UNDERSTANDING THE INDIGENE-SETTLER CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE: TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF PRIMORDIAL AND INSTRUMENTAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Nigeria is a heterogeneously constituted society where recurring clashes and bloodletting have become regular features of the relationships between many of the ethnic groups in the country, such as between the Berom people of Plateau State and the Hausa-Fulani. These conflicts have been highly associated with the issue of indigene versus settler status whereby indigene status provide “indigenes” the identity, recognition, affinity, and meaning for individual members of the group acting individually or collectively to defend group interests while non-indigenes, on the other hand, wage war against host communities to defend theirs. The perennial problems associated with the inter-communal and ethno-religious rivalries seem to defy known conflict resolution strategies such that the insurgence seem to have gradually overwhelmed governments’ capacities and apparatus as the crises are being managed rather than resolved, and these conflicts may be growing deadlier and more numerous with time. However, there seems to be a lack of robust and comprehensive theoretical frameworks in understanding the underlying interactions and factors that sustain the incessant conflicts as well as defying the efforts to enshrine perpetual peace. This paper attempted to describe the indigene-settler conflict in Plateau State, Nigeria with the aim of integrating the primordial and instrumental theoretical frameworks as were applied in describing the Rwandan and Burundian carnages of the 1990s. Secondary data from literature were used to make inferences and deductions that provide a broad understanding of the problem from a grounded theoretical point of view which informed recommendations for dealing with the challenges posed by the indigene-settler conflicts in the area of study. The results of the discussion show that the incessant ethnic conflicts in Plateau State arise partly from the primordial notion that ethnic identities and group cohesion are at the root of the crises while the instrumentalist idea is that the ethnic conflicts are as a result of the manipulation and politicizing of ethnic grievances and frustrations by certain key actors. However, it was concluded that although differing theoretical frameworks each have their strengths; they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, it was suggested that there should be conscious efforts in the development and integration of comprehensive theoretical frameworks applied to understanding the conflicts aimed at fostering scholarship and policy that allow for making effective and holistic interventions for perpetual peacebuilding.

KEYWORDS: indigene-settler, ethnic conflict, theoretical framework, Plateau State, Nigeria

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
Nigeria, is a multicultural society with over 250 ethnic enclaves, three different major religions; Christianity, Islam, and the African Traditional Religion. It is easily considered the third most ethnically diverse society in the world. There is also a growing atheist population in the country. This diversity in both ethnicity and
religion has been the source of conflict and uprising. This is not entirely because difference is a bad thing but because it can be used to stoke negative sentiment for negative agenda to thrive (Sayne, 2012). Due to the sensitive fabric that Nigeria is made of, questions of settler and indigene have been thrown into major discussions. Some could credit it to the ongoing violence of minority tribes and communities in the North Central and North East part of the country. The fear of going extinct and becoming strangers in your country as a result is one reason the terms ‘settlers’ and ‘indigene’ have been brought to question and who reserves the right to earn these titles. Settlers in this context may not only refer to those from outside Nigeria, but those who are from within but of other origins.

Recurring clashes and bloodletting have become regular features of the relationships between many ethnic groups in Nigeria, such as the relationships between the Hausa/Fulani and some indigenous communities in Plateau State. The issue of indigenes and settlers has remained for many decades as the principal source of intractable intra/inter communal violent conflicts in the country. As a result of the intransigent trend, many communities have been destroyed with recorded cases of colossal loss of lives and properties, the displacement of millions of people who have become vulnerable to various forms of abuses, such as rape, hunger, infections, epidemics and other heinous consequences.

However, history shows that issues bordering on communal conflicts and inter-ethnic crises are common phenomena as conflict is a reality of social relations at all levels (individual, group, and society). African communities have experienced inter-communal dynastic feuds or conflicts since pre-colonial times up till the colonial, and now in the post-colonial times. The present day intractable conflicts associated with the indigene-settler controversy in various parts of Nigeria stem from the conception, definition, and perceptions about the characteristics of an indigene and that of a settler – which determines the rights of indigenes over non-indigenes (settlers). According to some writers (such as Nwagwu, 2016), the value of “indigene status” arose from the emergence of unhealthy ethnic-based divergent interests, desires, and aspirations in crude competition for scarce resources to meet the conflicting demands of human relations in a defined society. As a heterogeneously constituted society, ethnic-based conflicts flourish, and distrust amongst tribes is very high – in the midst of illiteracy, sentiments, and the tussle for power all over the country. The indigene status provides “indigenes” the identity, recognition, affinity, and meaning for individual members of the group acting individually or collectively to defend group interests while non-indigenes, on the other hand, wage war against host communities to defend theirs (Best, 2006; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Otite & Albert, 1999) and as such the nation struggles to accommodate ethnic and religious differences among its people. Being considered as the world’s third most ethnically diverse nation with a population of about 200 million split evenly amongst Christians and Muslims with some animist faithful, hundreds of historic political units, cultures, languages, and microeconomies jostling each other; the country is faced with real challenges for development, nation-building, and security.

Evidence abound based on available information in the public domain to illustrate the background and context of the indigene-settler cultural dichotomies in Plateau State, Nigeria. For example, there are published reports that sought to answer questions about the practice or implementation of policies such as the Federal Character or citizenship laws which may be potentially discriminatory to “settlers” (i.e., all those who do not possess certificates of indigeneity or who are not perceived to be indigenous to an area). There is also information on the processes (or lack of processes) in place for those who are indigenous to an area in situations where local governments may provide preferential treatments to those who are indigenous to an area; situations where the lack of access to indigeneity impacts the ability of individuals to access services and rights in certain areas (for instance, access to education, ownership of land, access to employment in the public sphere, etc.); information on incidents where local authorities may try to persuade ‘settlers’ to return to their area of origin; particular incidents where the social perception of a particular group of ‘settlers’ have led to violence and so on. Such reports (e.g., Asylum Research Consultancy ARC, 2018) help to identify relevant areas or potential conflict situations that can be considered by decision makers in assessing policy applications and appraisals.
Similarly, the German, Austrian and Swiss Departments (D-A-CH Kooperation Asylwesen Deutschland-Osterreich-Schweiz, 2013) published that “in every state and local government area (LGA) in Nigeria, the population is divided into “indigene” and “non-indigene” citizens or into “host” and “settler” communities. In theory, the indigenes are the people who can trace their roots back to the original inhabitants of a particular place. In practice, however, it is very difficult to prove historically who the first settlers were in a specific area. Indigenes and non-indigenes have usually lived in the same place for many generations, and the divide between them simply corresponds to ethnic and linguistic differences.” Also, with reference to Plateau State, Higazi (2018) adds that in Plateau political discourse, the “indigenes” are the first comers (or natives) and the “settlers” are the latecomers to a particular territory (with implied lack of traditional land and institutions there). Consequently, the competition for resources has intensified, and the indigeneity problem has resulted in increased tensions and violence.

A publication by the Geneva Declaration (2011) spoke of an indigene or citizenship crisis whereby the constitution privileges local descent over residency. Those who leave their state of origin risk becoming ‘second-class citizens’ in another part of the federation. Within a country of more than 250 ethnic groups [about the world’s third largest ethnic composition], the discrimination against non-indigenes in all six geopolitical zones threatens to tear the country apart. Indigene status is an important tool in the politics of identity and labelling. Differing interpretations of local history are applied to mark the boundaries of who belongs and who is left out.

According to Ehrhardt (2017), the negative effects of indigenship is weakening the uniformity of Nigerian citizenship; politicizing ethnic and religious identities; marginalizing Nigeria’s minority ethnic groups; increasing discrimination of ethnic and religious “non-indigenes” and even causing ethnic and religious conflict. On the violence in Jos, Plateau State, for example, the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2012) reported that “the indigene principle, or indigeneity (that is, local origin) means that some groups control power and resources in states or LGAs which others – who have migrated for different reasons – are excluded. This gives rise to both grievances and fierce political competition, which too often lead to violence. The concept of indigeneity was given constitutional force at Independence in 1960 to protect the ethnic minorities from being submerged by the larger Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba groups and preserve their cultural and political identity and traditional institutions of governance. Religion is also pertinent, albeit secondary factor, which reinforces underlying tension and, over the years, has assumed greater importance, especially since the return of democracy in May, 1999. Fierce and unregulated political competition characterized by ethnic mobilization and violence, economic deregulation and rampant corruption, have severally exacerbated ethnic, religious and regional fault lines. The notion of national citizenship appears to have abrogated both ethnicity and ancestry.

Higazi (2018) highlights more on the Jos indigene-settler situation that Christians form a substantial majority on the Jos Plateau but there is also a large Muslim population, among ethnic groups considered to be ‘indigenous’ and among ‘settlers’ and these categories can be contested as they ignore the complexities of inter-marriage, longterm residency, and the ambiguities of customary land tenure but they are popularly used and those regarded as the indigenes of a particular area tend to hold on strongly to such ideas of primordial belonging. This is the case not only in Plateau State but also throughout much of the country. Disputes over indigeneity and tensions between Christians and Muslims in the political sphere, over land, and to some extent socially, have sparked violence in urban and rural areas. The unrest and contestation over identity and land is linked to distinct history and sociology of the Jos Plateau. Communal violence in other parts of central and northern Nigeria has a comparable basis, but there are variations in the pattern of violence and in the nature of the grievances.

In the ensuring complexities, the Human Rights Watch (2006) explained that an increasing number of Nigerians find themselves trapped in the ‘stateless’ category of non-indigenes and in some cases this is because their families have been living on the land they now occupy for generations and no longer remember precisely where their ancestors migrated from. In other cases, non-indigenes may know where their families originated from but cannot persuade local officials there that they are bona fide indigenes. Furthermore, obtaining indigenization may not necessarily be formal as individuals may apply to local authorities for
indigene certificates that are issued at the discretion of local officials who usually follow informal, ad hoc channels that yield results that are broadly seen as legitimate. In other circumstances, local governments exercise their discretion in an opaque or even arbitrary manner easily influenced by personal relationships, prejudice, and corruption – mostly in processes not open to any realistic manner of appeal (see also ARC, 2018; ICG, 2012). Funny though, trouble knocks at the door when the well-to-do buy up indigene certificates from multiple LGAs, then pick and choose among them like tickets to wealth.

Both the Human Rights Watch (2006) and the ICG (2012) reports suggest that the indigene principle promoted in the 1999 Constitution appears to be in conflict with citizenship provisions, against the notion from experts that residency rather than indigeneity should be the determining factor for citizenship. Such ambiguity of constitutional juxtaposition and contradiction has been neglected by both the federal executive and legislature (see also ARC, 2018; Ehrhardt, 2017).

Generally, supporters of the so-called “indigene clause” maintain that this status is meant to protect the rights of minority groups in states where indigenes are no longer a numerical majority such as in Kaduna and Plateau States, while critics of the “indigene clause” affirm that this distinction had led to a privileged status for some citizens and constituted a violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution.

The indigene-settler problem in other parts of Nigeria can be seen from other reports such as The Guardian Nigeria (2016), where indigenes of Lagos State came out to protest what they consider as undue discriminatory administration against bonafide indigenes of the state in what they consider as marginalization through the appointment of non-indigenes into key positions of the state, a development made worst by incidents such as a recent summary dismissal of 15 Permanent Secretaries that are Lagos indigenes. Conversely, some groups in Plateau State (such as the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) claim that the Fulani ‘indigenes’ of Bokkos LGA have been facing difficulty since the local government council stopped issuing indigene certificates to them which has prevented hundreds of them from Bokkos who want to further their education or join the Nigeria Police Force or the military/paramilitary on the basis of not having indigene forms (Viewpoint Nigeria, 2016). It is also worthy to note the agitations of indigenes of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja who threaten to take up arms if the government tries to displace them again. For example, Al Jazeera (2016) reported that the Iyah and Kpaduma community dwellers are among the indigenous people of the Nigerian capital with about nine ethnic groups numbering at least a million claiming Abuja as their ancestral homeland – though the relocation of the nation’s capital city from Lagos to Abuja has made Abuja become highly congested and over-populated, designating their only home as a ‘no-man’s land’.

The United States Institute for Peace (as cited in Sayne, 2012) reports that the costs of the violence look increasingly steep and, although the Nigerian government is known to not keep reliable records, media reports and other testimonies suggest that thousands of lives have been lost since the return of democracy to the country. The Human Rights Watch (2006) estimated that clashes between rival ethnic and religious groups on troubled Plateau State alone killed perhaps over 4,000 people in about ten years; a single outburst in southern Kaduna State claims over 2,000 lives. These and other places are especially troubled, yet the indigene-settler violence remains a nationwide problem. More complicated is the observation that sticks and machetes were once the weapons of choice but now the worst conflict zones witness attacks with more sophistication such as AK-47s, rocket launchers and time bombs or improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The use of mercenaries and ethnic militias have also arisen. In some places, the resulting chaos is opening up space for organized crime, such as kidnapping, smuggling, and banditry. There have also been series of assassinations of both indigenes and settlers (such as the gruesome murders of a serving senator and member of House of Representatives, as well as a serving military officer in Plateau State) and scores of other incidents which residents of Jos at one point referred to as ‘silent killing’. All these constitute challenges to Nigeria’s international reputation and status as an investment destination, thus hindering nation building and community development, as well as hinder the quest for national integration through gross discrimination.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Plateau State is home to over 50 ethnic groups and has therefore earned the title of ‘Mini-Nigeria’ and proclaimed the “Home of Peace and Tourism”, boasting of a diverse culture in which various tribes and clans have managed to coexist peacefully which, until recently, remained relatively untouched by ethnic conflict that plagues the rest of the country with recorded bouts of violence since 2001 to date (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2018). Despite the region’s peaceful nature, conflicts broke out and things have not returned to normal neither do they seem to following the killings of tens of thousands of people and destruction of properties including worship centers. However, some scholars argue that the use of indigene status is problematic because it fails to account for the high amount of migration within and into the country or the state boundaries that have changed over time. Unlike nations such as then United States of America where indigenous people (i.e., the Native Americans) were indisputably the first settlers, both indigines and non-indigines in Plateau State claim to have settled first in the area, thereby further complicating the process of allocating rights based on indigene status.

So far, the contextual background to the indigene-settler problem in Nigeria (and Plateau State in particular) emphasize on newspaper reports, social media postings, and the reports of organizations such as the Human Rights Watch (2006) report on government discrimination on both indigenes and non-indigenes in Nigeria, such that “the population of every state and local government in Nigeria is officially divided into two categories of citizens: those who are indigenes and those who are not. The indigenes of a place are those who can track their ethnic and geographical roots back to the community of people who originally settled there. Everyone else, no matter how long they or their families have lived in the place they call home, is, and always will be a non-indigene.” The endemic problem also represents what Kunovich and Randy (1999 in Olakunle et al, 2016) described as ‘ethnic intolerance’ – i.e., the unwillingness of an ethnic group to extend political, economic, and social rights to other ethnic groups, regardless of perceived similarities and differences in basic values, norms, or beliefs which usually manifest in form of protests and conflicts, ethnic solidarity and ethnic group political solidarity.

The perennial problems associated with the inter-communal and ethno-religious rivalries seem to defy known conflict resolution strategies as the insurgence seem to have gradually overwhelmed governments’ capacities and apparatus as the crises are being managed rather than resolved, and these conflicts may be growing deadlier and more numerous with time (Sayne, 2012). Despite responses from governments and other stakeholders, the scale and severity of the conflicts have also been further accentuated by the infiltration of the dreaded terrorist group known as Boko Haram (for example, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the December, 2010 attacks in Jos, saying in its video clip that “our creator has ordered us to wage war on everyone who does not embrace the religion of Islam after preaching to them” (Vanguard, 2010; Aghedo, Nwokolo, & Okigbo, 2019).

Unfortunately, many of the administrative lines government draws in many communities to help manage the problems of these dichotomies also fuel violence. For example, the thorny question of who is an indigene, meaning roughly the original inhabitant of a place, gives officials the leverage to use the slippery term of indigene to limit access to public resources such as land, schools, and government jobs (Nwagwu, 2016). Consequently, the population of every state and local government area (LGA) is divided into indigenes and settlers – people who cannot trace their roots back to earliest times. Settlers can still be Nigerian citizens, and are thus not completely stateless, but discrimination against them can provoke serious violence. Currently, there seems to be unclear grasps of the indigene-settler conflict in Plateau State which tends to be cladded with so much sentiments and confusion amidst frustration and grievances experienced in continuous ethnic rivalries and bloodbath. More so is the opinion of the author of this work that there is a lack of consensus of a grounded theoretical framework applied to describing the state-of-the-conflict. It becomes important to review the current state of thinking and public policy regarding the indigene-settler conflicts in Nigeria. It is also important to assess the progress made so far, and to focus more on future outcomes by understanding the factors that fuel the indigene-settler conflicts. This is because there has not been any
empirical work to date that shows the integration of differing theoretical frameworks in describing or the understandings of the indigene-settler conflicts in Plateau State and Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
This paper looks at the indigene-settler dichotomy in Plateau State with the aim of integrating different theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain or describe ethnic conflicts. Particularly, the paper takes a clue from the integration of primordialist and instrumentalist theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain some of the most profound ethnic conflict dimensions in Africa – such as the Rwandan and Burundian carnages of the 1990s – to explain the indigene-settler conflict in Plateau State, and by extension, Nigeria at large. The paper attempts to answer the questions of ‘what’, ‘why’, and ‘how’ or ‘who’ is involved in the interactions surrounding the indigene-settler problem in the area of interest.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The outcome of this study will provide the scientific community with a grounded theoretical framework that integrates different theoretical explanations for the recurring ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The paper will also be useful to policy makers as it provides a grounded theoretical framework that can be useful in identifying relevant areas of potential conflict situations which will inform decision makers in assessing policy applications and appraisals.

METHOD
This paper employed the explanatory research design to explain and account for the indigene-settler conflict in Plateau State, and Nigeria by extension using an integrative theoretical approach from the literature review. The paper relies upon secondary data sources obtained mostly from internet search, such as journal articles, specialized reports, book chapters, thesis reports, newspaper publications, social media content, as well as government reports/documents to make inferences and deductions about the variables of interest. The inclusion criteria for the selection of data was based on the keywords search. Explanatory and deductive methods of analysis were employed to make sense out of the data gathered and reviewed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
There several theories and approaches such as the functional-structuralism theory traced to Emile Durkheim; the elite theory with proponents such as Pareto Moska, Robert Mitchels, Wright Mills, Ortega Gasset among others; the ethnic competition theory; the traditional selectivity theory; and the theories of political economy that can be used to explain the indigene-settler conflicts in Nigeria and any such treatise must essentially consider theoretical discussions and explanations of the factors and conditions that influence the attitudes, dispositions, and perceptions of one group toward the other. These factors explain the acceptability and accommodation or otherwise of the one group by another. However, the theoretical approaches applied in this study are the primordial and instrumental theories of ethnic conflict which try to integrate other theoretical views based on the assumption that no single theory is robust enough to explain the dynamics of group conflicts. The primordial and instrumental theories of ethnic conflict broadly place other theories into one of the two.

Primordial Theory of Ethnicity: This theory explains that group ethnic and religious identities have deep social, historical, and genetic foundations and that the reason for the behavior of groups for ethnic and kinship affinity stems from certain subjective psychological forces that are internal to the individual which are connected to the individual human needs for security and survival. The primordial theory of ethnicity (also known as the essentialist approach) places its argument on the long history of ethnic affiliation as a defining characteristic for group categorization and the maintenance of cultural boundaries. The development of modern state has not succeeded in breaking kinship ties and culturally ascriptive attachments; rather it has strengthened the significance of identities. Thus primordialship is more concerned with the interrelationship between uniqueness and longevity of bounded cultures and the various distinct groups that incorporate them. This primordial attachment explains conflict in terms of psychological and cultural forces it invokes which is responsible for the ways in which individuals within a group understand and perceive themselves and others in their social relations (see Ross, 1993 as cited in Olakunle et al., 2016).
Hence, three major features can be identified: the overwhelming importance of ascribed identity/status; ethnic boundaries; and common ancestry – all of which represent the socio-biological currents in the primordial school of thought. **Instrumental Theory of Ethnicity:** The central argument of the instrumental theory is that ethnicity is mobilized when it is seen as a strategic tool for gaining access to certain resources in the state. Within the instrumentalist thought, group conflict or ethnic rivalry does not emerge directly from differences in ethnic identity, rather it arises only when ethnic identities are politicized or manipulated to generate political and socio-economic advantages for an ethnic group at the cost of depriving or neglecting other ethnies (see Che, 2016). Accordingly, instrumentalists point to factors other than ethnic identities to explain conflicts, including security concerns (Posen, 1993); competition and inequality (Gurr, 1994); and greed (Collier & Hoefllner, 2004). Sentiments of discontent underlying these factors suggest that ethnic conflicts, under instrumentalism, are commonly motivated by grievances/frustration (Ellingsen, 2000).

In relation to the primordial thought of ethnic rivalries and conflicts, instrumentalism appears a more nuanced theory as it recognizes the relevance of political and socio-economic structural dynamics to account for temporal and geographical variations in the occurrence of ethnic conflicts. However, Che (2016) points out that while instrumentalism highlights elite manipulation or politicization of ethnicity as the foundational source of grievances which include ethnic conflicts, it cannot independently explain why people easily, cooperatively, and effectively mobilize along ethnic lines – thus it must draw wisdom from primordialism in recognizing the power of ethnicity to perpetuate a sense of ‘common blood’, a sense of shared values, shared interests, shared threats, and, most fundamentally, a sense of solidarity which is indispensable for collective action. Whereas primordialism emphasizes mere differences in ethnic identities, instrumentalists accentuate ethnic grievances arising from the politicization of ethnic identity differences to explain ethnic conflicts and rivalries. **The Integrative Model**

The integrative model approach to explain ethnic conflicts such as the indigene-settler dichotomy shows an interconnection between, or a juxtaposition of standpoints wherein ethnic identity and grievances interrelate to increase insidious ethnic cohesion and the likelihood of ethnic group cohesion and the likelihood of ethnic conflict (Che, 2016). Che goes further to illustrate the integrative model using the cases of mass ethnic violence in Rwanda and Burundi of the early 1990s by reconstructing them as emanating from mutually reinforcing instrumentalist and primordialist sentiments and relating the model to conflicts between dominant and discriminated ethnic groups (ethno-political conflicts). The model also recognizes the belligerent danger of group cohesion by drawing upon the perceived threats from out-groups that engender solidarity within the in-group in response to the threats (see Stein, 1976).

In essence, ethnic grievances crystallize ethnic identity (i.e., instrumentalism reinforces primordialism) while, at the other end, group cohesion engenders frustration (i.e., primordialism reinforces instrumentalism). Where most theories that explain ethnic conflict attach disparate degrees of primacy to ethnic identity, primordialism asserts that mere differences in ethnic identities constitute a direct source of mutual fear, distrust, ancient antipathies, and subsequent conflicts between ethnic groups (see Esteban, Mayoral, & Ray, 2012) while, under instrumentalism, ethnic identity becomes relevant to conflict outbreak only when manipulated for political gains (Che, 2016). Furthermore, grievances arising from the instrumentalization of ethnic identities contribute towards crystalizing primordial ethnic divisions when the grievances are aired and disseminated through informal and formal interactions, including actions such as media broadcasts and social media postings – a shared sentiment of frustration against a perceived threatening out-group fosters cohesion with the in-group whilst crystalizing divisions and enhancing hatred, distrust, and the danger of violent conflict between the groups. Basically, the integration model of ethnic conflict shows that the two classical approaches of primordialism and instrumentalism are not mutually exclusive as there is an interdependent relationship between core concepts of primordialism (collective identity) and instrumentalism (grievance/frustration). Drawing from the analogy of the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and Burundi, instrumentalism attributes the event to the postcolonial domination of power by the Hutus in Rwanda and Tutsis in Burundi, where, in Rwanda, the Hutu elite politicized ethnicity and narrowly defined democracy to mean ‘majority rule and
majority rule meant Hutu rule’ (Kiwuwa, 2005 in Che, 2016). The postcolonial Hutu regimes from 1961 to 1994 adopted discriminatory and exclusionist policies against Tutsis, forcing many of them into exile in neighboring countries. The Tutsi grievances/frustration arising from discrimination fueled the Tutsi-led Rwandan patriot Front’s (RPF) insurgency and assassination of Habyarimana which immediately triggered the genocide of Tutsis by Hutu loyalists. In Burundi, key institutions, including the executive the military, the judiciary, and the education system were dominated by the Tutsi and Tutsi domination engendered sentiments of alienation and frustration among the Hutu. Hutu grievances metamorphosed to mass murderous violence against the Tutsi following the assassination of Burundi’s first post-independence Hutu president in 1993 in a coup by some Tutsi military leaders (see Che, 2016).

On the other hand, primordialist narratives of the Rwandan and Burundian bloodbaths of the 1990s accentuate the role of ancient antipathies, mistrust, and mutual fear between the Hutu and Tutsi identities in the build up to the post-assassination massacres. Past inter-group hatreds contributing to recurrent ethnic conflicts created a climate of ‘permanent mutual fear’ and, following the assassinations of Habyarimana and Ndadaye, affections for the in-group and hatred for the rival group motivated inter-group violence in response to fears of suppression and extermination. The Hutu majority feared suppression by the Tutsi minority while the latter feared extermination by the former (Uvin, 1999 in Che, 2016).

For emphasis, both instrumentalist and primordialist narratives of the Rwandan and Burundian carnages, as pointed out in Che (2016) are credible but are not mutually exclusive as in between the ethnic grievances (emphasized by instrumentalists) on the one hand and the bloodbaths on the other were divisive informal chats and inflammatory formal broadcasts which emboldened the Hutu-Tutsi divide and revived memories of ancient hatreds (emphasized by primordialists) between the two groups.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: APPLYING THE INTEGRATIVE MODEL TO THE INDIGENE-SETTLER CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE**

To illustrate the empirical utility of the integrative model, the indigene-settler conflicts in Plateau State are herein reconstructed as functions of mutually reinforcing primordialist identities and instrumental grievances. Although the ethnic and political unrests associated with the indigene-settler phenomenon have been explored using separate theoretical lines by different scholars, this represents an attempt to integrate some of the theoretical explanations using the Rwandan and Burundian carnages as models.

1. **The Primordialist Interpretation of the Indigene-Settler Conflicts in Plateau State**

In the report by Isa-Odidi, a candidate at the Washington college of Law with interest in human rights law and advocacy foe constitutional reform in Nigeria, many international and national groups attribute the violence in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria to proridal sentiments of religious and cultural differences, whereby the Plateau State’s so-called ‘indigenes’ are predominantly Christians while the ‘non-indigenes’ or ‘settlers’ (particularly of the Hausa-Fulani extraction) are predominantly Muslims. Such primordial thinking is understandable given the increased tension in the country between the Christians and Muslims. However, a closer look reveals underlying causes to the conflict to be related to the use of ‘indigene’ status in determining access to resources such as limited employment opportunities and resources such as land. Religious differences have only served to catalyze the violence between the ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’ who are already competing for the same resources. Thus, the primordialist interpretation of the crises on the Plateau accentuate the role of ancient antipathies, mistrust, and fear between the so-called indigenes and settlers alike on the Plateau in the build-up to the present democratic dispensations. Accumulated inter-group hatreds contribute to recurrent ethnic conflicts creating a ‘permanent mutual fear’ which motivates violent response to fear of suppression and extermination based on affection for the in-group and hatred for the rival group(s) – the Afizere/Anaguta/Berom dread suppression by the Hausa/Fulani while the latter fears extermination by the former.

On the one side, the Berom people are the indigenous ethnic group of Jos, mostly concentrated in the local government areas of present-day Jos South, Jos North, Barkin Ladi (Gwol), and Riyom LGAs with a population of over 1 million people, out of which 96% are Christians (Wikipedia, 2020). The multicultural, multifarious, and multilateral nature of the Jos conflict has many ethnic groups contending for indigeneship of the land, with the Berom alongside the Anaguta people, claiming they settled and secured Jos prior to the adventure of the colonialists who made Jos the administrative center of their government by conquest.
According to them, the Hausa-Fulani people were brought into Jos by British colonial masters as cheap labor in the tin mining activities, which was the main commercial activity in the area then (Sampson, 2014 in Nwagwu, 2016). The Afizere people (another ethnic group laying claims to Jos) also opine that Hausa-Fulani people in Jos are settlers and non-indigenes who do not appreciate and reciprocate the hospitality showered on them by their host communities. The Afizere consider Hausa-Fulani as a group that has no right to claim traditional authority and land in Jos. However, they debunk claims by the Anaguta and Berom ethnic groups as the owners of Jos.

Generally, the mainly Christian indigenous populations in the state hold primordial claims that they are the rightful owners of Jos having lived in the areas for centuries, while, in contrast, the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani people whose language has become a generally spoken language in the area also hold on to primordial sentiments that they nurtured the city into a commercial nerve (Adam, 2008).

2. The Instrumentalist Interpretation of the Indigene-Settler Conflicts in Plateau State

Using the instrumental paradigm, the bloodbaths in Plateau State can be attributed to the postcolonial domination of power by the Hausa who claim that the Plateau region was under their sphere or jurisdiction. The Hausa-Fulani claim that they established Jos from nothing and nurtured it into what it is today without the help of the so-called indigenous ethnic groups. The central issue of their argument is that Jos was established around the 19th century out of a virgin land with none of the indigenous groups near the vicinity they now claim to be theirs respectively (Nwagwu, 2016). To back this claim, some of the Hausa-Fulani elite make reference to some colonial report such as reports by one Mr. Ames in 1950 that the population of Jos town was 10,207, out of which 10,000 people were of Hausa-Fulani origin.

Besides the primordial sentiments attached to the indigene-settler disharmonious syndrome on the Plateau are the religious and cultural intolerance, political marginalization and economic deprivation sentiments that are associated with the crises. The control of the central government by the Hausa-Fulani for decades gives them the leverage to compel other tribes to their whims and caprices as the Federal Government is evidently in support of the Hausa-Fulani extractions wherever there is conflict between them and other ethnic groups (Nwagwu, 2016). Further, the Federal Government most often creates confusion and acrimony in communities housing Hausa/Fulani and against the host communities (indigenes) by allotting federal political appointment positions (the constitutional rights of the indigenes based on the principle of Federal Character or quota system) to settlers instead of rightful indigenes. For example, the late President Umaru Yar’Adua’s regime selected a Hausa/Fulani resident in Plateau State as a ministerial nominee on the slot of Plateau indigenes which is a violation of Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic. The main point here is that the complex and precarious nature of the Plateau crises hinges on the multiple and conflicting claims by the Berom/Anaguta/Afizere against the Hausa/Fulani in the region coupled with the nepotistic nature of Federal Government appointments in favor of the Hausa-Fulani settlers which infuriates disadvantaged ethnic groups and subsequently cause disharmony, havoc, and distress (Nwagwu, 2016). This is also coming with grievances and agitation from the indigenous ethnics that the Governor (whom they claim is subservient to the Hausa-Fulani, especially to the current 0President, Buhari) appoints Hausa-Fulani into important positions that they – the indigenes – supposed to uphold, such as the appointment of a Hausa-Fulani as the Chairman of Jos North LGA and other Hausa-Fulani as Commissioners from Jos North rather than they the indigenes (of which the Governor has been using as an achievement of his administration towards peacebuilding). Such can be considered to be instrumental to the present Governor’s political position as the chairman of the Northern Governors’ Forum – an identity many indigenous people detest and wish to be considered as ‘Middle Belt’ rather than as northerners.

Consequently, the grievances and frustration arising from such discrimination fuels the indigene-settler rivalries and conflicts which inevitably lead to wanton loss of lives and property. Considering the degree of emotions and intensity of the conflict by the atrocities that are being carried out by the violent extremists of both Christian and Muslim extraction as well as from both ethnic identities in the feuds, Nwagwu (2016) points out that such is the impetus for the major political issues that are being vigorously and violently contested along the lines of complex ethnic nationalities, religious, indigene-settler, and regional divide in
the country. The existence and legitimacy of the State are the fundamental matter at hand that generate fierce contestations among competing ethnic groups, with zero-sum intent to control the state power, resource allocation, and citizenship status. Every public issue becomes ethnicized till it generates to a serious ethno-religious intractable feud (Smyth & Robinson, 2001). Also, Falola and Heaton (2008) succinctly note that since ethnic patronage has remained a key element of Nigerian politics, individuals depend on ethnicity to mobilize and create power relations – a function explained by instrumentalist philosophies. When the competition for values (state power) and resources intensify between and within ethnic groups, individuals with access to the seat of government and state law enforcement apparatuses utilize such mechanisms to exploit ethnic networks and whip up movements or sentiments to gain support and influence (Nwagwu, 2016).

3. Integrating the Primordialist and Instrumentalist Thoughts in Understanding the Indigene-Settler Conflicts in Plateau State

From the above exposition, the indigenes of Plateau State, especially the Berom, and the Hausa-Fulani represent two combative communities on the Plateau and, interestingly, while the Berom have dominated politics in Jos the capital area, the Hausa-Fulani (together with the Igbo and Yoruba communities) have dominated commercial activities, especially since the Independence era to date (Aghedo et al., 2019). However, in recent times, the younger generation of the Hausa-Fulani in the area have broadened their interests from primordial sentiments to more instrumental motives beyond the commercial spheres to the political areas to the resistance and dislike of the indigenes thus fueling the crises in the North-Central zone of the country in areas such as Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Taraba states in conflicts in the forms of indigenes versus settlers and sedentary farmers versus nomadic herders (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). Although the primordial narratives of grievances of the conflict actors have also been wrapped up in religious idiom, instrumentally, the political elite in Plateau State have often manipulated the conflicts for their selfish agendas. They have not only undermined the Federal Character principles enshrined in the Constitution but have “introduced devious schemes to divide the people permanently” using then ethno-religious card (Aghedo et al., 2019; Akeredolu, 2010). Thus the major trigger for the recurring conflicts since 1999 has been political intrigues. For example, during the 1999 local government elections in Jos North, the Hausa-Fulani won six out of fourteen electoral wards in the council and expected to produce the Chairman but the Christian ethnic groups formed a coalition and produced a Christian Chairman, thus denying the Muslim Hausa-Fulani an access to the position which triggered more fighting (Krause, 2017). This also demonstrates the infusion of primordialists thought and instrumentalism where ethnic identity and its manipulation thereof work together in reinforcing the communal conflicts in the area. These have been further fueled by the relegation of a single citizenship, leading to ‘us versus them’ violent struggles for power, land, pasture, water and other forms of scarce public goods in other areas of the state, such as was the case in Yelwa in 2002 and 2004, respectively when violence broke out between natives and settlers, leading to over a thousand deaths, internal displacements of close to a hundred thousand men, women and children, and the eventual declaration of a ‘state-of-emergency rule’ in the state and removal of the then governor (Oota, 2016). More primordial actions were seen in actions such as mass protests by women and youth groups, religious and ethnic organizations with accusations and counter-accusations, and outrages such as that of the incessant attacks and killings of Plateau people by uniformed assailants (Owuamanam, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This paper makes reference to the terms ‘indigene’ and ‘settler’ only to highlight flawed reasoning; not to condone the use of such terminology, and to lean towards an integrative theoretical approach that better explains the sources and dynamics of the incessant ethnic conflicts in Plateau state, and Nigeria by extension. The integration of the primordialist and instrumentalist theoretical frameworks in explaining the incessant conflicts on the Plateau with regards to the indigene-settler dichotomies has thus shown the three key elements of primordialist thought: the overwhelming importance of ascribed ethnic identity/indigene status, ethnic boundaries, and common ancestry (all of which represent the socio-biological currents in the primordial school of thought) as well as the instrumentalist argument that ethnicity is mobilized as a strategic tool for gaining access to certain resources in the state.
Furthermore, the data reviewed in this paper support the realization that group conflict or ethnic rivalry in Plateau State does not only emerge from the differences in ethnic identity (which is the core assertion of the primordialist thought) but also arises when ethnic identities are politicized or manipulated to generate political and socio-economic advantages for an ethnic group at the cost of depriving or neglecting other ethnies as was demonstrated in the Rwandan-Burundian paradigms. This supports the argument that, although instrumentalism appears to be a more nuanced theory as it recognizes the relevance of political and socio-economic structural dynamics to account for temporal and geographical variations in the occurrence of the ethnic conflicts examined herein as the fundamental source of grievances and frustration, there is also wisdom in primordialist thought in recognizing the power of ethnicity to perpetuate a sense of shared value, shared interests, shared threats, and more importantly, a sense of solidarity with which collective action becomes indispensable. This simply suggests that instrumentalism reinforces primordialism where the ethnic grievances and frustrations crystalize ethnic identity and primordialism reinforces instrumentalism where group cohesion engenders frustration.

Therefore, it is important for policy makers and frameworks in explaining phenomena as this paper demonstrates the validity of integrating theories where no single theoretical approach is robust enough to interpret or explaining social phenomena. It was shown here that both instrumentalist and primordialist accounts of the conflicts in Plateau State are credible but are not mutually exclusive. This further reinforces the need for the development of more integrative and comprehensive theoretical approaches to understanding ethnic conflicts which build upon the strengths of different extant theories of ethnic conflicts that work towards ensuring that scholarly and policy worlds stand a better chance of exposing the multidimensional nature and scope of ethnic conflicts such as those of the indigene-settler dimensions to allow for making effective and holistic interventions for perpetual peace. Stakeholders concerned with efforts toward ending the incessant ethnic conflicts in Plateau State and Nigeria to put into consideration the arguments that ethnic group cohesion is important in fueling as well as curtailing the conflicts but that there is also the tendency of certain actors to manipulate or politicize such group dynamics for their own selfish gains, especially of the elite who seek to gain control of public resources. Scholars and academics interested in peace and conflict phenomena should also see reason to be flexible and eclectic in adopting/adapting theoretical approaches in their work.

REFERENCES


