restitution demands that all the constituents of the federation be involved in the

¹⁸ Plateau Patriots, volume 1, p. 17

¹⁹ Plateau Patriots, volume 2, p. 20.

²⁰ Willink’s Commission Report, 1958.

affairs of the nation, especially the sharing of power. This is especially so when the ethnic minorities on a scale far outweigh the majority groups in total population.²¹

It is for this reason that the writers of the 1979 Constitution entrenched the concept of Federal Character in the 1979 Constitution, which was also repeated in the 1999 Constitution. This idea was borrowed from the American Constitution, which is based on the principle of *Affirmative Action*, meant to deliberately provide opportunities to disadvantaged groups and act as an instrument of engineering social equity.²² The Federal Character of Nigeria refers to distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation. Section 14(3) of the Constitution provides that:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty and thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or nay of its agencies.

The constitution in Section 14(4) lays down similar conditions for the states and the LGs, recognising the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Nigeria, enjoining decision makers to “recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority” to ensure proportionate equitable representation of all persons in government. At the Federal level, therefore, factors to be considered are usually a person’s state of origin, ethnic group and religious affiliation. At the LG level, factors include political constituency, ethnicity and religion. This is how the term “indigene” entered the constitution in respect of the appointment of Ministers as reflected above.

It is in pursuant of these objectives that Decree 34 of 1999 put a Federal Character Commission in place. This further elaborated on the scope of the Federal Character principle, expanding beyond what it meant under the 1979 constitution. Section 4(1) (a) empowers the Federal Character Commission:

To work out an equitable formula...for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the civil and the public service of the Federation and of the states, armed forces, the Nigeria Police and other security agencies, bodies of corporate owned by the Federal or State Government and Extra Ministerial Department and Parastatals of the Federation and States.

The principle of representation extends to bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government and the private sector. The decree also includes the distribution of socio-economic services, amenities and infrastructural facilities. Section 4(1) (d) (ii) provides that the Commission is to work out modalities and schemes for “Redressing imbalances and reducing the fear of relative deprivation and marginalization in the Nigerian system of Federalism as it obtains in the public and private sector”. On account of the importance of the significance of the mandate of the Federal Character Commission, Schedule 3, Part 1, Paragraph C of the 1999 Constitution reproduces these

²¹ Plateau Patriots, volume 2, p. 22.

²² Plateau Patriots, volume 2, p. 22-23.

provisions. The Hausa-Fulani, who were left far behind in the area of acquiring Western education, have benefited immensely from this national policy.

The Plateau Peace Conference and the Indigene/Settler Question

Upon appointment, the new Sole Administrator of Plateau State paid visits to trouble spots and all LGs in the state, conducting inter-face discussions with various ethnic, religious and interest groups. He constituted three Peace Committees charged with the responsibility of restoring peace in specific trouble areas of the state and conducted the Plateau Peace Conference in 2004 under a twelve member Steering Committee headed by Ngo Elizabeth Pam.

The Plateau Peace Conference was premised on the philosophy of the increasing desire of Plateau people to have peace and live in peace with each other, as evident from the various interface sessions held before the conference. It was further hinged on the fact that Plateau people possess the capacity to resolve their problems without recourse to any other external sources of mediation.

Based on this philosophy, the conference was charged with the following mandate: 1. To provide opportunity for each and every ethnic nationality in the State (no matter its numerical strength), to bring to light grievances and disagreements within itself, with its neighbours or with the system. 2. To make it possible for other Nigerian ethnic nationalities resident in the state as well as relevant professional bodies and interest groups to have the opportunity, as stake holders, to contribute to the peace process. 3. To create a forum that will bring together people of Plateau State along with other stake holders to a round table discussion where contending issues will be openly presented and debated. 4. To attempt to find lasting solutions to the lingering problems that have precipitated the long running crises in the state. 5. To establish by consensus the yardstick for co-existence between the various ethnic and religious groups in the state that will be a point of reference for future generations in the state and the nation at large.

The methodology adopted by the Plateau Peace Conference is as follows: first, reports of all previous judicial and administrative commissions of inquiry into the various disturbances but were never published were collated. Second, fresh memoranda were received from communities, interest groups, LGs and Senatorial Zones. Thirdly, all memoranda/documents received/collated were analysed and codified, thus bringing out the remote and immediate causes of the crises in various parts of Plateau State. There were in all, thirteen major causes of the crises in Plateau State, which the Peace Report grouped into themes with sub-themes under each. Each member of the committee was given a copy of each of the reports/documents mentioned above which then served as a working document for participants at the Plateau State Peace Conference.

These thirteen causes are as follows: land use/ownership; indigeneship, citizenship, settlers and syndrome; traditional matters, social, economic, religious, and political factors, security matters; farmer/grazer conflict, role of the media, youth and women issues, and the non-release of previous reports of Commission/Panels, and Government White paper.

Membership of the Peace Conference was drawn from each ethnic nationality in the state which was represented by two members. Other interest groups and Nigerian ethnic groups resident in the state were permitted to send one representative each. In all, there were one hundred and forty-three (143) participants at the Peace Conference. The

conference was divided into five syndicate groups, with each presenting and discussing one of the thirteen themes per day while a plenary session was held on alternate days for the groups to come together to present and discuss the results of their findings. This was the format used until all the issues identified as the factors responsible for the Plateau State crises were all exhaustively discussed.²³

Participants from particular areas were encouraged to meet and dialogue amongst themselves. Participants were also encouraged to return to their respective communities and interest groups mid-way into the conference to brief them on the progress they had so far made and to receive feed back from them. LG Chairpersons were also instructed in a meeting to help in facilitating this feed back mechanism and briefing. Some feuding factions were settled on the floor of the conference, for example, the Fulani and Irigwe (Miango) community of Bassa LG solved their problems on the floor of the Peace Conference. The Peace Committee further directed that medical personnel should accompany persons distributing relief materials.²⁴

The Steering Committee members of the Peace Conference visited some crisis flash points, such as Wase, Kadarko, Shendam and Yelwa areas. Questionnaires were administered to delegates for their assessment of various aspects of the Peace Conference to enable the Steering Committee carry out a general assessment of the conference. The Peace Conference allowed the State College of Education Gindiri to mount an exhibition in the premises of the conference with pictorial messages of peace, while the Peace Conference itself concluded with a two-day sensitisation workshop on conflict resolution organised in collaboration with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution and the UNDP. The Peace Conference held meetings with religious leaders, traditional rulers and chairpersons of LGs, where they were intimated concerning the issues raised and discussed at the Peace Conference. They were also enjoined to return and work assiduously for the propagation of the ideals of peace among their communities.²⁵

The Plateau Peace Conference noted that Plateau State is an ethnically diversified state with fifty-four ethnic groups represented in the state at the Peace Conference. It reasoned that if Plateau State were truly a crisis state, such diversity would constitute a basis for conflict which would have wiped out communities from the state a long time ago. It however rightly identified the parties to the Plateau conflict as two: namely, the Hausa, and then later, the Fulani on the one hand and some other indigenous ethnic nationalities in Plateau State.²⁶

However, at a point in the crises, religion was introduced into the conflict. At the point the religion card came in, the demarcation line changed, and it became religious, following the dividing lines between Christians and Muslims.²⁷ But soon after, masquerades were introduced further down the line, when the Taroh of Langtang used unleashed and launched the Orim masquerade cult to chase all Hausa-Fulani Muslims out

²³ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 9.

²⁴ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 10.

²⁵ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 10-11.

²⁶ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 11; During the conference, the Fulani delegates insisted that there is a difference between Hausa and Fulani, since they represent different cultures and languages. It was also expedient that these two groups be understood as different because many have attacked the Fulani believing they were attacking Hausa, while some Fulani decried being deceived by the Hausa into fighting a Hausa cause.

²⁷ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 11.

of Taroh land. At this point, the ethnic card came back again, backed by some almost extinct but resurrected traditional religious cult beliefs and praxis. The Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Hausa, Fulani and communities of the South-South, among others were present at the Plateau Peace Conference

Defining Indigeneship and the Land Question

The conference discussed the issue of land use and ownership with specific reference to the ownership of settlements in key flash points such as Jos, Yelwa-Shendam, Yamini, Saya, Wase, Kadarko, and Bakin Ciyawa among others.²⁸ The Plateau Peace Conference defined indigenes as: “People who are the first to have settled permanently in a particular area and who are considered traditional natives”.²⁹ It sampled a number of opinions as to what should constitute an “indigene” and the following harmonised definition emerged: “Indigeneship should be peculiar to a people who are the first to have settled permanently in a particular area and who are often considered as ‘natives’. Such people have rights to their lands, traditions and culture”.³⁰

The conference cited examples of the Australian Aborigines and the American Red Indians to buttress their arguments. It endorsed the well articulated definition given by the Fibresima Commission of Inquiry Report in respect of who is an indigene of Jos to support their position as follows:

An Indigene of Jos is one whose ancestors were natives of Jos, beyond living memory. This does not include any person who may not remember from where his father or grand father left his native home for Jos as a fixed home, domiciled there as of choice for life; or who is ignorant about from where his family moved to Jos permanently in quest of better living or in the process of his business...In the light of the above consideration or careful thought, we concede to the claim of the Afisare, Anaguta and Berom tribes, and to declare that they are ‘indigenes’ of Jos. But as to the Hausa-Fulani people’s assumption, we make bold, on the evidence at our disposal, to advice them that they can qualify only as ‘citizens’ of Jos....³¹

However, this definition does not solve the problem, because:

While the indigenes seek exclusive control of existing social and political rights at the expense of the latter, settlers seek to resist their exclusion. The consequence is that millions of Nigerians who live outside the socio-political space within which they can affirm their indigeneity suffer exclusion and are exposed to all kinds of humiliation. While some have endured deprivations in passivity, others have contested their exclusion, leading to a spate of communal conflicts. In many instances, this has assumed the dimension of violent conflicts with dire consequence for development, national unity and the resolution of the National Question.³²

²⁸ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 23.

²⁹ Plateau Peace Conference, 30.

³⁰ Plateau Peace Conference, 30.

³¹ Plateau Peace Conference, 30-31; Fibresima Commission Inquiry Report, 1994: 25, Item 3.1.4.

³² Egwu, 2005: 2.

Furthermore, concerning Jos town, delegates referred to many documents at their disposal and confirmed the fact that pre-colonial history of Jos is synonymous with only three indigenous ethnic groups which share boundary with each other. These are the Afisare (Izere or Jarawa), Anaguta (Naraguta) and Berom. It confirmed that these ethnic groups in Plateau State have lived in peace with other ethnic groups that have settled among them. The Conference's attention was also drawn to the minutes of an interactive session among the various communities of Jos North LG held at Government House, Jos on 25th June, 2004, in which the Hausa-Fulani made it clear that they lay no claims to the ownership of Jos and the traditional stool of the Gbong Gwom Chief of Jos.³³

At the state level, delegates endorsed the *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the Jos Riots of 1994*, chaired by Hon. Justice Fiberesima (retired) and the *Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Civil Disturbances in Jos and Environs of 2002*, chaired by Hon. Justice Niki Tobi who all made pronouncements on the ownership of Jos. The Plateau State Government was advised by the Peace Conference to set up a special committee to facilitate proper understanding among the Afizare, Anaguta and Berom communities over their ancestral claim of Jos Township and the demarcation of boundaries where necessary. It finally advised that all ethnic groups in the state should be accommodating while exercising their constitutional rights.³⁴

Concerning the contest between Goemai and Jarawa/Hausa-Fulani over Yelwa, the Peace Conference referred to historical evidence which confirmed that Yelwa is indisputably Goemai land, known and called in the Goemai language as Nshar. It made reference to colonial documents to buttress its point.³⁵ Likewise Yamini, which was originally known as Japnu in Goemai language was confirmed part of Goemai land. It historically reverted to the Jarawa, when the *ganuwa* wall of Yelwa was destroyed in 1912, and the leader of the Jarawa stock moved to settle in Japnu. However, when he was asked by the then Long Goemai (the sacred Chief of the Goemai of Shendam) if he wished to resettle somewhere else, he expressed his satisfaction with his new settlement in the Hausa language by saying, *yayimani* (meaning, I am satisfied with it), thus the name Yamini. The Peace Conference directed that the original names of Nshar for Yelwa and Japnu for Yamini should be restored to reflect the culture and tradition of the Goemai people.³⁶ The Hausa do not even feature at all in the ownership of Japnu (Yamini).

Claim of ownership of Wase by the Taroh and Jukun/Hausa-Fulani was also examined. The Conference noted that though Wase township is under a Fulani dynasty, it was established by way of conquest of the Taroh by the Fulani who made it a sub-emirate during the Jihad of Uthman bin Fudi. But, there is a great danger, for instance, in saying that Wase "is under a Fulani dynasty established by way of conquest" which means by implication that Wase can/should be re-conquered by the Taroh who are the initial owners of the land. Thus it would seem that the Plateau Peace Conference did not resolve the Wase issue at all, rather, it unearth more potent embers that can be fanned by certain mischievous wind into yet another round of crises in the future. However, according to

³³ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 23.

³⁴ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 24.

³⁵ Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, volume iv, The Highland Chieftaincies (Plateau Province), 1932, by C.G. Ames, pp. 198-179, and the Gazetteers of the Northern Province of Nigeria, volume ii, The Eastern Kingdoms, pp. 44-45, cf. Plateau Peace Conference Report, 25.

³⁶ Plateau Peace Conference Report, 26.

records before it, the Conference noted that it is explicitly clear that the Taroh and the Jukun are the indigenes of Wase LG. The Conference made reference to the Justice Felicia Dusu *Judicial Commission of Inquiry Report of June 2003*, which affirms the indigeneship status of the Taroh and Jukun.³⁷

This was the general trend and method used in handling clashes over ownership of land and communal settlements by more recent migrants into Plateau State, which are otherwise referred to in Nigeria as “settlers”. The Plateau Peace Conference noted that certain individuals and groups distort history concerning land ownership for selfish purpose and in order to cause confusion. It resolves at the community level that: 1. Elders in the various communities should tell the truth about land ownership to younger generations while the youths should not change those truths and facts handed down to them. 2. The names of places which have been changed should be reverted to their original names, e.g. from Zomo to Dafoen (Mikang LG), Takumbru to Swahaas (in Namu Chiefdom of Qua’an Pan LG), etc. 3. People should desist from distorting historical facts concerning people and places. 4. Historians and individuals should only record the truth on matters relating to land ownership. 5. Husbands should write wills in order to avoid cases of children and wives being denied land upon their demise. 6. At the state level, government should set up a committee to look into areas where there are recurring complaints. The Conference suggested that the Federal Government should consider its recommendations on the status of an indigene with defined privileges towards solving some of intractable lingering problems associated with it throughout the nation.³⁸

Beyond the Peace Conference: Citizenship, Ethnicity and the Indigene/Settler Question

The Plateau Peace Conference at the end failed to properly address the settler/indigene question, perhaps because it is more of a national than a state issue. The best document on this problematic so far was the paper given by President Olusegun Obasanjo himself as founder/president of the Africa Leadership Forum (ALF) whose offices are quartered on his Ota-Sango farm. In a seminar, which the ALF’s Conflict Prevention and Management Centre held in Jos from 15 to 17 December, 1993, on the theme “The Settler Question in Nigeria: The Case of Jos Plateau” General Obasanjo noted in his opening speech:

The concept of settler or non-native syndrome has of recent hardened into a theory of ethnic exclusiveness and moulded and propagated to foist a pejorative meaning to advance economic and political control among competing elite groups for interests during democratic regimes.³⁹

None of the other groups, for example, the Urhobo who were the first ethnic migrants to Jos,⁴⁰ the Igbo, and Yoruba, among many others living on the Jos Plateau before, during and after the tin mining boom lay any claims that the Hausa-Fulani are making over Jos,

³⁷ Plateau Peace Conference, 35.

³⁸ Plateau Peace Conference, 29.

³⁹ Plateau Patriots volume 1, p. 13-14.

⁴⁰ See Fruend, 1981.

thus these other groups are living in peace with various indigenous groups in Plateau State. Mutual respect amongst all groups will serve as one of the solutions to the crisis. Participants at the ALF:

Citing the Hausa-Fulani settlers (in Jos) for example...condemned the unwillingness of some groups of settlers [Hausa-Fulani] to integrate into their host society and their quest for domination of these societies for political and economic interests.⁴¹

Citizenship and Flexible Identity

The indigene/settler question is best solved if the citizenship of all Nigerians is accepted. Citizenship refers to rights ascribable and attributable to the individual as a member of a political community. It applies to and endows a person with full political and civil rights within the context of the modern state.⁴² In the history of political community, the question concerning who are “settlers” and who are “indigenes” exhibits the fact that the whole argument is within the realm of citizenship; and citizenship is a domain of exclusion and permanent contestation. Citizenship is often characterized by attempts by those in power, who skew and manipulate it to exclude others on the basis of certain construction of political identities, such as gender, class, religion, and/or ethnicity. “Indigenes” seek the exclusion of those described as “settlers”, while those excluded on the ground of “settlement” seek to resist their exclusion on grounds of long residency and their membership or citizenship of the Nigerian State.⁴³

In the Nigerian context, and as exemplified by the findings of Ellsworth, ethnic, religious and regional identities appear to be the dominant basis for framing political identity, and therefore in determining right bearers.⁴⁴ Thus the system of ethnic citizenship and religious nationalism for the underlying bases for numerous ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The current resurgence of ethnic and religious nationalisms should be sought for in the failure of emergent nation-states to work out defined principles of regulating the distribution of social advantages. In many places, this has allowed ethnic nationalisms to emerge as the major vehicle for initiating change (globalisation), even as ethnic nationalists prowl the scene drunk with an over dose of ethnic nostalgia. This has resulted in national integration eluding Nigeria and giving way to growing ethnicity.

When ethnic heterogeneity militates against minority interests, the tendency has been for tiny acephalous communities to coalesce in search of some form of group identity and group expression. Consequently, in the welter of contemporary forms of group expression and group conflict, there has been a pronounced and sudden increase in tendencies by people in many countries and in many circumstances to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness and identity and on the new rights to derive from their group character.⁴⁵

Crucial to the concept of citizenship is the notion of reciprocity of rights, obligations between state and citizens, and some degree of participation, since it is also about

⁴¹ Plateau Patriots, volume 1, p. 14.

⁴² Egwu, 2005: 3, Whitaker 1964; Ofoegbu and Nwosu, 1986.

⁴³ Egwu, 2005: 2, 12.

⁴⁴ Ellsworth, 1999: 11-19, passim.

⁴⁵ Glazer and Moynihan, 1925:2-3; James, 2001? 145.

membership of a political community.⁴⁶ All this makes citizenship the mother of all political rights and a domain of all contestations. In much of Africa, as a result of the history of state formation, the question of group identity and rights have come to be prized above individual rights in the construction of citizenship rights. Thus ethnic, sub-ethnic, religious, communal and regional, forms of identity appear to be dominant in framing discourse of citizenship rights, as has been the case in Nigeria.⁴⁷

Ethnicity and related cleavages justify the exclusive basis for the construction of political identity and citizenship. Attachment to one's community, and, through it, to the soil of the ancestors or the homeland, is a fundamental dimension of citizenship.⁴⁸ This has given birth to the popular "sons/daughters of the soil" syndrome or *yetul*—"remember home" clubs for "daughters married" outside the home or ethnic land.⁴⁹ Seen in the dichotomy between "indigenes" and "settlers", exclusive claims to the land and its political, economic, social and religious resources by natives is justified, but very often at the expense of those perceived as "settlers".

Pre-colonial Africa was characterized by flexibility of identity, which made it possible for migrants to be completely absorbed into their host communities without participatory barriers in social, civil, political and religious life as long as they exhibited enthusiastically strong sense of identification and integration into the host communities.⁵⁰ What obtains in Nigeria is thus an ethnicised concept of citizenship.⁵¹

In analyzing the pathologies of citizenship in Nigeria, Momoh opines that "to be accepted as an indigene one is expected to be a native; and to be accepted as a citizen, one is expected to be an indigene".⁵² This system of citizenship has been legitimized in the successive constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, from the 1979 constitution, which was the first attempt to codify this public law.⁵³ Three issues make ethnicity problematic in relation to discourse on identity and citizenship:

First, ethnicity is not a fixed form of identity, but it is subject to frequent reconstruction and redefinition. Boundary breaking and reconstruction are enduring qualities of ethnic identity. The problematic is that ethnic identity is quite recent phenomena in Nigeria and therefore, is in constant need of redefinition.⁵⁴ Much of pre-colonial Africa was characterised by flexibility of identities and the construction of civic realm under guarded by moral ethnicity. This was the case with foreign Christian missionaries, for example, Elizabeth Webster, who became *Nakam* the woman teacher, Christiana Cheal, *Nakris* the short form of her name, Mr Braodbent who became known to the locals as *Mallam Kofa* "Mr Door", all missionaries of the Sudan United Mission (SUM) on the Jos Plateau.

Among the Mupun, there was the concept of *La wal ndan nin*, "the child who cries after his/her mother", denoting a child who follows his/her mother into a new marriage

⁴⁶ Egwu, 2005: 3; Held 1989:198.

⁴⁷ Egwu, 2005:5; cf. Castell, 1997.

⁴⁸ Egwu, 2005: 6; Ntalaja, 2003.

⁴⁹ A club formed by Mupun Daughters married outside Mupun land for the development of Mupun chiefdom. *Yetul* means, "remember home", that is, the land of birth and of the ancestors.

⁵⁰ Egwu, 2005:6; Mustapha, 1998.

⁵¹ Mamdani, 2001:1.

⁵² Momoh, 2001:1.

⁵³ Egwu, 2005:6.

⁵⁴ Egwu, 2001:6-7; Salamone, 1993.

and is welcomed and brought up as a *bona fide* member of that family. It was a taboo for any person to declare such as person *jiji*, which is, rejected from the family. The breach of this taboo carried heavy fines. There was also the *kin kaa dyar* concept, “the uncle whose granary I can climb”, again referring to the role of the mother’s brother who sometimes takes in his nephew as a new member of his family.⁵⁵ In the early part of the 20th century, *Dikam Bakari* of Jing, even though an ardent Muslim from Kano had to accept Mupun traditional culture in *lukun* a shrine before he was accepted by the Mupun. Likewise the Hausa Community at Chika/Amper that came from Lere near Zaria had to integrate with the Ngas society, recognising the Ngas as protectors through *amana* a covenant before they were fully accepted. However, colonialism brought a halt to this initial process of flexible indigeneity and identity.⁵⁶ A person in traditional society by the very definition of being a person must of necessity be capable of integrating. A person who is not integrated, does not integrate or cannot be integrated is at best sick or must be regarded a dangerous enemy. Witches and sorcerers, though stigmatised in some African societies possessed recognized modes and patterns of integration in society.

The colonization process of the Jihad started by Uthman bin Fudi from 1804 was continued fully, on a larger and more organized scale first under the British and then later by the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, using the full machinery of government and hiding behind the colonial policies of Indirect Rule and non-interference. Hausa-Fulani cultural and religious colonialism was marshalled, packaged and propagated in the north in terms of *hausanisation*, Islamic propaganda and cultural imperialism. Hausa became the vernacular of the north, while Hausa-Fulani regalia became the acceptable norm. Since the acceptance of Islam then was usually accompanied by loss of cultural, social, political, linguistic and religious institutions and structures of minority host communities, it must be accepted that the Hausa-Fulani cannot integrate, rather, the host/indigene community must take the initiative to integrate. It is for this reason that while the Hausa-Fulani consider other groups to have *yare* vernacular, Hausa is considered *apriori* the language. Inability of Hausa-Fulani to integrate in outside Hausa land should be viewed from this perspective.

Second, there is the state of unequal ethnic relations defined in terms of access to state power and resources. This is to be understood as the:

Consequences of not merely ethnic plurality, but tentatively put, the state of ethnic relations characterized by intense unequal competition for resources of the state, the most sought after being the appropriation of state power, particularly, its coercive and resource allocating elements.⁵⁷

With regards to power relations and control, of course the mega ethnic groups—Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo are highly advantaged and privileged.

Third, there is the impact of prolonged military (mis)rule and the accompanying over centralization of power and resources, devoid of any democratic framework of negotiation, compromise and accommodation. The net result is the emergence of a multiple system of citizenship, which has been trenchantly criticized as the basis for

⁵⁵ See Danfulani, 2003.

⁵⁶ Agree with Egwu, 2005:9.

⁵⁷ Ifidon, 1996:100, Egwu, 2003:7.

negating the central political objective of nation building and sharpening the national question.⁵⁸ This gave birth to the Hausa-Fulani in Plateau state to view themselves as the major players in control of political power. However, party democracy has emasculated and made nonsense of former power sharing arrangements that were not based on democracy, equity, justice and fair play, but were allotted by fiat, patronship and nepotism.

Demise of Ethnic Cleavages in Sight?

Attempts at establishing native/indigene status has in some areas given birth to intense production and/or reproduction of ethnic/group histories (of migration/settlement patterns) in order to prove exclusive claims and refute the claims of rivals. In Jos, appeal has been made to oral sources in order to bolster claims over the town. The natives have the Jos Gwosh myth, which refers to British mis-pronouncement of Gwosh giving birth to Jos. The Hausa-Fulani myth points to their use of the Arabic term *majus*, pagans, which eventually became Jos. The Christian myth talks remotely of an obscure missionary who when in trouble in the area shouted out for help by saying, “Jesus our Saviour”, JOS. The various Commissions of Enquiries also created their own distinct myths of legitimisation too. Thus so many myths of legitimisation are evolved in the creation and recreation of history. Coupled with this is the habit of copiously quoting colonial sources towards affirming exclusive claims and legitimacy, which are indeed reflections of colonial Royal West African Frontier Force soldiers, anthropologists and administrators, as exhibited by some of the sources used by the Plateau Peace Conference. Some Hausa-Fulani lay claim to all lands to south of Hausa land, based on the *Hausa-Bakwai* and *Banza-Bakwai* myth, arguing that the whole land mass initially belonged to Hausas.

Definition of the relevant other is not usually anchored on any proven history of migration and settlement, suggesting that various nuances and possibilities are involved in the construction of political identities. For instance, power relations at local levels may determine labelling of groups as “natives” and “settlers”. For example, the Tiv and are considered “settlers” by others, such as the Kambari, Alago and Jukun in Nasarawa South Senatorial district of Nassarawa State. Yet the Kambari who are of Kanuri extraction and who control the local power structure in Lafia emirate, and who seek the exclusion of the Tiv from participation in social and political life of the area are themselves migrants who arrive the area in the course of the 19th century. This is a classic example of a group of “settler” status defining and stigmatising others as “settlers” on account of existing power structures and domination.⁵⁹ For the Kambari of Lafia, the fear of the Tiv prolific and highly mobile population is indeed the beginning of political wisdom

Native/settler distinction negates contemporary patterns of integration and the central political objective of promoting unity and integration in Nigeria.⁶⁰ James aptly described the integration question as “delayed integration”.⁶¹ What obtains in Nigeria is a layered system of citizenship, differentiating access of different groups to rights and privileges. Those who belong to the indigenous communities of a state are most privileged. Those citizens who are indigenes of other states are less favoured. Jobs for the junior cadre, that

⁵⁸ Egwu, 2001:7; Nnoli, 1989; Bach, 1989

⁵⁹ Egwu, 2005:10-11.

⁶⁰ Egwu, 2005:11.

⁶¹ James, 144-169.

is, from Grade level 01 to 06 in all LG, state and federal institutions are reserved for indigenes. The least favoured and endangered are those citizens who are unable to prove that they belong to a community indigenous to any state in Nigeria.⁶² The Hausa-Fulani in Jos consider themselves under such a category.

History in most cases does not easily delineate the dividing line between indigenes and settlers and where it does so clearly it may imply the total exclusion of perceived settlers from access to citizenship rights since indigeneity then becomes a precondition for access to rights conferred and guaranteed by the Constitution. What are the reasons for this development?

Geographical compactness of ethnic settlements in the Middle-Belt: tiny minority groups are clustered in spots—Tiv Gboko, Jukun Wukari, Kuteb Takum, Anaguta Jos, Afisare Fobur-Tina Junction axis, Berom, Bukuru-Du axis, Goemai-Shendam, and Ngas Pankshin, among many such other compact settlements.⁶³

Shift in settlement patterns in this region, from hill tops, nucleated hill-side, nucleated foot-hills and nucleated *kurmi* forests settlements to the more dispersed, sometimes linear, nucleated and dispersed patterns long major roads and rail networks. Shifts in demographic patterns in favour of the Middle-Belt given impetus to the scale, intensity and momentum of ethnic/communal conflicts. The population distributions and population density of these areas changed dramatically because of the growing importance of the Abuja-Kaduna, Abuja-Jos-Bauchi, Abuja-Ajaokuta, Abuja-Lafia-Makurdi core areas. Consequently, Middle-Belt is witnessing massive population migration from northern Nigeria due to the ecological changes taking place in the Sahel Savannah and the attraction of the increasing commercial growth and industrialisation around the above core economic centres. Desertification, drought and drought induced immigrant communities from the further north have greatly increased the pressure on land allocation, distribution and appropriation.⁶⁴

Additionally, the generally all year round cool weather of Plateau State magnetises “others” or “settlers” the last major pull being stimulated by the expansion of Shari’ah in twelve core Muslim states of the north—some Christians from the Middle-Belt decided to return home, followed by some Southern Christians, added to this, some liberal Muslims—most popular choice was Jos. Also, there appears to be a massive out migration from Southern Nigeria as a result of diminishing farmlands, threats of widespread gully erosion, oil spillage, and limited trade expansion opportunities back home.⁶⁵

The historical antecedent of associating the settler communities with commercial activities and centres such as Kafanchan, Jos, Keffi, Lafiya, Suleja, Minna, makes them relatively wealthier than their host communities and counterparts. This apparent prosperity of settler-elements exposes them to the control of the lucrative sectors of the economy—confers on them economic strength and power. This economic advantage has its corollary in the political power advantage both of which consign the host community

⁶² Egwu, 2005:11

⁶³ Onoja, 1996:10; James, 146.

⁶⁴ James, 145.

⁶⁵ James, 147

to an inferior economic and political power status, a situation that is vehemently resented and resisted as evinced by the history of conflicts in the region.⁶⁶

Religion in Nigeria has provided a tangible set of common identifications—language, dress, names, music, food, marriages, burial, etc. religion has become a powerful tool for claiming special place, recognition and advantage in the competition for values in society to be politically realised. Settler communities thus cling to the religion of the places of their origin, thus conferring on itself a religious identity that is very distant from that of its host community—one of the factors opposed to and mitigating against social interaction and integration. Thus in Nigeria, “a form of consciously willed oppositional identity preserving Islam associated with the settler-community currently matched by a comparable form of identity—preserving Christianity associated with the community, is coagulating and colliding in the intermittent outburst of religious violence as evinced by the Muslim versus Christians conflicts...”⁶⁷

Conflict erupted over issues involving values and power in public and civil life—the perennial problem of a delayed institutional dispersion into the political power structure because of superior/inferior relationship has been a constant source of friction. Frictions have occurred over yearning for greater degree of political, social justice, equal political participation in policy and decision making, personal equalities for members and the obliteration of the discrepancies that exist between individuals and groups, relative share of resources, welfare, power, influence, and interpersonal values.⁶⁸

Geographic compactness of ethnic settlements in major urban areas in Hausa land—stranger quarters, Sabon Gari, in Zaria, Sokoto, Katsina, the Shagamus, Auchis, Hausa Quarters, Ogbe Hausa, Sabos in Yorubaland and Igboland, compact ethnic settlements throughout Yoruba—Ijebu, Ekiti, Remo, Abeokuta, Ogbomoshos, Akure, Igbo—Awka, Owerri, Nnewi, Onitsha, Aba, Umuahia, Abakaliki, Nsukka, Hausa—Kano, Zaria, Sokoto, Katsina, Daura, Bauchi, influenced the emergence of similar compact ethnic settlements in the Middle-Belt region—Gboko, Oturkpo, Wukari, Idah, Bida, Keana, Okene, Nassarawa Eggon, Kagoro, Manchok, Kwoi, Zonkwa, Shendam, Pankshin, Takum, etc.⁶⁹ These compact ethnic settlements patterns have essentially nurtured , preserved and nourished ethnic based cultures. These compact ethnic settlements have only provided both major and minor ethnic communities with a basis for ethnic and religious consolidation.

The settler-host community dichotomy concept has been drummed and trumpeted in Nigeria with some engaging candour. Implicit in the quiet ferocity of this recondite controversy is the resilience, persistence and salience of ethnic-based forms of identification and social conflicts as opposed to class based forms of social identification and conflicts. The numerical preponderance of these ethnic-based forms of social identification and conflicts remains one of the absurd complexities of the Nigerian experiment.⁷⁰

The problem of settler-host community dichotomy is inextricably interwoven with the problem of national integration—question of instinctive loyalty to the nation state and to

⁶⁶ James, 148.

⁶⁷ Clarke, 1982:185; James, 148.

⁶⁸ Onoja, A, 1996:12-13; James, 149.

⁶⁹ James, 1990:185.

⁷⁰ James, 150-153, James, 1990:185.

the ethnic nationality/religious group. The latter is below the minimum necessary for political stability and socio-economic development.

Indeed the proximate danger to Nigeria's stability and survival as a political entity is the resurgence of substantial disintegrative pressures and the upsurge of sub-national disintegrative forces threatening to break apart the nation-state expressed in ethnic nationalism and/or religious fanaticism.⁷¹

Push factors for migration in those days included slave raids/slave trade and slavery, wars, conflicts, droughts, desertification, famine, trade, farming, and conversion to a new religion. The rich loamy and/or marshy soils of the Middle-Belt towns and the near temperate climate of the Jos Plateau also serve as additional push factors.

Most cities in the Middle-Belt are not of great antiquity. For instance, Suleja, Kontagora, Yola, Jalingo, Jema'a, Keffi, Nassarawa, and Wase, among many others are all 19th century settlements resulting from the Jihad.⁷² Whereas, it was at the beginning of 20th century Kaduna, Jos, Barakin Ladi, Dorowa, Gana Ropp, Gana Bauje, Gindin Akwati, Minna, Kafanchan, and Makurdi, among others, emerged as a result of British colonial activities. Moreover, presumption or pretensions of equating indigeneity with precedence in arrival at a purported place of destination may not hold water as others might have arrived first. Furthermore, towns and cities that emerged in the Middle-belt region in 19th century in the wake of the jihads and those that were birthed in the 20th century as a direct result of British colonial activities display and share certain pronounced social and physical characteristics:

High migrations patterns and receptivity; high boundedness, high orientation to physical features; high use of agricultural urban open space; crafts, and trades centred near the market; markets centred in the middle of town, plus smaller decentralised "gate" or community markets; cemeteries outside town by religious group; internal transport linking market and palace to city gates (i.e., external trade), but with local residential communities emerging between transport arteries, having some autonomy and self-identity; town laid out on north-south, east-west axis.⁷³

Cities and towns in the Middle-belt, both old and new, display certain basic characteristic features: high migration inflow patterns and very strong receptivity disposition to new comers resulting in the moderately mixed population ethnically.

The whole of the Middle-Belt is witnessing a massive migration from both Northern and Southern Nigeria. What may be called the Igbo threat is even more than that of the Hausa-Fulani given that every small stretch in the Middle-Belt has been infiltrated by trading activities persons of Igbo origin who are themselves threatened by erosion, lack of farm land and expansion of trade back home. The rise in clan and home consciousness all over Nigeria will turn the Middle-Belt into a Zone of conflict of ethno-religious forms in the very near future with this massive migration to the area.⁷⁴

⁷¹ James, 153

⁷² James, 157-158.

⁷³ James, 158

⁷⁴ Onoja, 1996:16.

The upsurge of these ethnic and religious strives have been fuelled basically by the failure of the civilian regimes to improve the conditions of lives of the people in the past one year and the use of ethnicity and religion for political ends by different sections of the capitalist class.⁷⁵ The *Shari'ah* saga will remain completely meaningless for as long as the poor and terrible social, economic and political living conditions of the *talakawa* masses in the northern states are not greatly improved.⁷⁶

Conclusion: The Way Forward

The use of military force and emergency powers cannot permanently resolve the problem posed by sectarian violence given its historical, ethnic, elitist, class and faith character. The military and mobile police very often become a part of the problem, killing more people than the ethnic/religious militias. The men in uniform sent to provide security very often extort money from the citizens whose security they are supposed to safeguard and when bribed they fail to maintain peace. Moreover ethnic/religious militia clashes promptly resume once the soldiers and police are withdrawn. The indigene/settler issue is a recent one, emerging strongly in post-independent Nigeria. In the document by the Obasanjo-led African Leadership Forum (ALF), participants stated:

- Continuous ethnic polarization has existed among the people (of Jos), and in order to co-exist peacefully, non-natives must recognize and respect the culture, customs and traditions of the host community, just as Christians in living in Kano, Sokoto, Katsina and other northern cities do.
- The non-natives must be willing to be integrated into the culture of the host community by taking traditional titles, witnessing cultural festivals and marrying across the religious divide. This should be enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as means to promote peace.
- Natives and non-natives relationship is a variant of the National Question and therefore applaud the hospitality posture of the indigenous communities in Jos and lamented unparalleled attitude of Nigerians in other parts of the country.⁷⁷
- Non-natives should accept and uphold the fact that traditional institutions are the sole preserve of the natives, for example, Chieftaincy, District headship, membership of the traditional council, etc., they can aspire to title holdings other than these.
- In order to give balanced recognition to settlers in their host-communities, they should demonstrate ample evidence of integration and this should be enshrined in the constitution. Resurrecting the old lines of integration, whereby ethnic groups absorb and integrate visitors and foreigners in their midst (as observed above) will go a long way to help solve the problem of integration.
- Religious leaders and scholars should be cautioned on the use of inflammatory methodologies and develop better understanding of their faith and responsibility to the society. In this regard, participants concluded that the closure of streets by both Christians and Muslims on Sundays and Fridays, respectively, is capable of

⁷⁵ DMS, 2004:2 of 7.

⁷⁶ See Mohammed, Adamu, Abba, 2000.

⁷⁷ Plateau Patriots, volume 1, p. 14-15.

heightening tension in the society and suggested that it must be legislated against by the state.

- Federal agencies, like the immigration department should be equipped to check the influx of aliens with similar cultures as those of the Nigerian settler community with tendencies to get assimilated and alter bring confusion in the country. In this regards, Federal Authorities should expedite action on the National Civic Registration and the National identity Card Schemes.⁷⁸

The implication of the outcome of the African Leadership Forum (ALF) leads to the logical conclusion that the Obasanjo-led government in Nigeria appreciates quite well the settler problem in Jos and elsewhere in Nigeria as an issue that must be confronted head-on. Though differentiated and fractured system of citizenship is common to multi-ethnic and multicultural societies,⁷⁹ it is vital that Nigeria develops amongst its diverse people a common notion of citizenship as a means of strengthening bond of national *asabiyya* unity. It must urgently resolve the tension and contradiction existing between individual rights as officially embedded in the Constitution and the demand for protection of group rights and identities which Egwu rightly stressed can neither be addressed in the political market place nor guaranteed in a liberal political order.⁸⁰

It is clear that conflict has resulted from the contradictory pulls of exclusion and inclusion in the contestation over citizenship rights. The inadequacy of liberal state framework is a basis for the crisis of citizenship. Again, Egwu is right when he asserted:

The continued salience of the ethnic phenomenon is symptomatic of the inadequacies of the liberal state as far as it is exploring the myth of the nation state as an indivisible unified entity in the face of the reality that heterogeneous right bearing peoples united by blood ties are calling to question the position of the state as the representation of general interests.⁸¹

Nigeria's entrance into the global society presupposes a successful socialisation programme for its populace and regional-religious-ethnic groups into embracing liberal-democratic values and liberal state framework.⁸² Liberal democracy focuses on individuals whose claims are ultimately placed above those of the collective or ethnic enclave.⁸³ Thus as an integral part of the modernity project, the liberal democratic state appears to be impervious to notions of collective and group rights and interests. It rests on the individual rather than the collective rights and does not guarantee equality between political, social, ethnic, religious and economic majorities and minorities.⁸⁴ So far, Nigeria as a nation has woefully failed in entrenching and nurturing a vibrant culture of the liberal state project. This resulted in the decline of social citizenship in providing the

⁷⁸ Plateau patriots, volume 1, p. 15-16.

⁷⁹ Kamylicka, 1995.

⁸⁰ Egwu, 2005: 7.

⁸¹ Egwu, 2005:7; Jinadu, 2003.

⁸² Ellsworth, 1999: 4.

⁸³ Ake, 2000; Egwu, 2005-8.

⁸⁴ Alemika, 2003:11; Egwu, 2005-8.

dynamics that have sustained identity-based conflicts in the context of the struggle for citizenship rights.⁸⁵

To come to terms with the interface between different layers of identity and the question of citizenship, Egwu points to two observations: first, the fact that violent ethno-religious conflicts tend to occur in the context of economic decline, state failure and the imposition of harsh economic policies in the form of SAP—Structural Adjustment Programme that accompanied IMF loan. Second, conflicts have occurred in relation to struggle for power (political power and socio-political relevance) in an atmosphere of increasing dwindling economic opportunities, and appear to have provided a meeting point between socio-economic deprivation and exclusion based on ethno-cultural identities.

In charting a way forward, it should be stated that though people may divide themselves along ethnic and religious lines as is the case in Jos, however, the underlying problematic are economic, social and political, bothering on the issue of access to power and resources, recognition of mutual tolerance, a biting depressed economy, inappropriate economic reform policies and continued withdrawal of the state from provision of social welfare and facilities. In a nutshell, the problems are rooted in the denial of social citizenship, thus making the national economic and political context vital.

Practical steps should be taken towards developing a culture of social citizenship unique and fitting for Nigeria, which should involve the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the media, authors of school books and all stakeholders. They should be repositioned to address the issues of public education and awareness campaigns on the culture of social citizenship as well as the question of conflict prevention and peace-building, good governance, democracy and transparency, independence of the justice system and respect for rule of law.

The Nigerian people must be mobilised towards engaging and embracing the political reality of multiculturalism and on the basis of this recognition, address the challenge of multicultural citizenship. This implies a reform of the Nigerian constitution towards sharpening and broadening the concept of citizenship and eliminating the definition of indigeneship and all the political privileges that goes with it in the present Constitution. It also implied the restoration of a social citizenship type that is capable of addressing the concerns of mass economic and social disempowerment of the populace. Economic policies should be drawn to provide the basis for sustainable development, emphasising social welfare, compulsory mass education and literacy, poverty alleviation and popular participation, which is, entrenching the principles of democracy. Even and balanced development should be promoted by ensuring that resources are distributed in a manner that favours all ethnic and regional homelands. The notion of multi-culturalism should be advance and promoted through multi-cultural citizenship, whereby the Middle-Belt of Nigeria and the Joss Plateau area must tolerate and accommodate streams of migrations as their fore fathers did, also as this gesture must be reciprocated by other communities throughout Nigeria. The dilemma of the Plateau Peace Conference was not that it did not want to encourage accommodation of other citizens, but the glaring fact that people from Plateau State are not accepted as indigenes elsewhere in Nigeria, but are treated as settlers, even worst than second class citizens by Muslims in the northern Shari'ah compliant states!

⁸⁵ Egwu, 2005: 8; cf. 1998, 1999,.

As Nigeria moves from the present transitory regime to a true democracy, where military dictators give way to civilian rulers, the reality of the complexities of the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and multi-religious diversity index will no longer be barriers to national cohesion, integration and unity.

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