RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNICATION EFFECT AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA'S JOS METROPOLIS: A STUDY IN IDENTITY POLITICS

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
	This paper is on the relationship between communication effect and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis, the epicenter of Nigeria's Middlebelt geo-political region. While using Jos metropolis, as a case study, the paper relies largely on the general analytic and case study research techniques to explore and interrogate the place of verbal and non-verbal communication on ethno-religious conflicts in the city. In doing this, the paper hypothesizes that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria's Jos metropolis are affected by a matrix of communications of the complex social reality. A major finding of the paper is that though all concerned do not have to agree before violent intergroup conflict can ensue; access to common resources as well as ethnic and religious are factors that cannot be ignored in the quest for fair and sustainable peace in the city of Jos. Accordingly, the paper recommends, among others, a people-oriented all-inclusive democratic institutions and processes that are equipped and sustained by broad spectrum of participation profile. *Copy Right, IJAR, 2015,. All rights reserved*

INTRODUCTION

Until about two and half decades ago, the city of Jos, capital of Plateau state, was easily one of the safest in Nigeria – a peace-haven of sort in the federation. This has now changed. As recent studies have shown, about forty per cent of the one hundred and two violent inter group conflicts that occurred in the six states that make up Middlebelt geo-political zone between 1979 and 2005 took place in Plateau state alone. Reflecting on the impact of ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau state, *Report of the Plateau Peace Conference* (2004:3) laments that "the conflict had resulted into widespread dislocation of people creating a refugee crisis that threatened the social fabric of Plateau state with implications for the entire nation. The crisis had also closed the doors of friendship, interaction and rapport among the various ethnic groups in the state as well as other states, and kept investors from coming to Plateau state".

Recent studies show that about 80 percent of conflicts recorded in the city of Jos from 1979 to 2014 border on ethno-religious issues (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2009, 2014 and Owutu, 2013). Among others, Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2014) identified struggle for the control for political power and social resources as central to the quest for political influence and power in the metropolis. Accordingly the study made three interrelated submissions. First, societal resources in Jos metropolis have become increasingly scarce and competitive. Secondly, the state is perceived as primary dispenser of social resources and wealth. Thirdly, recourse to ethno-religious consciousness in the political calculations of major social forces in Jos metropolis is increasing. This paper is on the interface between communication effect and ethno-religious conflict in Jos metropolis.

This study explores and explains the relationship between identity politics, communication effect and ethno-religious conflicts in the Jos metropolis. It examines the historical dimension of the conflicts in order to aid

understanding of the nature of the conflicts. The study also focuses on the social environment and conflictive issues in ethno-religious conflict in Jos metropolis. Accordingly, the paper is hinged on a number of interrelated anchor questions. What are the critical issues of identity and intergroup conflict in Jos metropolis? What are the major social forces in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis and the *modus operandi* of their verbal and non verbal communications? How significant is communication effect on the generation and prosecution of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis? In the bid to address the above questions, the paper employs the analytic inductive techniques in data generation as well as descriptive and interpretations skills in the presentation and analysis of collected data.

In line with the foregoing, the paper is divided into six interrelated parts. The first is the introduction which in addition to problematizing the paper also highlights its objectives. The second part focuses on salient contextual and conceptual issues relevant to the study while the third segment is on methodological issues. Part four examines the evolution and character intergroup conflicts in Jos metropolis. The fourth part is on the salient factors and issues in Jos ethno-religious conflicts. The fifth examines Jos experience and offers options for electoral inclusiveness. Part six contains the summary, some conclusions and considered recommendations.

1. Contextual and Theoretical Issues

The word identity, in everyday parlance, easily connotes the qualities and attitudes which a person or group has, that makes such a person or group feel that own character is different from the others Identity emphasizes awareness and the fact that there are differences in character or attitudes between individuals or groups. In line with Jega (2003), identity is largely concerned with identification with and commitment to shared values and beliefs in a social collectivity into which a person belongs. Accordingly, attributes of identity comprise "commitment to a cause, love and trust for a group, emotional tie to a group as well as obligations and responsibilities relating to membership of a group with which a person identities" (Jega, 2003:14-15). It is also important to note that those who share an interest actually share an identity such that the interest of each person requires the collaboration or all (Pye, 1962). Identity emphasizes awareness and the fact that there are differences in character or attitudes between individuals or groups. As a matter of fact, identity is not only about individuality, self-awareness or existence of difference in character.

In the words of Larsh and Freidman (1992:336), the formation and construction of identity space, is the "dynamic operator linking enormous and cultural processes" in modern societies. The import of this is that identity politics is largely a means to an end; that is to say an instrument. Being an instrument, it is often handy in the objection of the exploitation, marginalization or powerlessness of social groups or in the national political and competitive struggle over access to the state, particularly in situations where the state and its control constitute the primary or most visible avenue of accumulation. Reflecting on this, Jega (2003:16) usefully points out that by and large, identity politics, involves the mobilization of identity consciousness in order to create a mass base of support for the ruling classes and the elite generally in their factional struggle in the accumulation processes. As has been noted:

No doubt, until about the last two decades, scholarly social science literature have largely ignored issues on or relating to identity politics. Increasing policy and academic interest on the subject matter is traceable to the challenges faced in many parts of the world by a variety of identities in politics and in a variety of ways. With the decline of ideologically bipolarity following the collapse of Soviet Union in the late 1980 and the resurgence of the phenomenon of primordial identity based anxiety/conflict in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Burundi, Iraq, Ukraine, Central Africa Republic, etc the increasing interest in the issue of identity politics is understandably in the increase. It is interesting to observe that this upsurge in the culture of political participation and competing struggle, identity politics has been more virulent in some areas than others. It is important to note that most of the conflicts in Plateau particularly in the last two decades or so, are linked directly and sometimes indirectly to the dialectics of pluralism and identity politics in the city of Jos, the state capital (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2014: 217).

As a matter of fact a majority of intergroup conflicts in various parts of the world such as we find in Nigeria hinge on primordial group identities mainly ethnicity and religion. Whether ethnicity and religion are the real issues or merely serve as platforms for other issues is a different ball game.

Post and Vicker (1973), Nnoli (1978) and Anugwom (1997) among others underpin the material or economic bases of conflicts between groups. As a matter of fact, while arraying the basic patterns of conflict in the immediate post-independence era in Nigeria, Post and Vicker (1973), argue that:

The basic sources of conflict was mobilization of the people, not towards some transcending national loyalty but rather towards identification with an intermediate, most often in situations of competition between sections… Conversely, not only the mobilization of resources but their distribution was an important source of inter-sectional competition and conflicts… (in Nwanegbo, 2003: 18).

The view that economic interest is, by and large, at the root of most human actions has been subjected to both theoretical and ideological debates. As a matter of fact, an essential premise of Marxist theory is that "it is not men's ideals, philosophies or religions that determine their social consciousness, but on the contrary, their economic or natural existence that determines the social consciousness" (Marx and Engels in Akpuru-Aja, 1997: 2). Notwithstanding the fact that Marx's *economic determinism* has been vigorously attacked, that economic factor determines, or at least is a major determinant of the form of politics, culture, religion, law and so on, cannot be reasonably denied. Our position here therefore is that conflict, particularly intergroup ethno-religious conflict and concomitant manipulative communication must be analysed in the light of the foregoing. This takes us to the issue of communication.

For Berdo (1960) communication is by and large "a dynamic interactive process". In particular, he explains that "If we accept the concept of process, we view events and relationship as dynamic on-going, ever-changing, continuous. When we label something as a process, we also mean that it does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events. It's not static or at rest. It is moving. The ingredients within a process interact, each affects all the other". Berdo's (1960) communication model is associated with a series of steps with eight identifiable components. These are: (1) message sender, (2) encoder, (3) the message, (4) channel of communication, (5) perception of the message (6) decoding process, (7) action, (8) feedback (in Chendan, 1987). The provisions of this model is no doubt incisive, nevertheless its application here appears quite limited. This is because while this study is not necessarily about formal organizations, the application of the model appears to make greater sense in formal organization.

For Laswell (in McBride *et al*, 1985:285) however, emphasis is on the fact that one cannot suitably describe a communication action without answering some basic questions: who said what, by what channel, to whom and with what effect? As a corollary, he identified five useful parameters of appraising communication effects. They are: (a) identification of transmitters (sources), (b) analysis of message content, (c) study of transmission channels, (d) audience identification, and (e) evaluation of effect. This model is particularly useful because it highlights the key sectors and questions in a communication.

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on power theory. As a conceptual frame of analysis, power is useful in exploring and explaining the nature of the relationship that dictates roles in social and political processes. The nature and use of power has been a major concern of many thinkers such as Machiavelli (1469 – 1527), Hobbes (1651), Michels (1949), Laswell and Kaplan (1950), Morgenthau (1986), and others. In a nutshell, power precept transcends "the realm of formal institutions to focus on the real motives and objectives of human beings which lie behind all political activity and institution - building" (Gauba, 2003: 249). The implication of this is that power is tangentially seen as the ability to make people do what they would not otherwise have done, such that the central focus of power worldview is "how groups or persons dominate, get their own way or are best able to pursue their own interest in societies" (Allison in McLean and McMillan, 2003: 431). Along this path, March (1966) in his work, "The Power of Power" regards the concept of power as 'an act of *real-politik'* which is invariably immuned from moral evaluation.

Taking cognizance of the forgoing perspectives, the theory of power and power relations hinge on the framework put forward by Michel (1949: 207) when he argued that "he who has acquired power will almost always endeavour to consolidate it and to extend it". The bottom-line is that power must be recognized as a relationship where *"A" has the capacity to dictate to "B"*. Thus we can also state that power relationship is conceptual, purposive and dynamic. It is not just a mere abstraction; it is a mental construct, yet it is practical, or concise. It is practical in the sense that it explains reality. The dynamic attributes of power hinge on the fact that over time power relations also change, becoming stronger or weaker depending on whose side the factors of power aggregate more. Whereas it may be appropriate to recognize the centrality of power and to see politics alongside Robertson (1993: 394) as "ultimately, the exercise of power" at both theoretical and practical levels we are confronted with the problem of measuring power. Thus, besides open conflict, particularly in heterogeneous or inter group power relations, it is often difficult to explain conflictive power relations.

In a nutshell, alongside Pye (1962), Elaigwu (1993, 2005), Jega (2003), Best (2004, 2007), Sani (2007) Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2009, 2014) this paper further interrogates identity politics in relation to ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis by examining communication factor. In line with the foregoing, the key proposition of

this paper is that ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis are largely effects or responses to   communication narratives by ethno-religious leaders and activists.   Accordingly, this paper is hinged on two interrelated propositional hypotheses (i) major social forces in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis often take recourse to provocative communication (ii) Provocative communications has significant effect on the generation and prosecution of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis

2.   Social Reality and Conflictive Issues in Jos Metropolis

Jos, the capital of Plateau state, has grown steadily. With clement and temperate weather, the city has today become a cosmopolitan: "with residents drawn from the different parts of the country and from other parts of the world. The residents have also lived in peace with both the indigenes and with one another since the founding of Jos as an urban centre" (Best, 2007:5). It first became a state capital in 1967, following the creation of Benue-Plateau state. A colonial creation, initially set up in 1907 by tin miners who came to the near 2000m above sea level plateau, soon after the imposition of indirect rule. It was largely sustained by the missions who soon established their headquarters in the city (Morrison, 1976; Blench, 2004). With the opening of rail line from the south, the emergent city quickly attracted migrants from all over Nigeria to work in the tin mines and related service industries.

By tradition, the city of Jos is believed to have been founded between 1902 and 1915 on land belonging to the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere ethnic groups (Best, 2007). As it turned out, most of these are now Christians at least by identity. With the inflow of immigrants and the rapid growth of the city, coupled with the prolonged stay and contributions of immigrants to the growth, there has also been increased agitation for more political hold and prominence. This is particularly true for the Hausa / Fulani, who are mostly associated with Muslim identity. This agitation is based on the claim of indigeneship of Jos, which is rejected and resisted by the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere indigenous ethnic groups. The indigenous ethnic groups collectively insisted that Hausa/Fulani are strangers or mere settlers and not indigenes. This has pitched the Hausa/Fulani against the indigenous population in an intense bi-polar contest (Best, 2007, Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2014).

The contest is facilitated by the prism of religion yet the contest is largely driven by cut-throat zero-sum competitions for state distributed resources and opportunities. The provisions of the Nigerian constitution have not helped matter either. For instance, notwithstanding grey areas, on the issue of indigeneship and citizenship question, the power to issue Certificate of Indigeneship is exercised by the Local Government Authority. This is instrumental to a chain of consequences. Employment access to public and civil service is determined largely by indigeneship status. Since indigeneship certification is done at the level of Local Government Authorities, control of the Local Government Authorities is considered crucial and indeed zero-sum game. In this way access to various levels of public and civil service as well as political representation and political office generally are determined by indigeneship status. Simply stated, so much benefit can or may not accrue to persons largely on the strength of being or not being an indigene.

In line with the foregoing, accounts of the immediate cause of the 1994 and 2001 conflicts are instructive. On April 12, 1994, there was ethno-religious conflicts between Hausa / Fulani and Berom / Anaguta / Afizere natives over the appointment of someone perceived as non-indigene as Chairman of Jos North Local Government Council. In the process, multi-million naira Jos Main Market was set ablaze. Seven years later, on September 7, 2001, similar violence conflict between Muslim Hausa / Fulani and Christian indigenes erupted again. It was over political appointment in Jos North Local Government Area. The conflicts in Jos city particularly those of 1994 and 2001 in the foregoing are largely manifestations of resort to bipolar identity differentiation in the contest for benefits from the state. Although the contests are largely waged on ethnic and religious terrains, there is no doubt that they are rooted substantially in the quest for zero-sum accesses that border on exclusionist control and distribution of public resources and benefits. The high points of conflictive issues Jos metropolis are many and we have identified some.

3.   Identity Consciousness and Factors of Intergroup Conflict in Jos Metropolis

The first high point or factor in identity consciousness and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos metropolis is traceable to Nigeria's 1986 membership of Organization of Islamic Conference. Nigerian membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference, OIC, was accompanied by hardening of positions in inter-group relations. As Elaigwu (1993:21) points out, from January 1986, every action of the military government at that time became suspect to various religious groups. Issues which never mattered before in inter-group relations took a new saliency. Nigerians had always quarreled over representation in federal institutions, but usually such conflicts were along ethnic, geo-ethnic and state lines of distinctions. Suddenly the religious devil added its mark to Nigeria's already

complex resource allocation problem. Membership of the Armed Forces which used to be seen in state or geo-ethnic terms became a victim of the new religious perception prism.

Against this background, the imperatives of the second factor, 1991 split of Jos LGA need to be appreciated. After five years in office as the military president of Nigeria, the General Ibrahim Babangida regime created 89 new local governments all over the country. In the process, what was hitherto Jos LGA was split into: Jos North and Jos South LGAs. The area covered by the new Jos North LGA was confined to the stronghold of the Hausa / Fulani Muslims in the city. This did not go down well with the indigenous population, who are mainly Berom, Anaguta and Afizere. They were particularly irked because: (a) the local government was split without due consultation and approval from them. (b) the mode of creating the local government was largely clandestine. It was this lack of consultation and the clandestine way in which the split was hatched and actualized that made Berom Elder's Council (in a memoranda to Justice Aribiton Fibersima Commission of Inquiry into the riots of 12 April 1994) to posit that the split was "a plan by the Hausa/Fulani to take over Jos from its ancestral owners" (in Best, 2007:52). Even though for the Hausas, due process was followed in the creation of Jos North LGA, the major land mark of the exercise was that it sowed the seed that has capacity to undermine trust and peaceful existence in the city.

> The major points of Berom enragement include:
- It exercises large portions of the indigenes of Berom and Afizere away into Jos South. This, the indigenes argued was to erode their age long numerical advantage.
- It left few and numerically weak patches of Berom (Kabong) and the Anaguta and Afizere (Gwong) in Jos North LGA.
- Large chunks of the subjects of the Gbong Gwon Jos were exercised away into Jos South.
- Obvious case of gerrymandering that cut parts of Jos city, which were obviously north, into Jos South LGA. Efforts to de-create Jos North LGA, or re-adjust the boundary, also failed. The effect was further frustration and spiraling tension.

On the other hand, the 'architects' of Jos North LGA, who are largely Hausa/Fulani Muslims jubilated, believing that solution had been found to their 'long term marginalization' by the indigenes. The new local government, they posit will make it potentially easy for them to control their own affairs. It is an opportunity, they argue, to counter immense frustration from the indigenes in respect of political appointments, access to political processes and opportunities. Against these backdrops, it is not surprising that all elections and appointments after 1991 creation of local government have been accompanied, indeed marred, by intense competition and cut-throat tension and even open violent conflict. This underlines the fact that most of the manifest conflicts that has occurred in the area since the split of Jos LGA into North and South, including the April 1994 and September 2001 outbursts, were in the attempt by both groups to respond to the matters arising from the 1991 split of the local government (Best, 2007 and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2014). This is largely because rather than all-inclusive due process that targets win-win situation, the local government creation exercise by the Federal Government under General Ibrahim Babangida was by all intentions and practices exclusivist. As the foregoing accounts show, the structure and processes or behavior of the state particularly its winner-takes all electoral system are instrumental to the conflict in Jos city. This is because it plays significant part in the transformation of latent plural social forces into open and petrifying conflicts.

4.   Communication Structures and Processes in Jos Ethno-Religious Conflicts

The sources of ethno-religious messages are, broadly speaking, ethnic values and leaders as well as revealed texts and interpretations made out of the texts by various religious authorities and identity activists. Since ethnic identities are many, the sources and media of ethnic messages also tend to vary even within the same ethnic group. The implication is that, though opinions differ on a wide range of issues they aggregate once a common 'danger' signal is identified. For the religious identities, the Koran and the Bible are the major sources. Even at this, differing interpretation of these texts have led to multiplicity of sects and denominations within the two broad folds.

Although Islamic values and interests are propagated by a broad section of Muslim clerics and opinion leaders, Ja'amatul Nasril Islam (JNI), Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in Nigeria (SCIAN), Council of Ulama (CU) and Muslim Society of Nigeria (MSN), Muslim Students Society (MSS) appear to be the most visible. Added to these formalized organizations, there are also less visible and sundry sub-groups within the Muslim fold. Typical examples are the Young Muslim Association of Nigeria and the Tijamiya Muslim Group, both of whom were active participants in the Jos intersects conflict of 1980. In recent times Boko Haram sect has gained unparalleled prominence in many parts of northern Nigeria, especially the Northeast geopolitical zone.

It is important to note that these sundry groups often expound extreme views which in turn impact variously on Muslims in their relationships with fellow Muslims and Non-Muslims. Although in his assessment, Sani (2007) points out that these bodies have been very effective in sustaining the "integral validity" of Muslims in Northern states of Nigeria by ensuring that Muslims "have one voice and a well-constructed platform for articulating their corporate political interest", there is doubt whether this has always tallied with the overall national or corporate interest of Nigeria. Very importantly, it underlines the complex nature of ethno-religious contestations in Jos Metropolis and the whole of the Middlebelt region.

On the other hand, although structurally, organizations like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Northern Elders Forum (NOSCEF) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) are ready equivalents of SCIAN, etc for obvious reasons they appear not to be fairly matched. The grounds and consequences of this miss watch will be handled later. Suffice it, however, to say straight away that Christian organizations exist largely to propagate the values and interest of Christians. As in the case of Muslim transmitter organizations, there is also need to appraise the existence of these organizations against the backdrop of the corporate interest of the nation.

We have also identified other transmitters in the manipulative communication process in ethno-religious conflicts in the Middlebelt. Some of the most active in the ethno-religious conflicts in the Middlebelt are as follows: Afizere Development Association, ADA; Bassa Community Associon, BCA; Berom Elders Council, BEC; Gemai Unity and Development Associon, GUDA; Jasawa Development Association, JDA; Pan Development Association, PDA; Tiv Development Association, TDA and Tiv Youth Organization, TYO.

There are also large umbrella organizations for the propagation of ethnic and community values and interests. The most notable, though most times remotely or indirectly invovled are Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Northern Elders Forum (NEF), Middlebelt Forum (MBF), Afenifere, Odua People's Congress (OPC), Ohaneze, MASSOB, etc. Those occupying traditional institutions such as chiefdom rulers and heads of various ethnic identities in and outside the Middlebelt have also played notable roles in the manipulative communication process found in the Middlebelt. Typical examples are the Ohimege Opanda in Toto conflict, Gbom Gwom Jos in Jos city conflicts, Long Gamai of Shendam and Emir of Wase in various conflicts in Plateau South Senatorial District.

In analyzing the message content, it has to be borne in mind that religious messages hinge on two basic principles - the revealed text and interpretations pronounced by past and present religious authorities. These interpretations often seek to address concrete or felt needs of followers. Whereas in most of the messages disseminated in sermons by imams and priests could with all intent and purposes pacifist, they do also or have the potential, to ignite violent conflicts. In other words, the first possible level of manipulation is the content of the messages and interpretations associated with various ethno-religious organizations and individuals.

Case I: Channels of Communication Effect in Jos Ethno-Religious Conflict

We are interested in the channels by which communications are transmitted. Data available show that the most prominent channels for the transmission of ethno-religious values is the socialization process. Our investigations confirm the fact that this begins in the family, then schools and whence through ethno-religious organizations. Ethnic organizations have structures that enable them interact from time to time; on their part most faith groups meet at least once a week. The popular press especially radio, television, newspapers / magazines also play prominent roles in the transmission of ethno-religious values.

The most prominent, however, is the use of pamphlets and leaflets. Evidence shows that in the weeks leading to the September 2001 violent conflicts in the city of Jos, that provocative slogans, pamphlets and hand bills were freely employed by both sides of the conflict as instruments of manipulative communication. In challenge of the appointment of Alhaji Muktar Muhammad, a 'non-indigene', as the Coordinator of National Poverty Eradication Programme for Jos North Local Government Area, LGA, a group of youths, championing indigene perspective, made inscriptions and pasted handbills at various places with which they issued threats and called names. See the accompanying Plate 1. In response to threats and name-calling expressed in Plate 1, a group which called itself *Hausa / Fulani Youths Under 25* countered with even greater threat. See Plate 2 below.

As evident in the build up to September 2001 conflict in Jos, pamphlets, handbills and graffitis were also used as veritable communication channels to intimidate and threaten real or perceived opponents. Grafittis were employed on visible perimeter walls and highway side rocks. In general terms, while religious identities are mostly reinforced in mosques/ churches and religious activities, ethnic identities get their boost through cultural meetings, events and festivals.

Plate 1: *Name-calling and Threats issued by Indigenous Youths, protesting the appointment of a 'non-indigene' as National Poverty Alleviation Programme Coordinator in Jos North LGA*

> 1) If you can't read, atleast you know what the sign above means: Dangerrr!
> 2) Trace your roots before it is too late.
> 3) The devil has no parking place in Jos North.
> 4) I believe you will like to take care of your family, boy! Run for your life. Run! Run!! Run!!!.
> 5) You are warned again not to step in.
> 6) Please go and tell them you are not interested any more because your life is at stake.
> 7) This office is not meant for Hausa/Fulani or any non-indigene.
> 8) Go and teach Islamic Religious Knowledge, it is better.
> 9) Mukhtar Muhammad is a wonderer. If you want to stay alive don't step in.
> 10) If you have forgotten about 1997(sic) we have not. Don't let history repeat itself.

Source: Adapted from the Letter of Jasawa Development Association, National Headquarters, Jos, to Governor Joshua Chibi Dariye, dated 20 August, 2001.

Plate 2: *Threats issued by Hausa/Fulani Youths in the build up to September 2001 Conflict in Jos City*

> 1) Rose to claim our rights.
> 2) Resolved never to be passive again if we are subjected to tyranny and injustice.
> 3) Yes, the loss (sic) of a few families wouldn't bother us. After all for every single Anaguta's life and their families, there are thousands of other Hausa/Fulanis. Let's see who blinks first.
> 4) Jos North Local Government is not only historically located in the middle of our community but was actually created absolutely at our own request, with violent resistence from those calling us names today. Ironically they are now claiming to be the only indigenes vested with rights and privileges at our expense. Is this justice?
> 5) Rights and privileges at our own expense. Is this justified?
> 6) Yes, the devil has no parking space in Jos North. Frank Tardy is already doing it for him.
> 7) Death is the best friends of hamas. Be best assured that we will do it even better.
> 8) The seat is dearer to us than our lives. In that case, do you have the monopoly of violence?
> 9) Blood for blood.

Source: From Best, S. G. (2007) *Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State, Nigeria.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books pp.63-64

Case II: Data on Preferred Channels of Communication in Periods of Ethno-Religious Tension

To ascertain the preferred channels of communication in periods of ethno-religious tension, two inter-related statements were posed to the respondents. They had to do with the communication channels which the respondents usually rely upon under normal circumstance and periods of ethno-religious tension.

The most visible pattern of reliance for direction and information under a normal circumstance and even during periods of ethno-religious tension is radio and television. While as high as 459 respondents, that is, 56.7%, rely on radio and television under normal circumstances, we have 441 respondents (54.4%) It is also interesting to observe that, while 39 respondents (4.8%), and 39 respondents (4.8%), relied on town criers and community meetings respectively, for information under normal circumstance, the number went down to 28 respondents (3.5%), and 34 respondents (4.2%), respectively, during moments of ethno-religious tensions.

Table 3: *Channels of communication under normal circumstance*

S/N	Channels of information	Respondents	Percentages
1	Radio/Television	459	56.7
2	Newspaper/magazines	141	17.4
3	Town criers	39	4.8
4	Community leaders	42	5.2
5	Community meetings	39	4.8
6	Sermons by Priests/Imams	44	5.4
7	Can't really say	46	5.7
	Total	**810**	**100.00**

Source: Biereenu-Nnabugwu, M. (2009) "The State and the Dialectics of Ethno-Religious Conflict: A Case Study of Nigeria's Middlebelt, 1979 – 2005" Un-published PhD Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. P. 156

Conversely, it is important to point out that, whereas 42 respondents (5.2%) said that under normal circumstance they would rely on community leaders, the number of those who would rely on community leaders during moments of ethno-religious tensions increased to 108 respondents (13.3%); a 257.14% increase. Major implications of these are that radio/ television, newspapers / magazines and community leaders are very important channels of communication by which the people are reached at all times. Of all these, community leaders have increased prominence during periods of ethno-religious conflicts in the Middlebelt zone.

Table 4: *Distribution of channels of information during ethno-religious tensions*

S/N	Channels of information during tension	Respondents	Percentages
1	Radio/Television	441	54.4
2	Newspaper/magazines	110	13.6
3	Town criers	28	3.5
4	Community leaders	108	13.3
5	Community meetings	34	4.2
6	Sermons by Priests/Imams	43	5.3
7	Can't really say	46	5.7
	Total	**810**	**100.00**

Source: Biereenu-Nnabugwu, M. (2009) "The State and the Dialectics of Ethno-Religious Conflict: A Case Study of Nigeria's Middlebelt, 1979 – 2005" Un-published PhD Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. P.157

Although we did not ask for the specific stations that each of the respondents listen to and the frequency of doing so, there is no doubt that for most, the stations must include those whose signals are clearly received in parts of the Middlebelt zone. They include various state radio and television stations and the federally run stations in various parts of the Middlebelt and beyond such as the Federal Radio Corporation Nigeria, Kaduna; and Nigeria Television Authority, Abuja. It needs be pointed out straight away, that these stations are not ideologically or value neutral. They represent or tend to perpetuate a value that is consistent or representative of the power structure and contests for control, influence and domination.

Case III: On Communication and Ethno-religious Configurations
It is also important to point out that there is wide disparity in public information gathering culture between the broad segments of ethno-religious configurations in the Middlebelt. This fact is widely captured by *The News* Magazine of January 15, 2001 which states in clear terms that:

No section of the country exhibits the culture of news and information craving as the Muslim Hausa-Fulani of the northern states of Nigeria. They are undoubtedly well informed about public and salient national issues. They are sometimes referred to as the 'radio people'. They exhibit a high radio-listening culture such that they are likely the first to get breaking news from persuasive and highly influential world media as BBC, VOA, FRI, DW and CNN. From the lowly artisan who works by the roadside, to even labourers and highly placed officials and traditional rulers, are found to be passionate about gathering news and information through radio-listening. This has enhanced their dialogue and persuasion power (in Sani: 34).

In contrast, Christians, particularly in the Middlebelt, lack the culture of news and information gathering. This is largely because "they are ill disposed to reading newspapers, listening to radio, and watching TV news and in engaging in robust debate over salient national issues, yet they make no effort at reversing the trend. Consequently, it has affected their unity, power of persuasion and political negotiation and participation, and also their economic status" (Sani: 34 - 35). The two scenarios above are hardly the same. While members of the minority ethnic groups in the Middlebelt are substantially Christians, the Hausa-Fulani majority ethnic groups are predominantly Muslims. To some extent, each of these broad groups exhibit unique attitude to information that differentiate them from the other. For example, some of the Christian denominations, such as the *Deeper Life Bible Church* discourage or even bar their members from owning and watching television.

Transmission channels make it possible for ethno-religious identities to reach target or identifiable audiences. Largely because of the varied nature of both the sources and content of the messages, complex and varied range of messages reach the individual members of the target audience. Over time, the messages lead to ossification of specific notions and values about self-group and other group. Attempt to evaluate the impact of manipulation on ethno-religious conflict, should as necessity take cognizance of the fact that communication messages are complex and varied. To be effective, such communication must *inter alia* be believable, relate to life experiences, and be of interest to the target audience. In being believable, the message may not necessarily be truthful. In line with our earlier stated model of communication process and frame of analysis, it is also necessary that we explore some concrete situation to establish the impact of manipulation ethno-religious conflicts in the Middlebelt.

5. Concluding Analysis

In this paper, we interrogated the interface between communication and intergroup conflict with ethnic and religious prisms as terrains of contestations. In doing this, two main questions were relied upon and tested. Our first finding is that opinions of people in the Middlebelt on whether or not ethnic and religious leaders encourage followers to partake in violent intergroup conflict is far from being unanimous. While 33.2% of the 810 respondents say ethno-religious leaders actually encourage violent intergroup by what they communicate or fail to communicate, 28.9% say they do not. Those who opine they do, say they encourage violent intergroup conflict by directly or in-directly telling members to kill or take revenge. One possible explanation for the divergent views is the fact that ethnic and religious leaders are not a monolithic. Even within the two broad religious identities, there are sub-groups that espouse views that are diametrically opposed to one another. Such is more or less also the same within various ethnic identities in the area.

A very important point to note however is that all those concerned do not need to agree before violent intergroup conflict can take place. It needs just a handful to buy into the violent conflictive enterprise for violent conflict to take place. Secondly, ethnic and religious leaders constitute an important segment that should not be ignored in the quest for genuine or meaningful management of intergroup conflict that hinge on ethnic and religious prisms. In this regard, broad based involvement of ethnic and religious leaders is considered a sine qua non for long and short term solutions to intergroup conflicts not only in Jos metropolis but also other parts of the region and country.

Our second finding is that most of respondents revere or have great regard to their ethnic and religious leaders. In specific terms, even situations where people are aware that the actions and inactions of such leaders are incorrect, most respondents (only 5.2% of the respondents say they will ignore him or her) are inclined to actions that are supportive or accommodative. The import of this is that ethnic and religious leaders, especially the later exercise enormous authority and influence on the people. It goes to not only support our first finding, but also the fact that such leaders are important in meaningful calculations on overcoming the ethno-religious conflict in the city.

The study also found out that in reality ethnic and religious leaders through their actions and inactions provoke or support intergroup conflicts. As the test case shows, actions and counter actions of Christian and Muslim leaders were largely responsible for the Hausa – Fulani and Tarok violent conflicts that took place within the period under study in Wase LGA of Plateau state. Nevertheless, a major point to note here is that ethno-religious conflicts reflect a complex matrix. This is on account of the fact that intergroup conflict could, and do take a variety of courses.

While some are spontaneous others brew over a long period of time, yet many more others are in between, and in differing combinations.

Our recommendations follow from our major findings. The first is that peace building efforts should encourage people-oriented all-inclusive democratic institutions and processes that are equipped and sustained by broad spectrum of participation profile. Secondly, ethnic and religious leaders, civil society activists as well as youth and women advocacy groups should be involved in cross-identity activities. The focus should be on deliberate socialization process that is devoted to accommodation and appreciation of the others essence and viewpoint. Thirdly, mechanism should be put in place for early warning signs.

In conclusion, communication is hardly a neutral or value free activity. Ethnic and religious leaders knowingly and unknowingly say or do things that suggest a line of action for their followers. A way forward for curbing intergroup conflicts in Jos metropolis and elsewhere in the Middlebelt region, and indeed the whole Nigeria is deliberation and accommodation

Acknowledgments

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