

**Sliding Towards Armageddon:
Revisiting Ethno-Religious Crises in Nigeria**

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Usually people wait for things to occur before trying to describe them. Since we cannot afford under any circumstances to let a holocaust occur, we are forced in this case to become historians of the future.

Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth.

When Karl Maier wrote *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis* in 2000, he was alluding to Chinua Achebe's sad commentary on Nigeria as a country that has fallen down.¹ Similarly, Akinola Aguda a renowned jurist, in October 2000 noted, "One thing is certain: the present edifice called Nigeria as we know it today has come nearly to the end of its life... The cracks on its walls are too great for edifice to continue to stand."²

When in 2005 the United States National Intelligence Council revealed that religious strife in Nigeria could lead to a military take over of power, Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria, dismissed it as spurious and the authors of the report as "prophets of doom."³ In 2008, Pastor Ladi Thompson, initiator of *Macedonian Initiative* (MI) and researcher on religious terrorism, raised a similar alarm and affirmed that terrorists had infiltrated the country.⁴

Today, these alarms have been vindicated. The continuous crises, as Ladi Thompson had warned, show that "either the terrorists had infiltrated government or some elites in government were members" of the crisis squad and this explains government's failure to act whenever they were duly informed of an impending crisis.⁵ The continuous allegations of foreign involvement in our local conflict situations and allegations of terrorism indicate that Nigeria is under siege. The siege mentality is worsened when Nigerians are now at daggers drawn with their fellow nationals.

Recently, Olayemi Akinwumi's inaugural lecture on 11th December, 2009, entitled, *Before We Set This House Ablaze, Let Us Consult Our Oracle (History)*, was a masterpiece drawn from historical introspections. Drawing allusions, therefore, is an age-old stylistic device which is meant to draw attention to an impending danger or to call attention to past historical events or experiences. It is in the same way that we have adopted the Biblical imagery of "Armageddon" in this paper.

Nigeria has witnessed violent ethno-religious crises since the exit of the military in 1999. The democratic space seems to have provided the launching pad of these crises. Today, the term "ethno-religious conflicts" has become popular due to its religious and ethnic

underpinnings. We seem to be heading towards a precipice of unpleasant consequences. This is the thrust of this paper.

A Brief History of Jos

Before we discuss the last two crises in Jos (2008 and 2010), for the purpose of historical analysis, we have provided a brief historical background of Jos. A brief history of Jos will help to situate the incessant conflicts over the years. The history of Jos has attracted immense attention of recent. This is due to the various interests and perspectives that have come to bear in recovering the history of this tin city. The diverse historical records of Jos have become one of the causes for crisis.

Danfulani and Fwatshak captured this when they noted:

Today, however, the ownership of Jos town is hotly contested among the three main indigenous ethnic groups (the Berom, Naraguta and Afizere) whose traditional land meets on an unmarked borderline in Jos town, on the other hand, and the descendants of Hausa-Fulani settlers who initially settled in Jos as traders and tin miners, today known as the Jasawa (a Hausanised term for Jos), on the other hand.⁶

Jos is situated in the central belt of Nigeria, properly referred to today as the “middle-belt” region. The temperate climate of Jos makes it one of the coldest in Nigeria, and its plateaus add to its scenic beauty as a major tourist attraction. Plotnicov describes Jos as “one of the healthiest places in West Africa.”⁷ Founded at the dawn of the 20th century (about 1902) as a tin mining city, Nigeria became the sixth largest world tin producer with the greatest part of this output coming from the Jos-Plateau minefields. Jos was preceded by settlements at Naraguta and Guash, out of which Jos probably originated with an indigenous population including the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere.⁸

Shadrach Gaya Best has however indicated that, today, the Hausa maintain that they established Jos and nurtured it into a modern city without help from any of the indigenous ethnic groups in Jos.⁹ Best notes further that, “traders, butchers, Koranic teachers and other artisans also followed the mining population. Other wider Plateau indigenous ethnic groups came into the city for either commerce or to join the tin mining industry. These include Plateau groups like the Ngas, Ron, Mpun and Mwaghavul.”¹⁰ The commercial importance of Jos also attracted people from the South including Ibo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Ibibio and Edo, among others. This situation has created lasting implications for inter-ethnic relations between the “natives” and the alien population for years till date.

Since the days of tin mining in Jos, the growth of Jos city has been phenomenal. The creation of Benue Plateau State in 1967 with Jos as its headquarters led to the influx of civil servants and other businessmen into the city. Today, the civil service status of Jos has overtaken the tin mining activities, which marked Jos in its formative years.

Since its inception, Jos has contended with the heterogeneous population due to its strategic location and role in mining activities. Plotnicov notes that, “the problems of administering a heterogeneous community were recognized as early as 1962”,¹¹ and states further that, “the extreme heterogeneity of Jos reflects the variety of peoples of Nigeria, of whom almost all are represented.”¹²

With the collapse of tin mining in Jos, most artisans and traders remained in Jos, and made it their permanent home. Nnoli has indicated that Jos witnessed 7.6% rural-urban migrations between 1952 and 1963, and was one of the major cradles of ethnicity as was Kano, Zaria and Kaduna.¹³

Other “pull factors” which have contributed to the growth of Jos include the high presence of Christian mission agencies, educational institutions and the so called peace status of the city. Jos has assumed the status of a “missionary centre” due to the national headquarters of major Christian agencies here such as: Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), Sudan United Mission (SUM), Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN), and Tarayar Ekklesiya a Nigeria (TEKAN).

It is also host to the national headquarters of Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES) and Christian Corpers’ Fellowship of Nigeria. Jos is host to three theological seminaries, and Bible Colleges. It is easily seen as unofficial centre of Christianity in the North. Jos is also the national headquarters of the Jama’atu Izalatu Bidiah Ikamatu Sunna (JIBWIS). Jos has therefore attracted attention to itself from diverse religious interests and divides. This partly explains the strong interest for the control of Jos by these faiths.

With the reintroduction of Sharia legal system in some northern states in 1999 and its attendant crisis, Jos witnessed a tremendous influx of people from Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Zamfara, and from other core northern states who came to take refuge.

While inter-ethnic relations in Jos could not be said to be cordial since its inception, inter-religious relations of the acrimonious type is a recent development in Jos. Imo has observed that the major threshold for ethnic and religious activities began in 1980 with the *Maitatsine* uprising in Kano. “Jos began to be threatened by intolerance, tension, and mutual suspicion.”¹⁴ The creation of Jos North local government area in 1991 by Ibrahim Babangida, former Nigeria’s president, seems to have also sown a seed of discord between the Hausa-Fulani and the indigenous population which has haunted Jos till date.

Jos Crisis of 28th November, 2008

Jos first experienced a violent ethno-religious crisis on September 7, 2001, which broke its innocence as a religiously tolerant state. Since then Jos has lost its acclaim as the city of “peace and tourism”. Today, it is sarcastically referred to by public observers and commentators as a city of “pieces and terrorism”. The November 2008 Jos crisis is yet to be fully documented. However, Philip Ostien has give some useful perspectives on the crisis in a report submitted for *Cordaid*, an international development organization based in the Netherlands, entitled: *Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria*. It provides a good grasp and understanding to the continuing crisis in Jos. But as usual with most of the ethno-religious conflicts in the North, there are other explanations as to the causes of the conflict particularly as it relates to the 2008 crisis. While some read political factors to it, others see it as having religious and even economic reasons.

The crisis began shortly after state-wide local government council elections, which were considered by some as “peaceful, free and fair”. Security reports and situations before the elections in Jos had advised that the elections be postponed till a more convenient date. Some others had reasoned that their continuous disenfranchisement was only fitting and convenient

for the state government who had been accused of biases even before the polls. It was while awaiting the announcement of the results that trouble broke out at the collation centre which had been moved to Kabong shortly before the elections. The movement of the collation centre to Kabong outside the Headquarters of the Jos north local government council had earlier been opposed by the Hausa-Fulani in Jos. In what started as a minor skirmish, it engulfed Jos almost simultaneously. This sent wrong signals that the crisis had already been planned and expected. A 12-hour curfew was initially imposed on Jos and its environs before it was extended to 24 hours.

The crisis lasted four days, leaving in its trail, loss of lives, and property. The carnage was enormous. An example of the losses is captured in brief by Ephraim Kadala thus:

According to the report carried by *The News* of December 15 2008, Mr. Bala Zuberu, the trading company, lost about N28million when his business centre where he sold cars was razed to the ground. Alhaji Musa Haruna Adamu of Pama Motors lost about N601million worth of cars during the riots. Many of their houses were burnt and many mosques destroyed. A number of petrol stations belonging to Muslims at Farin Gada ward of Jos metropolis were also razed to the ground during the riots.¹⁵

The Federal Government set up a presidential panel to be headed by General Emmanuel Abisoye (rtd) to investigate the crisis, but was engulfed in controversy by the Plateau state government which insisted on its own panel headed by Justice Prince Bola Ajibola, in what was a constructional problem.

Security agencies were blamed for the escalation of the crisis as they either aided in the conflict, or failed to intervene on time until the situation worsened.

There were allegations of “hired informed men” who were arrested and later taken to Abuja for further interrogation. The exact number of casualties became another source of problem between Christians and Muslims as claims and counterclaims beclouded the actual number of victims.

Tape-recorded video clips of the casualties were produced and sent via telephones and the internet across states in order to inflame more passions. These had to be banned in some states such as Kano, Kaduna, Gombe and Bauchi to check mate possible spillover effects. Election results were eventually announced amidst raging crisis and the chairmen were sworn in.

Justice Prince Bola Ajibola’s panel sat and submitted its report towards the end of 2009, shortly before another crisis erupted on 17th January 2010. This was before the government white paper on the 2008 crisis had been made public. This crisis came two weeks after the Presidential Panel of Emmanuel Abisoye (rtd) started sitting at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) in Kuru, Jos.

Jos Crisis of 17th January, 2010

Sunday, 17th January 2010, witnessed another ethno- religious conflict in Jos. Three versions of the immediate cause(s) of the crisis have emerged:

- i. That one Alhaji Kabir Mohammed had gone to Nasarawa Gwon to commence the reconstruction of his house demolished during the 2008 crisis. He had mobilized some youths to assist him with the work at the site. As the work began, some youths (not identified) came and stoned the site workers in order to stop work. Attempts by the soldiers who were still close by keeping watch over the security area to stop the disagreement failed. What started as a little matter, degenerated into a full scale crisis.¹⁶
- ii. That it was a group of Muslim youths who stormed St. Michael's Catholic Church in Nasarawa Gwom while the church service was on and unleashed terror on members of the congregation. This version was conveyed by the Police Commissioner, Mr. Greg Anyanting.¹⁷
- iii. That violence developed from a minor argument among Christian and Muslim youths in a local football match on Saturday, 16th January, 2010. The argument and name-calling continued till the next day and degenerated into a major religious crisis.

From these accounts, in what began as isolated disagreements in Nasarawa area, Jos was again engulfed in a major orgy of killings, mayhem, and wanton destruction of houses and business premises. The crisis spread to Bukuru and its immediate environs. Rayfield, a hitherto elite area which had been insulated in previous crises was also affected. The University of Jos came under siege from both sides, that is, the Naraguta students' hostels, Abuja and village hostels and senior staff quarters at Bauchi road and permanent site. A 12-hour and later 24-hour curfew was imposed in Jos-Bukuru and its environs by Plateau state government. Arrests were made amidst renewed allegations of hired uniformed fake soldiers, who were again taken to Abuja for further interrogation, an action which the Plateau State government again condemned.

The level of destruction assumed new dimensions in Bukuru particularly, as houses were completely brought down to their foundations. The tensions spread to Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Gombe States. State governments of Ondo, Oyo, Benue and Nasarawa sent buses to transport their students and other citizens to their home states. An imminent national calamity became rife and palpable.

Police statement put the number of casualties at 326, while another put it at 362.¹⁸ The *Human Rights Watch* confirmed that about 150 dead bodies were pulled from a village well at Kuru Karama. The Red Cross Society of Nigeria noted more than 8000 refugees in the Toro local government area of Bauchi.¹⁹

There were accusations and counter-accusations of security partial handling of the conflict. The carnage left more devastation than the previous crises in Jos, with new dimensions. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Director-General, Brigadier General Maharazu Ismaila Tsiga, was forced to give a two weeks break to NYSC members to travel home in order to assuage the fears of their relations and to forestall a repeat of the loss of lives of NYSC members in the 2008 crisis.

A presidential committee was set up to be headed by Chief Solomon Lar, a former civilian governor of Plateau State, to look into the causes of the crisis and to proffer solutions towards averting future occurrence.

Calls for a declaration of a state of emergency emerged, and for the relocation of federal institutions and agencies. In a swift reaction to calls for the state of emergency in Plateau State, the Plateau State House of Assembly issued a press advertorial in which it raised certain observations and questions. "The house is unable to understand on rational analysis why such orders were not made in some states in the north where religious sects such as Boko Haram and Kalakato emerged in challenge of Federal Authorities in which many lives were lost."²⁰

Similarly, the Plateau State Indigenes Development Association (PSIDA), Abuja Branch, issued a paid advertorial, in which they saw the call for a state of emergency in Plateau State as having an ethnic agenda, to do the bidding of the Hausa community.²¹

Such reactions that have come after crises in Jos create new problems in the handling of such conflicts and the intentions of government also come into serious public scrutiny as government has failed to set up panels in Bauchi and Borno states that have witnessed crises of recent. This has been one of the national dilemmas in handling conflicts of such nature in Nigeria.

At present, Jos is still witnessing a lot of tension, rumours of a possible new attack, fear, anger and pains, as the exodus from this once peaceful city is continuing, with calls for a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* to end the crisis in Jos.

The Boko Haram Crisis (24th – 28th July, 2009)

The Boko Haram riots began in Bauchi town from 24th – 28th July, 2009. By the time it was brought under control, it had spread to Borno, Yobe, Kano and Katsina states, and sent jitters to other adjoining states. *Boko Haram* is a combination of Hausa and Arabic words, which connote "western education" and "something that is forbidden" A. Farah and others in the *Dictionary Arabic English*, define "Haram" as, "sin, wrong doing, offense and a taboo."²² Haram is literally, "that which is prohibited, and unlawful", and a thing is said to be "Haram" when it is forbidden, as opposed to that which is "halal" or "lawful."²³

The leader of Boko Haram was Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, a 39 year old, who was described as an Islamic reformist, and Nigeria's equivalent of Bin Laden.²⁴ Yusuf lived by Ibn Taimiyya Mosque in Maiduguri and had a camp which was founded in 2004 called "Afghanistan" in Kanamma village in northern Yobe, on the border with Niger, but the group had existed since 1995.²⁵

Boko Haram's headquarters was located at Markas, near terminus in Maiduguri, where they foisted their flag with Islamic inscriptions. Inside the headquarters was a section for making bombs, armoury store, an office, a mosque and an open space.²⁶ They also had an 80km expanse of land near Maiduguri, believed to have served as their training camp. They drew membership from youths, unemployed university graduates who had been indoctrinated to believe that their state of hopelessness was caused by government which imposed western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefit.²⁷ The group also had an elite membership and leader, Kabiru Atiku in Sokoto who was a former university teacher, with many former university teachers in his fold. To show their disdain for western style education, many of their members tore their secondary and university degree certificates in the full glare of the public,²⁸ at the annual walemah banquets, amidst chorus of *Allahu Akbar*.²⁹ They reject employment in government civil service and do not eat in homes where parents' income come from questionable source. Muhammad concludes that "not a few

brilliant youths have been ruined by this misrepresentation of Islam by people who see no good in acquiring one form of education or another.”³⁰ The group had Alhaji Buji Foi, a former Commissioner in Borno state as their member, along with businessmen, politicians and religious leaders in the north as their sponsors.³¹ Boko Haram are opposed to the secular status of Nigeria and various security clampdowns on their activities. Therefore, the police and other security agencies became their targets of attack, as they killed policemen, burnt police stations and their barracks and also invaded the prisons.

Their outbreak in Bauchi had been traced to a reaction to Bauchi state government’s refusal to allow them freedom to politely practice their religion as well as win souls to the sect.³² Sheikh Ahmed Muhammad Sanusi Gumbi, a Kaduna-based Islamic cleric has noted that Boko Haram was a “protest against bad governance in Nigeria.”³³ The group was condemned by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba group, who described them as “local talibans” and their activities, “very unislamic.”³⁴ The Governor of Bauchi State, Isa Yuguda, called them “lunatics” who had psychiatric problems, and their leader as a hypocrite, “one who reaps from the ignorance of his followers”, and that “while he preaches against western values, he lives flamboyant lifestyle, driving big cars like jeeps, while his members live in the most dehumanizing conditions.”³⁵ In fact, “people who knew him said Yusuf lived a false life and deceived his followers.”³⁶

Boko Haram had global networks, such as with the Chadian rebels, Mauritania, *Al-Quaida* in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanese undercover groups with diagrams of strategic buildings in Abuja marked for attacks.³⁷ They were trained in guerilla style military tactics and their attacks were compared to suicide bombers in the Middle East.³⁸ They have been described as a new Maitatsine as Muslims also came under their attack.

Evidence has shown that Yusuf had been arrested severally under Obasanjo and his activities were well known.³⁹ It took combined efforts of the police and the military to quell the riots. Yusuf was arrested by the army and handed to the police where he was killed. His death sparked off controversy as “extra-judicial killing” in order to cover up official knowledge and complicity in the crisis. But some bereaved mothers wanted Yusuf dead because they did not trust the police and their suspicions were that were he to get to Abuja, the authorities would have got him to court and the case thrown out for want of evidence.⁴⁰ Some others opine that Yusuf should have been spared in order to give information on the structure operations and targets of the sect, though he could as well have refused to divulge any of these. Killing him hurriedly therefore, justifies the cover-up theory that was possibly meant to officially shield collaborators and sponsors of the crisis.

Dan Agbese has written on Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria and raised pertinent observations and questions. Agbese observes that Islam owes much of its success, rapid spread and resilience in the face of persecution in its early years to perhaps its most potent weapon-education and enlightenment. Islamic universities and enlightenment flourished in Islamic civilization. Yusuf and his group are trying to impose in Islam the burden it refused to bear from its beginning that is education and enlightenment. The Boko Haram face of Islam is the unacceptable face of Islam to all Muslims. Agbese charged them for their upside-down reading of their religions with its backward religious philosophy.⁴¹ Agbese poses the following:

How was it possible for Mohammed Yusuf to organize and indoctrinate his followers without the secular and the religious authorities having a whiff of his activities? How was it possible for them to acquire arms and ammunitions without the security agencies

knowing a thing about them? How come their distinct blue beret raised no eye brows? How was it possible for them to organize, arm and take on the agents of state in bloody battles in at least five towns almost simultaneously and yet no one seemed to know of their existence?⁴²

From the foregoing therefore and other observations and posers, Boko Haram has raised more issues that have contradicted itself in many ways. For example, while they detest western education and its values, they patronize western made cars, ammunitions and telephones. The use of maps and diagrams require an educated mind and hand to handle. The history of Islamic civilizations is replete with intellectual achievements and legacies that have sustained the pride of the faith for centuries. For Boko Haram therefore, to indoctrinate people against western education sparks off either ignorance of Islamic faith and history, or a deliberate indoctrination and brainwashing against the West.

Further research into Boko Haram will throw more light as to its similar inspiration and pattern with the Kalakato for example, and the linkage between Boko Haram as a sectarian violence which took some ethno-religious garb in both its character and execution.

Perpetrators of Ethno-Religious Crises

Detecting perpetrators of most ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has been problematic. This is due largely because politics, religion, ethnicity and other interests have shrouded attempt to identify perpetrators of these conflicts, thereby frustrating genuine efforts towards their prosecution and punishment. Most times, even the identities of some perpetrators have generated unusual controversy in official circles. Thus, certain names have emerged to refer to them such as: hoodlums, fanatics, miscreants, talibans, extremists, fundamentalists, mercenaries, fake soldiers, terrorists, religious zealots, lunatics and misguided elements, among others.

They are the unseen hands of the powerful in the society, who use them as cannon fodder, who are paid some tokens. They are indoctrinated, brainwashed and misguided, in order to unleash terror on fellow Nigerians. There have been allegations of hired mercenaries who come from Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and they use Nigeria's porous borders to infiltrate without qualms. The involvement of foreign mercenaries in most of the ethno-religious crises which began from the *Maitatsine* uprising in 1980 has continued till date with greater involvement.

While perpetrators or the "real foot soldiers" in these conflicts are drawn from the bottom ladder of the Nigerian society, most sponsors are believed to be wealthy men, influential traditional and religious leaders and politicians. But the question that still begs for answers is whether the so-called mercenaries, miscreants and fanatics are the true religious zealots or those who pay them to terrorize people because of their extremist, political and intolerant religious dispositions? Why do they engage in such illegality and criminality with impunity? These seem to be the real perpetrators of the heinous crimes that have posed far above the law. In fact, the manipulation thesis of Yusuf Bala Usman becomes relevant for our further critical understanding and analysis of this phenomenon.

"Weaponization" and Ethno-Religious Conflicts

The history of conflicts has shown that the scale of conflicts and the rate of casualties are a function of availability and sophistication of weapons. Thus, it would be observed that, as violent conflicts continue in Nigeria, the use of weapons has increased with greater intensity and sophistication. Militarism and violence are twin evils of a failed state if they go unchecked. Nigeria is sliding towards this as free possession of firearms among civilians has gone unchecked and is gradually turning Nigeria into a banal state. Today, the proliferation of guns and their availability paints a very gloomy picture of Nigeria. For example, in the Boko Haram crisis, dangerous weapons were discovered to include: bags of gun powder for making explosives, 200 detonators, 2000 locally made cylinders for making bombs, and bags of potassium nitrate for making explosives. There were also, AK 47 rifles, 270 rounds of live ammunition, axes, machetes, swords, single barrel guns, local pistols, cartridges, knives, quivers, army uniforms, catapults, and jerry cans of petrol.⁴³

There were reported cases of the use of explosives and bombs in both 2008 and 2010 Jos crises. This phenomenon is a new dimension in ethno-religious conflicts and it is continuing. The use of army camouflage uniforms in order to deceive people in order to kill during crises has also continued since 2000 when it began in the Kaduna and Tafawa Balewa sharia crises.

In fact, the militarization of conflicts in Nigeria and of weapon use, particularly as it relates to ethno-religious conflicts, is blamed today on the long military involvement in governance. The partisan posture of ex-military men in some ethno-religious crises has also exacerbated conflicts and heightened the level of destruction of both human lives and property.

Emerging Changing Patterns of Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Certain patterns have emerged over the years in most of the ethno-religious crises that we have witnessed in Nigeria. New trends keep evolving as crises occur. For example, outright killing of human lives has continued with greater brutality. Corpses of victims which were hitherto left to be identified and possibly buried are today burned to charred remains beyond recognition. This scenario began from 2000 in the Sharia-related crisis in Kaduna and has continued in the subsequent crises. The level of human brutality shows that we have lost all senses of our humanness and have drifted towards barbarity without restraints or any sense of the sanctity of human life which Christianity and Islam strongly affirm.

Demolition of houses to their very foundations became pronounced from the Sharia-related crisis in Kaduna in 2000. This trend was replicated in Tafawa Balewa in 2000, Yelwa-Shendam in 2003 and in Jos 2008 and 2010 crises. The major presupposition is that such demolitions are warning signals that victims in such crises are not expected to return to their ruined homes. The potential danger this poses played recently in the 2010 Jos crisis when one of the explanations for the trigger of the conflict occurred when a victim of the 2008 crisis in Jos tried to commence rebuilding of his demolished house and was prevented by his erstwhile “neighbours” who did not want his return.

Another disturbing trend that has continued with greater intensity is the involvement of uniformed personnel in fuelling the crisis. Here, cases of “fake uniformed men,” “foreign mercenaries” and “strangers in the city” have assumed greater dimensions. Today, even the weapons that are used have become more sophisticated from the ordinary ones that were

previously known as we have illustrated above. This portends serious security problems for the Nigerian state, and a threat that could lead to a major anarchy even within security ranks. At least, the 2010 Jos crisis demonstrated this assertion very clearly.

Another potentially dangerous trend that emerged in 2010 Jos crisis was the evacuation of Nigerians to their home states. In the wake of the crisis, states such as Benue, Nasarawa, Osun, Oyo, and Ondo, among others, sent buses and conveyed their state indigenes from Jos back to their homes. This step has some dangerous precedents that could have triggered fresh crisis in the camps of the returnees as stories of the crisis were being told and relayed to friends, and relatives.

Another noticeable feature that has also emerged in the Jos crisis of 2008, 2010 and the Boko Haram was the use of telephones and internet to either send messages, or calls in order to inform or warn of the crisis. While they had their positive effects by helping to prevent likely casualties particularly for those traveling towards the crisis routes, some were full of exaggerated stories, inflamed passions and gory pictures and could be dangerous in future if not properly controlled.

The foisting of a flag by Boko Haram is a continuous dangerous trend, just as the Movement for the Actualization of the State of Biafra (MASOB) popularized the Biafran flag in their struggle. This has implications for the sovereign integrity of the Nigerian state and needs to be checked before it degenerates further.

Implications of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Ethno-religious crises in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country. What we are witnessing through these crises is a transfer of aggression from one grievance to innocent Nigerians. For example, in the Jos crises, the Hausa-Fulani have been piqued against Christians instead of confronting Plateau State Government in order to resolve their areas of disagreements. Similarly, in the Boko Haram crisis, fellow Nigerians were killed as a result of grievances arising from government's failure to address poverty, unemployment and good governance which affects both Christians and Muslims. It is our contention here therefore, that, the settler-indigene question has weakened patriotism, commitment to national ideals and true nationhood, giving rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages, which ethno-religious jingoists exploit for their interest and advantage.

Inflicting pain and hurt on innocent Nigerians has implanted hatred and deepened conflict, thereby widening conflict zones. This has also killed all sense of friendship, solidarity, and good neighborliness among Nigerians. Experiences of outright killing of human lives, the agony, pain, and the gory scenes of carnage, leave lasting memories for many years to come. For example, the holocaust type of experience which produced Ellie Wiesel's *The Night* could as well be in the making, if ethno-religious conflicts are not stemmed now and completely. The *operation vengeance* slogan which became a catchword before the 2010 Jos crisis, indicates that memories from such conflicts could create future conflicts.

The *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) arising from these conflicts is already becoming evident among the survivors of the crises. The continuous stockpiling of dangerous weapons and the new pattern of the use of bombs and explosives is a serious security breach that has dangerous consequences for the Nigerian state.

Government's failure to address serious national issues involving ethno-religious conflicts, portray that government is either partisan in handling such conflicts, or is exhibiting lack of political will, incompetence or bad governance. For instance, Government had been warned many times in Jos and in Maiduguri of impending crises but failed to stem them before they eventually occurred. Government's failure also to either bring out past reports of panels, inquiries and committees and white papers arising from such crises, confirms our assertion in this regard. Continuous ethno-religious crises have potentials of causing disaffection between security agencies particularly if accusations of extra-judicial killings and partial handling of such crises continue. The situation in the 2008 and 2010 Jos crises have shown this observation to be pertinent. Security agencies today have developed "fatigue of crises" as they are made to monitor situations that could degenerate to further conflicts. This is in addition to huge financial resources that go as security votes, instead of channeling such monies towards more purposeful developmental programmes.

The continuous road-blocks in Jos have psychological effects which indicate the insecurity of the city itself, just as the unending curfews continues to affect socio-economic life in the city. In fact, the incessant cases of violence in Jos continue to heighten ethnic and religious tension with tendencies of spillover to other parts of the country.

Control Measures in Ethno-Religious Crises

Control measures of ethno-religious crises have proved to be inadequate and ineffective. They have been characterized by lack of sincerity and political will and have become even monotonous. For example, once crisis erupts, it is always characterized by police or an army attempt to quell the crisis, government broadcast with antics of a promise to fish out trouble makers, imposition of curfew, arrests, security surveillance, emergency reliefs, panels of inquiry, sittings, submission of reports, white paper; and the viscous circle continuous in most cases with new crisis. Thus, the observation by many is that such panels set by government always to investigate crises have been ploys by government to buy time and a psychological trick in order to allow people to vent out their anger and frustrations. In other words, such inquiries have only cathartic effects without true commitment to implement recommendations that arise there-from. This is illustrated for example in the Jos crises where it took government many years, until recently, (March 2010) to release panel of inquiry reports of 1994, 2001, 2004 crises.

Most of these panels end up as talk jamborees, and some have raised more problematic issues for future crisis than attempts to control them. Even membership of some panels have raised controversies as was indicated in the Abisoye's panel of 2008 Jos crisis, and Solomon Lar's panel in which some indicted members in the 2001 Jos crisis were appointed to serve in the panel. This and similar problems explain why the re-occurrence of conflicts and non-implementation of panel of inquiry reports as perpetrators are not arrested, prosecuted and made to face the law to serve as deterrents to others. At the end, time is wasted along with financial resources that would have been channeled towards other developmental programmes by government. The politics, therefore, of setting probe panels of crises has become out-of-date and they need new approaches and change.

Preventing an Armageddon

Based on the foregoing, certain recommendations have been made to help reduce or completely stem ethno-religious conflicts and to prevent an armageddon in Nigeria.

1. That the major factors of land, power and control of economic resources and identity upon which other causes of conflict revolve in order to create tension, conflict and crisis, be critically and radically addressed within the ambit of the law in a just and fair manner. The Federal Government should therefore, ensure that the constitution is reviewed to clearly define “citizenship” in Nigeria.
2. That government reports arising from commissions of inquiry be released and appropriate steps taken to implement them.
3. That culprits identified in the crisis be tried in courts of law, and those convicted punished.
4. Government should create jobs in order to reduce the poverty level and unemployment, which are twin evils which provide breeding grounds for discontent, frustration and recourse to violence at the slightest provocation.
5. That there should be thorough education of Nigerians to accept the realities of the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, along ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, and political lines. Religious and traditional leaders have a role to play, other than to be the agents of indoctrination and inciting sermons as Governor of Bauchi State, Mallam Isa Yuguda has alleged.⁴⁴ We need a re-orientation of and a return to African traditional values of communal living, of being our brother’s keeper and of societal solidarity.
6. Government needs to be more open and sincere in managing information than giving opportunities for rumour mills to peddle rumours which create and heighten tension and conflict.
7. That the ban of sale of petrol through surface tanks and the use of motorcycles be sustained in major cities. Government should create and sustain an effective transport system in towns and provide petrol to ensure availability, as the excesses arising from these have aided crises.
8. That peace initiatives through inter-religious committees, and non governmental organizations (NGOs) should sustain consultations and dialogue in order to build bridges of peace. Such dialogue should be sincere and committed.

Conclusion

The Jos crises and Boko Haram are not only Northern Nigeria phenomena but point to Nigeria’s national question and the government’s insincerity and failure to address it squarely. The “settler-indigene” problem and the challenges of citizenship which these throw have remained unresolved vexatious national problem. It resonates in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Lagos, and Port Harcourt, among others.

Today, the reality of our living in a globalized world implies that we cannot continue to live at war with our next-door neighbour. We need to recognize and accept this inevitable human reality and its imperative should force us to forge a peaceful human community rather than to continue to live like in the dark ages of civilization.

Mahmood Mamdani captured this when he observes that “what horrifies our modernity is violence that appears senseless, that cannot be justified by progress.”⁴⁵ What we have

witnessed and are still witnessing in Nigeria today fits into Mamdani's apt assertion, but the linkage of development and progress will remain elusive in Nigeria if we continue in this conundrum of unrestricted blood-letting.

The using of ethnicity, religion and politics should rather unite us as Nigerians in order to promote peace, harmonious peaceful co-existence and unity. The reverse of this has consequences for Nigeria. Dare puts it this way:

I am no prophet of doom, but I have seen enough, heard enough and know enough to say boldly that if the government at both the state and national levels fail to act decisively from time hence, the road to Kigali [Rwanda] stares us in the face.⁴⁶

Or put another way:

The question many residents of Jos and concerned Nigerians are asking is whether the state or the Federal governments can find the courage to do what is right and stop the nation from a further slide into self inflicted destruction.⁴⁷

In the words of a cartoonist, Kenny Adamson, our state of nation is our "national attempt at self-immolation."⁴⁸ Response to the above observations and question depends on our resolve as Nigerians, that is, whether we desire to keep it as one indivisible, peaceful nation, and prevent the time bomb of the apocalypse, or to allow religion and ethnic conflicts to consume everybody. This is the direction we are heading if we continue unchecked and without restraints.

¹ Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, Westview Press, Oxford, 2000, p.iii.

² Gambo Usman Alih, "Can this Federation Stand?" *Daily Trust*, February 23, 2010, p.12.

³ Tony Orilade, "Bloodbath in the North," *The News*, August 10, 2009, p.27.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani and Sati Umaru Fwatshak, "Briefing the September 2001 Events in Jos Nigeria", *African Affairs*, Royal African Society, 2002, p. 245.

⁷ Leonard Plotnicov, *Strangers in the City: Urban Man in Jos, Nigeria*, University of Pittsburg Press, 1967, p. 33.

⁸ Anthony Dung Bingel. *Jos: Origins and Growth of the Town 1900-1972*, Department of Geography Publication, Jos, 1978, p. 2.

⁹ Shadrach Gaya Best, *Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State, Nigeria*, Spectrum Books Ltd, Ibadan, 2007, p. 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹¹ Leonard Plotnicov, p. 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹³ Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1987, pp. 65-66.

¹⁴ Cyril O. Imo, "Christian-Muslim Relation in Jos Plateau State Nigeria", *Mandyeing: Journal of Central Nigerian Studies*, 2001, p. 104.

¹⁵ Ephraim Kadala, *Turn the Other Cheek: A Christian Dilemma*, Bukuru, ACTS, 2009, p. 124.

¹⁶ Femi Adi, "Ethnic Cleansing in Jos, *The News*, February 1, 2010, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁸ *The Nation*, January 26, 2010, p. 1, cf. *Daily Trust*, January 26, 2010, p.1.

¹⁹ *The Nation*, January 24, 2010, p.8, cf. *The Nation*, February 6, 2010, p.51.

²⁰ "Resolutions of the Plateau State House of Assembly on a Motion on Matter of Urgent Public Importance Pursuant to Order 6 Rule 4 of the rules of the House, Tuesday, January 26, 2010", *Advertorial in Daily Trust*, Wednesday, February 3, 2010, p. 38.

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- ²¹ “Communiqué of the Plateau State Indigenes Development Association (PSIDA) Abuja at an Emergency Meeting of Council Members and Stakeholders” on Sunday, 24, January, 2010”, Daily Trust, February 3, 2010, p. 26.
- ²² A. Farah et al., *The Arabic – English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2006, p. 336.
- ²³ Thomas Patrick Hughes, “Haram”, *Dictionary of Islam*”, *The World of Islam: Resources for Understanding*, CD Rom, 2006, p. 162; cf. A. Farah, et al, p. 355.
- ²⁴ Sunday Nwankwo, “Unholy Week”, *The Week*, August 10, 2009, p.18; cf. Olayinka Oyegbile, “Shielding Patrons of Boko Haram”, *Tell*, August 17, 2009, p. 68.
- ²⁵ Olayinka Oyegbile, et al, *Tell* 26th July, 2009, p. 68.
- ²⁶ Demola Abimboye and Sam Adzgeh, “Mayhem in Northern Cities”, *Newswatch*, August 10, 2009, p. 14.
- ²⁷ Sunday Nwankwo, “Unholy Week”, *The Week*, August 10, 2009, p. 19.
- ²⁸ Olayinka Oyegbiye, et al, *Tell*, August 10, 2009, p.68.
- ²⁹ Ustaz Abubakar Siddeeq Muhammed, “My near conversion to Boko Haram and Darussalam (2),” *Islamic Perspective in Leadership*, March 5, 2010, p.27.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Sunday Nwankwo, p. 19.
- ³² Olayinka and Oyegbiye, p. 28.
- ³³ Sheikh Ahmed Muhammad Sanusi Gumbi, *Daily Trust*, July, 29, 2009, p. 9.
- ³⁴ Abimboye and Adzegeh “Mayhem in Northern Cities”, *Newswatch*, August 10, 2009, p. 17.
- ³⁵ Olayinka and Oyegbiye, *op.cit*, p. 28.
- ³⁶ Abimboye and Adzgeh, August 10, 2009 p. 14.
- ³⁷ Olayinka Oyegbiye, “Shielding Patrons of Boko Haram,” August 17, 2009, p. 68.
- ³⁸ Olayinka and Oyegbile, 26th July, 2007, p. 28.
- ³⁹ Olayinka Oyegbile, et al, *Tell*, August 17, 2009, p. 68.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Dan Agbese, “These Bad Times”, *Newswatch*, August 10, 2009, p.5.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Olayinka and Oyegbiye, *op.cit*, p. 28.
- ⁴⁴ Gbenga Oke, “We can end religious crises if...Gov. Yuguda”, *Sunday Vanguard*, February, 28, 2010, p. 44.
- ⁴⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim Bad Muslim: America, The Cold War And The Root of Terror*, Malthouse Press Limited, Lagos, 2007, p. 1.
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- ⁴⁷ Tajudeen Suleiman, “Echoes of A Crisis”, *Tell*, February 8, 2010, p. 31.
- ⁴⁸ Kenny Adamson, “State of the Nation,” *Sunday Vanguard*, March 14, 2010, p.48.