



**ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: A CASE
STUDY OF TAFAWA BALEWA (1991-2011)**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science)**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi state Nigeria, from 1991 to 2011. The thesis also examines the effect of conflict on the political and economic development and why attempts to resolve the conflict have been ineffective. The study uses manipulation by elites, socio-economic factors and communal identity as independent variables, whereas, ethno-religious conflict is the dependent variable. The analysis in the study is based on Smith's instrumental theory and Azar's protracted social conflict theory. The analysis of data utilises a mixed method i.e. quantitative and qualitative. Data collection included a survey using 30 close ended questions and involved 231 respondents. Interviews were conducted to complement the data collected from the questionnaires. Accordingly, descriptive statistics, factor analysis and multiple regressions were used in testing and analysing the data. The results of the findings show that socio-economic factors, political manipulation and communal identity are important factors that contributed to the conflict in Tafawa Balewa. Moreover, the conflict affects the socio-economic activities of the people and failure to implement the recommendations by special resolution committees has remained an obstacle in resolving the conflict.

خلاصة البحث

الغرض من هذه الدراسة دراسة العوامل التي أسهمت في الصراع العرقي والديني في منطقة تافاوا باليوا للحكومة المحلية بولاية بوتشي النيجيرية، خلال الفترة ١٩٩١م إلى ٢٠١١م، وتأثير الصراع، وأسباب عدم فعالية محاولة حل الصراع. استخدمت الدراسة متغيرات مناورات وتلاعب النخب السياسية، والعوامل الاجتماعية، والاقتصادية، والهوية الطائفية كمتغيرات مستقلة، في حين، أن الصراعات العرقية والدينية تستند على التحليل بناء على نظرية سميث، ونظرية عازار للصراع الاجتماعي الممتد. وتحليل البيانات المستخدمة جمع بين المنهج الكمي والنوعي. وشمل جمع البيانات والمسح ٣٠ سؤالاً، وشارك فيه ٢٣١ من المستطلعين. وأجريت مقابلات أيضاً لاستكمال البيانات التي تم جمعها من الاستبيانات. وفقاً لذلك، فقد تم استخدام الإحصاء الوصفي، وتحليل العوامل وانحدارات متعددة في الاختبار وتحليل البيانات. ونتائج الاستطلاع تظهر أن العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، والمناورات السياسية للنخب، والهوية الطائفية تعد من أبرز العوامل المهمة التي أسهمت في الصراع في تافاوا باليوا. إضافة إلى ذلك، فإن الصراع أثر في الأنشطة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية للشعب، وعدم تنفيذ توصيات اللجان الخاصة بالتحقيق، كلها ظلت عقبة في حل الصراع.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

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*This work is dedicated to my late father May Almighty Allah (S.W.T) have Mercy on
him*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA	Arusha Peace Accord
ERCICL	Ethno-Religious Conflict Interview Community Leaders
ERCIRL	Ethno-Religious Conflict Interview Religious Leaders
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIDP	Global International Displacement Programme
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
KANU	Kenyan African National Union
LGA	Local Government Area
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
NPC	National Population Commission
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

CHAPTER ONE

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN TAFAWA BALEWA L.G.A.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a single-case study of ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area (L.G.A) of Bauchi state, Nigeria. The Tafawa Balewa (L.G.A) is one area that has witnessed a series of conflicts among 20 local government areas of Bauchi State. The artificial demarcation of boundaries in Tafawa Balewa by former colonial administration has led to the existence of different ethnic groups distinguished by religion, norms and values living within the same area. Unfortunately, the coexistence of these various groups within the town has led to recurrent episodes of conflict from the early 1990s right through the present time.

Tafawa Balewa L.G.A is an important case in the context of Nigerian politics. The region is abundant with natural resources which include minerals and agricultural resources. More importantly, it is a strategic place for commercial purposes and a fertile land for farming. The town attracts many people from near and far for commercial activities. Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. is the only region that has experienced many ethno-religious conflicts over the past three decades. However, as a result of this conflict, the Local Government's Secretariat shifted from Tafawa Balewa town to Bununu, a village within the Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. This makes the region a unique case for analysing ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. Towards this aim, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives: First, to examine the key factors that contribute to ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa L.G.A.; second, to analyse how ethno-religious conflict affects the political and economic development of

Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. and; third, to examine why attempts to resolve ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. have so far been ineffective.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Recurring incidences of religious and Inter-ethnic conflicts in some parts of Nigeria have become a major national problem in contemporary Nigerian society. Both religious and ethnic conflicts are frequent and devastating in the country because they are threatening the existence of individuals and the nation at large. Since the end of British colonial rule in 1960, there have been several ethno-religious conflicts. The catalogue of ethno-religious conflicts has led to an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damage (Bogoro, 2008; Salawu, 2010). There is a consensus of opinion among observers that Nigeria provides one of the best examples or case studies of ethno-religious conflicts. With over 250 ethnic groups comprising of both Muslims and Christians, ethnicity and religious bigotry has become the order of the day fuelled by various forms of communal allegiances, ranging from linguistic assertions to cultural autonomy and religious superiority. Contextualising these tensions are demands for economic resources, political autonomy and self-determination.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study examines the outbreaks of conflict in Tafawa Balewa between competing groups divided along ethnic and religious lines. It analyses ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. of Bauchi State between 1991 and 2011. Tafawa Balewa L.G.A has witnessed several violent conflicts which have led to the loss of lives and properties. In this research, an attempt will be made to find out the factors that

contribute to ethno-religious conflict, the impacts of such conflict and why attempts aimed at resolving them have so far been ineffective. The dominant and minority ethnic groups treat each other with suspicion and hatred. Several efforts have been made to reconcile this rivalry and manage conflict. Religion, like ethnicity, is an issue of identity and is considered to be more than simply an ideology. In defining ethnic solidarity, religion sets a boundary in a complex manner between those who are considered to be believers and those who are not. Following independence in 1960, ethno-religious conflict began to pose a threat to national unity and integration. In the early 1980s, Nigeria witnessed the Maitatsine religious crises in the northern part of the country which included Maiduguri, Kano and Jimeta-Yola in 1984. Religious violence broke out in Kafanchan College of Education in 1989, Zangon Kataf in 1992 and Kaduna Polytechnic in 1981. Other cases include Muslim and Christian violence in various places such as the University of Ibadan in 1981-1985, Bulumkutu (Borno State) in 1982 and the Usman Danfodio University in Sokoto in 1982 (Abdullahi, 2005).

Ethno-religious conflict continued to affect the nation following the return of civilian government in 1999. Specific incidents during this period include the Sagamu crises in July 1999 in the southern part of the country where several lives were lost and properties damaged. Another ethno-religious reprisal attack in Kano led to the killings of mostly Yoruba people and the destruction of property worth millions (Abdullahi, 2005 and Mohammed, 2005). Given this history, one may discern the fact that ethnicity and religion are important variables in studying Nigerian politics. Using Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. as a case study, this study hopes to highlight some salient factors that have helped to shape the political, socio-economic and demographic contexts within which such conflicts occur.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is important for several reasons. First, it will help to highlight the dangers associated with conflict of any nature, be it political, religious or ethnic. Second, it will help to elaborate the impact of ethnic conflict on Nigerian politics and development. Third, the study will help to expose the ways in which individuals and groups have manipulated religion to achieve selfish political goals. This, in turn, should help to create awareness on the importance of religion as a custodian of values, peace, recognitions and skills. Fourth, it is hoped that this research will contribute immensely towards peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic groups by assisting the Federal, State and Local government in formulating policies and programmes that will help reduce tensions between various ethnic and religious groups. In addition, the research will be useful to conflict management organisations working for the mitigation of conflict through educational campaigns. From a theoretical and comparative perspective, by contributing some important insights on ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, the findings of this research would be useful to future researchers working on similar topics in Nigeria, Africa and elsewhere.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the key factors that contribute to ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government.
2. To evaluate how ethno-religious conflict impacts the political and economic development of Tafawa Balewa Local Government.
3. To examine why attempts to resolve the ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government seem ineffective.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, this research seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the key factors that contribute to ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government?
2. How does ethno-religious conflict impact the political and economic development in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government?
3. Why several attempts to resolve the ethno-religious conflict in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government seem ineffective?

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a case study of Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. of Bauchi state in Nigeria. It focuses on ethno-religious conflict that has affected the area for decades. This section reviews relevant literature related to conflict and its various dimensions. In the context of this study, conflict is defined as a violent and armed confrontation and struggle between two or more groups within a society that results in deaths, injuries and destruction of property (Elaiwu, 2005).

1.7.1 Conflict, Religion and Inter-Ethnic Violence

Conflict is a kind of behaviour on the part of individuals, groups or even nations which goes beyond normal disagreement and confrontation that characterizes much of the usual social, economic and competitive life of societies (Burton, 1990). Going by this definition, conflict is a behaviour that has the potential of being destructive to persons, property or a political system. The issues that lead to conflict are not ideas, choices, preferences and interest which are argued and negotiated as part of social normal living; the sources of conflict are deeply rooted in human behaviour.

Coser (1956) and William (1997) view conflict in light of economic, social and political settings where they asserted that contact between different ethnic groups does not fully account for the emergence of ethnicity but rather the nature and degree of such contact are determined by socio-economic over attitudinal factors. In this case, intense socio-economic competition leads to ethnic-like identities and antagonism. Hence, economic relations are very central to conflict between classes within a society. Conflict is perceived as abnormal, dysfunctional and detestable in many parts of the world, including Nigeria.

In his elaboration, Coser (1956) views conflict as a kind of interaction, particularly where there is scarcity of resources and different interests that are related to political, economic and socio-cultural factors. Conflicting parties do not only derive values but also hurt or eliminate their rivals (Coser, 1956). Competition over economic resources among different ethnic groups is seen as a potential factor that could generate disagreement and conflict within a society. According to Varennes (2003), all conflict that takes place within the global system is due to ethnic group demands, especially on securing basic rights for their group such as demanding more effective participation in politics, fair distribution of economic resources, education and employment opportunities.

Hence, political disparity and competition over economic resources are among the factors that lead to ethnic tension and conflict within a society, especially a plural state such as Nigeria, which is characterized by a diversity of co-existing but different cultures and religions. For the purpose of this research, the conflict of interest is ethno-religious conflict which involves the intersection of ethnic and religious identities. According to Elaigwu (2005), ethno-religious conflict is a kind of conflict which regiments primordial identities of a group in a competitive relation with other

groups. It is a kind of conflict that is more difficult to resolve. The diverse character of the Nigerian State contributes to ethno-religious conflict catalysed by mutual distrust and hatred between various ethnic and religious groups as well as the fear of domination of one group by another.

Many factors have been advanced by scholars as the causes of conflict, whether ethnic, religious or otherwise, among various groups within a society. Coser (1956) and Geoff (1974) enumerated the following factors as the causes of conflict within a society, including economic dissatisfaction among various groups within a society; political manipulation in various forms such the imposition of an alien ruler from outside the community; demand for greater authority; rights and recognition; religious differences; mutual mistrust; hostility; fear among members of conflicting parties; land acquisition; consolidation of economic discontent by peasant farmers; unequal distribution of resources and political offices; rapid mobilisation of new groups in politics; general insecurity in the country and inability of the security agencies to bring about effective security; unfair handling of past incidences of conflict in the country; and ineffective national cohesion programmes capable of promoting patriotism and harmony. Most of the factors mentioned above have greater roles in fuelling conflict in Nigeria and Tafawa Balewa L.G.A. in particular, where ethno-religious conflict has been a feature for many years. The literature review consists of two sections. The first one focuses on case studies of conflict from African countries and the second part reviews the Nigerian context.

1.7.2 Case Study Reviews

Apam (2011), in his research, recently showed that conflicts in Africa have their structural links to worsening socio-economic conditions and politics that has been

affecting the people of the continent. These recurrent socio-economic crises have increased intolerable living conditions among the African people as evidenced in the rising surge of poverty, unemployment, crimes across the border of nations and high debt profiles. He contends that those living in such conditions have led to the devaluation of human lives and also promoted a situation of protest, insurgency and threats of violent changes in which responses from the State/Nations have been marked by resilience, repression and authoritarian tendencies. Thus, if the current economic conditions are not changed, misery, rebellions, crimes and insecurity will continue to be the order of the day in Africa, particularly in this case, of Nigeria.

Political and social conflicts in Africa could be attributed to various factors. These include inter-ethnic tensions, socio-economic factors and political instability. In Kenya, there is a clear picture of inter-ethnic conflict between the two dominant ethnic groups in the country in which one ethnic group constitutes the majority of the national population. They formed the Nationalist Party during the colonial period which, after independence became the ruling party in Kenya. The remaining minority group formed another party as a result of fear of domination by the majority. The formation of these two dominant parties provided an avenue for regionalism. Greater autonomy to each region, as opposed to a strong centralised system of government, was aimed at the better protection of the interests of the minority group.

The first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, was the leader of the party dominated by the majority Kikuyu ethnic group. In 1964, President Jomo Kenyatta managed to convince the minority party to form an alliance with the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) following which the leader of the minority party became Vice President. However, immediately after independence, the ruling party started showing their dominance over the minority group. The ruling party was

accused of favouring the majority ethnic group, especially in economic matters such as commerce and industry. For instance, in 1978, President Jomo Kenyatta secured a huge farmland from the Government for his supporters from his ethnic group. The minority group was marginalised, especially in terms of security, police, military and other state apparatus (Abdalla, 2002). Arguably, the genesis of Kenyan crises could be traced to this ethnic marginalisation.

In 1978, immediately after the death of President Kenyatta, Daniel Arap Moi from minority ethnic group in Kenya came into power. President Moi realised that most of the security agencies, fertile lands and private sectors were dominated by Kenyatta's Kikuyu tribe. In order to address this problem, he adopted several measures including replacing the major tribe with his own ethnic group and other minorities in the higher levels of government positions, taking steps to reduce the Kikuyu dominance in the private sector of the economy as well as providing more educational and economic opportunities for his own group as well as other minority groups. However, the economic and other structural problems in the 1990s as well as the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya did not help improve inter-ethnic tension. Political liberalisation and pressure from urban elites, lawyers, professionals and religious groups led to the worsening of political tension in the country (Abdalla, 2002; Medhine, 2003). This case study is similar to that of the Nigerian context.

In the case of Congo Brazzaville, since 1991, the country has been trying to establish democracy. However, conflict within the political elite weakened the state apparatus and made it possible to start thinking for national cohesion in order to resolve the political issues that have affected the country. There has been no supreme authority that could exercise power. Instead, feudal lords claim equal rights and authority in their own territories. The struggle to control the State's central power and

natural resources preoccupied individual ethnic groups while ethnicity continued to fuel political conflict in Congo Brazzaville (Abdalla, 2002). The political elites used ethnic militia in an environment of youth poverty and unemployment which later became part of the country's violent culture. The lesson that we have learn from Congo is similar to that of Nigeria whereby political elites manipulate political issues in order to promote conflict.

Rwanda is another country which has experienced several episodes of ethnic conflict. A good example is the Rwanda genocide that occurred in the early 1990s. The genesis of this crisis could be traced back to the colonial administration which discriminated and provided unequal opportunities between the ethnic Tutsis and Hutu tribes. Colonial administrators considered the Tutsi tribe as being special by favouring them in terms of education and job opportunities over the Hutu tribe. The Tutsi were even differentiated by being discriminately provided with the citizen's identity card. These acts did not bring unity and harmony between Rwanda's two ethnic groups. Instead, it led to ethnic tension and lack of tolerance between the two dominant tribes. In 1959, there was a civil war which escalated as a result of political tension and inter-ethnic rivalry which consequently led to the overthrow of the Tutsi King. Three years later, in 1962, the country gained independence and was left to resolve ethnic tension on its own (Abdalla, 2002; Medhine, 2003).

After independence, the Hutus dominated the helm of affairs and threatened the survival of the Tutsis by killing them massively which led to many Tutsis fleeing to neighbouring countries. A survey shows that more than 150,000 people became refugees in various camps outside the country. The youths, who were residing in exile and mostly dominated by the Tutsi tribe, formed the rebel group called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In 1994, they returned to invade Rwanda with the claim to