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RESEARCH REPORT

# Governing for Whom?

## The Intersection of Identity, Violence, and Political Competition in Political Marketplaces

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# Overview

This paper explores how negotiations over political authority play out in 'real' transactional politics across multiple levels of government under conditions of competitive rentierism using Nigeria as a case study. It addresses the ways in which identity is intentionally and unintentionally activated and exploited in the pursuit of power. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how political competition in rentier political marketplaces can drive local level violence, and the implications this has for understanding how to build peace in these environments. This is the first in a series of papers that examines the nature of violent conflict within political marketplace countries and the impact of efforts to build lasting peace.

# Key Findings

**1. Transactional political decisions can spark local-level violent conflict.**

The 1991 decision to create new local government areas (LGAs), notably Jos North in Plateau State, was an attempt to solidify the military head of state Ibrahim Babangida's hold on national-level power by meeting the demands of local-level elite. On the surface, this appeared to answer calls for more inclusive, democratic, locally-controlled governance. In practice, it simply localized competition over government resources, leaving many aspects of the competition undefined and subject to manipulation. Specifically, two intertwined questions were left unanswered: who would control these governments and who should benefit from the resources flowing through them? In other words, the decentralization process created a new site of competition, not a framework to manage it. This, combined with existing disagreements over which groups should control territory, laid the foundation for the violence that would emerge in 2001 and transform the city over the next decade.

**2. Violence broke out after officeholders systematically excluded ethnic groups from local office and access to public resources.**

Historically, Jos was a peaceful city. Jos, and Plateau state more broadly, is home to more than 50 different ethnic groups, none of which constituted a majority of the population. It is part of the Middle Belt region where the largely Christian south meets the predominantly Muslim north. This peaceful reality changed after 1999 when local government offices in Jos North sought to specifically exclude the Hausa-Fulani from certain benefits and opportunities offered by the local government. Political leaders fostered a zero-sum political logic in which one group's gain was at the cost of another—creating tensions between the group that continued to rise until an everyday incident sparked a widespread communal violence.

### 3. The causes of the violence in Jos and its manifestations were different, but related.

The violence in Jos is often first described either in ethnic or religious terms based on the divided groups that can be clearly identified. However, this attributes a salience and division to the ethnic identities that did not always exist. Historically, while there were disagreements and competition for political power between the groups, these did not lead to violent clashes. In fact, the groups have a longer history of peaceful coexistence than of violent conflict. Identity-based grievances were fostered as officeholders at the national, state, and local levels began to operationalize and exploit indigene-settler distinctions to maintain their own political power and serve their own agendas. In sum, the causes of the violence in Jos were related, but different from how it manifested and evolved over time.

### 4. The manifestations of the violence develop their own legacy.

While the ways in which the conflict manifested in Jos were different from the original causes, they developed their own legacy over time. Neighbourhoods, businesses, religious worship centres, and places of social interaction became ethnically segregated. "No-go" areas for each religious and ethnic group emerged across the city. Moreover, young people were growing up only knowing identity-based violent conflict. This contributed to a situation where incidents not related to ethnicity, religion or indigene/settler status quickly escalated along identity lines. Consistent with broader research on political marketplaces, ethnic identity under these circumstances became entrenched.

# Introduction

In weakly institutionalized political systems or so-called "fragile and conflict-affected states," competition for political power often intersects with violent conflict, corruption, and identity politics. This competition plays out across political geographies, levels of governance, and in negotiations among the elite and between the elite and segments of the population. Violence in these environments can be sparked by elite competition over power, but take on its own trajectory, making it difficult to identity and separate the underlying causes from the manifestations of conflict. Nevertheless, doing so is critically important for the success of peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. This paper interrogates these processes by tracing how competition for political power at multiple levels of government sparked local-level violent conflict using Nigeria as a case study. In doing so, the paper interrogates how negotiations over political authority play out in 'real' politics under conditions of competitive rentierism and the implications this has for understanding how to build peace in these environments.

Nigeria's politics are kleptocratic, rent-seeking, and allegedly democratic, suffuse with violence, criminality, and identity politics—making them especially complex, dynamic yet remarkably consistent, and often defying institution-focused analyses. Here, the political marketplace framework (PMF) provides an analytic lens to better understand how the political system operates, as well as how it intersects with violence and identity.

A political marketplace (PM) is a country where transactional politics, meaning bargains and competition, dominate formal institutions and processes (de Waal 2015). Instead of focusing on the interplay of the institutions, it focuses on the logic which underpins actors' decision-making, the political economy of the state, and the organization of elite actors. Negotiations over political power are continuous, happening at every level of government and society, and lead to fragile deals that are frequently eclipsed when a better offer emerges. In these environments, political power is treated as a commodity that is bought and sold as if one is in a marketplace. Those without the money to buy it may attempt to claim it through violence. Countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Syria, and South Sudan are paradigmatic political marketplaces, but even weakly institutionalized countries such as Mexico or Indonesia also exhibit the PM's transactional logic (Schouten 2021; Kanfash 2021; de Waal 2016). Countries such as Iraq, Nigeria, and Sudan are rentier political marketplaces, meaning state resources are a key source of funds used to buy and sell political power as well as fund patronage networks used to control the broader population (de Waal 2015; Al Kli, Miller, and de Waal 2024).

Political marketplaces can have a variety of overall structures and configurations of key actors, parties, or coalitions, but are similar in their dominance of the forementioned transactional political logic. For example, there are three "ideal types" of marketplace structures (Spatz, Sarkar, and de Waal 2021). First, a functional centralized kleptocracy, meaning an authoritarian system controlled by a single actor (or small group of actors) who has control over the structure and rules of the marketplace. Syria under Hafez al-Assad (1970-2000) and Sudan under Omar al-Bashir (1999-2011) are examples of a centralized, kleptocratic PM (Kanfash 2021; de Waal 2019). The second type is an oligopoly. Oligopolies can be collusive, meaning a small number of elite actors work together, or rivalrous, meaning there are multiple elite coalitions working in competition with one another. This is akin to the market being dominated by a limited number of firms which may or may not form a cartel (collusive) or compete with each other (rivalrous). In an oligarchic environment, control over the system and the ability to set the rules is more fractured than in an authoritarian setting. Nigeria under Obasanjo and the then dominant People's Democratic Party (2003-2007)[1] is one example of a collusive national oligopoly. The system most open to competition is a free market or deregulated PM. Free markets are not dominated by any major firms, and they have low barriers to entry for those who wish to compete for power. Free markets often emerge in the midst of war as dominant firms lose control of the market.[2] In addition, elections also open the door to new competition, though the playing field for new firms may not be level. Eastern DRC in contemporary DRC is a PM approaching a free market, but one embedded in a regional, and national market with different configurations (Schouten 2021). This raises the second point—that markets are often multi-level with different constellations of actors operating at each level, as well as ongoing negotiations between the different levels.

A key question is how actors in the marketplace operate and interact across the different levels. Put differently, this is the question of how national-level actors relate and negotiate power with those in the periphery—whether at the state or local level. Here, Boone (2003) offers some useful categories to understand centre-periphery relations along with the balance of power between them. She proposes four categories of centre-periphery relations: power-sharing, usurpation, non-incorporation, and administrative occupation – each defined by the degree of concentration of institutional structures and authority (shown in Table 1 below).

| | | Who wields authority at the local level? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Rural Elites (Devolved Authority) | State Agents (Centralized Authority) |
| Spatial Configuration of State Apparatus | State institutions created at village level (Deconcentration) | Powersharing | Ususrpation |
| | State institutions "suspended above" localities (Concentration) | Non-incorporation | Administrative Occupation |

Source: (Boone 2003, 33).

Boone (2003) argues that the type of centre-periphery relationship is shaped by the degree of economic autonomy and social hierarchy of the rural elites. Those with high levels of economic autonomy and hierarchy are likely to be strong rivals to elites at the centre and therefore capable of negotiating favourable centre-periphery relations and institutional frameworks. However, in a rentier system, this becomes not only a question of power, but also of wealth flowing from the state and who has access to it; a question that becomes critical in conditions of sustained poverty. In essence, competition plays out at multiple levels across geographies (as described by Boone), but also in two predominant categories: elite competition to hold political power (playing out at multiple levels of government offices among elite actors); and the population's competition for access and control of the resources flowing from the rentier state and its patronage networks (largely playing out on the local level). These categories are interrelated and shape the evolution and reality of the other.

As de Waal and Pendle (2018) have shown, the way power is negotiated between the centre and the periphery also intersects with the transactional logic of the marketplace. Decentralization simultaneously serves a democratic and political marketplace goal. The reality of these processes is that expanding local governance can be an opportunity to redesign patronage networks and satisfy demands of local elite, all the while fulfilling a democratic demand from the people for greater local representation in government. These processes, however, do not play out in a vacuum but amidst complex histories and relations between sub-groups within the population leading these competitions to frequently bear the markers of identity-based conflict.

As Kaldor, de Waal, and others have observed, political markets provide a new context in which identity politics and political institutions are reinvented and negotiated, often leading to exclusive forms of both identity and governance (Kaldor and de Waal 2020).[3] Yet at the same time, there is evidence that elite actors at different levels operate on a more "individualized, opportunistic calculus" that is agnostic to identity as one would expect in a perfectly competitive political market (Kaldor and de Waal 2020, 520). These are competing logics that privilege different means and end-goals, but can be found intertwined in the political marketplace. Nigeria epitomizes the ways in which this happens.

In the 1990s, Nigeria was a rentier political marketplace operating under conditions of austerity and economic precarity. Political budgets of elite national actors were constrained and facing increasing demands from the Nigerian people to allow free competition in the form of democratic elections. Yet actors who had benefitted from their hold on power were reluctant to submit to the will of the population. In this context, leaders at the national level turned to decentralization as a way to shore up support from local level elites around the country as a means to maintain their own power. In some ways, this had the appearance of meeting demands for more inclusive, locally defined governance. However, in practice, the decentralization process localized competition over access to the resources flowing from the federal government, but left many aspects of this competition undefined and subject to manipulation. Two intertwined questions were left unanswered: who would control these governments and who should benefit from the resources flowing through them? In other words, the decentralization process created a new site of competition, not a framework to manage it.

This paper explores how these negotiations over political authority played out in 'real' transactional politics across multiple levels of government under conditions of competitive rentierism. It addresses the ways in which identity is intentionally and unintentionally activated and exploited in the pursuit of power. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how political competition in rentier political marketplaces can drive local level violence, and the implications this has for understanding how to build peace within these environments.

This paper is based on an in-depth case study of the conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria between 1991 through 2008. Nigeria and Jos in particular, offers an important case to explore these dynamics for several reasons. First, Jos is seen as a microcosm of Nigeria—with its risk of identity-based violence and its attempts to make peace—as emblematic for the entire country. Additionally, Jos epitomizes the reality of how decentralization processes play out in a context of competitive rentierism—a dynamic also experienced across the country. Third, these dynamics are playing out in Nigeria, one of the most diverse and populous countries in the world. It has and continues to also experience ethnoreligious and resource-based conflict among farmers and pastoralists, violent extremism, and a range of criminality that thrives in the insecure atmosphere. Each of these types of conflict intersect and shape each other. Understanding how these dynamics happen within Nigeria – and more importantly the impact of peacebuilding efforts on them – has critical implications not only for the future of the country, implications likely also relevant to other political marketplace countries.

This paper is based on primary research (in Nigeria and remote) between 2021 and 2023, existing secondary literature and government reports, and is informed by the author's previous experience living in Jos and working on conflict issues between 2015 and 2017.

The paper begins with a more detailed explanation of the political marketplace framework (PMF). I then introduce the multiple levels of the Nigerian political marketplace (PM) and key issues within it. The third section of the paper presents a historical analysis of the evolution of the conflict dynamics between 1991 and 2008. The fourth section then summarizes the key findings from this section before concluding with an analysis of the implications this case has for understanding identity-based conflict in political marketplace countries. This paper is the first in a series of papers that examines the relationship between political competition, violence, and attempts to build peace within weakly institutionalized political systems. Forthcoming papers will focus on attempts to build peace within these environments.

## The Political Marketplace Framework

As previously introduced, the PMF is a theory of politics used to describe and analyse states in which transactional politics, meaning elite bargains and competition, dominate formal institutions (de Waal 2015). In this paper, it serves as the analytic lens used to understand the competition for political power and evolution of violent conflict in Jos. Cash and violence serve as the key currencies within the marketplace, though as will be discussed in later sections, each serves different functions and is not necessarily interchangeable. In addition, having a preponderance of either is no guarantee of power. Actors also need to have the political acumen on how to best deploy each, who to target, and when to do so in order to be successful in the marketplace.

The PMF was developed from a close study of politics in the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, and Eritrea (de Waal 2015). It described these states in market terms because that was "the vernacular of everyday politics in Sudan", a language that also provided insight to other countries in the Horn of Africa (de Waal 2015, 9). It has since been used as an analytic lens to better understand politics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Nigeria, Syria, and Yemen among other weakly institutionalized political systems, as well as a lens to analyse thematic issues such as starvation and humanitarian response (Sarkar et al. 2021), decarbonization (Sarkar 2023; Spatz, Sarkar, and de Waal 2022), mediation (de Waal, Spatz, and Sarkar 2022), and political topography (de Waal and Pendle 2018).

There are four core conditions of PMF countries (de Waal 2015, 19). First, that political finance, meaning the funds that political actors to buy loyalty or political services, are in the hands of individuals who have political, military, or economic interests distinct from the state. Second, that control over the means of coercion is dispersed or contested. For example, there are competing armed factions outside state control. Third, political disputes are not resolved by formal institutions and procedures. Lastly, that PMF countries are integrated into the global order in a subordinate position.

The PMF introduces two key tools used throughout the paper. The first is the concept of the political budget, meaning the funds that political actors use to buy loyalty or political services (de Waal 2015). This can range from paying off powerbrokers or key officials so that they support you instead of oppose you, to hiring thugs to stoke violence or intimidate a rival (Miller 2024b). Political finance is the overall amount of funds flowing through the political system to facilitate deals, fund patronage networks, and purchase these political services. In a rentier system like Nigeria, the state is one of the key sources of political budgets—whether through outright embezzlement, cronyism, patronage, or another budgetary scheme (Miller 2023). This corruption is not primarily about self-enrichment, but about accumulating enough resources to be able to compete within the marketplace (Miller 2024b), though corruption as a means of self-enrichment often happens in parallel.

The second tool is the analytic focus on the transactional logic as it intersects with competing political ideologies defined by civic ideals, ethnoreligious identity, competition over scarce resources, and violence. As Kaldor and Radice (2022) and Kaldor and de Waal (2020) have found, these logics are often intertwined and opportunistically employed by political entrepreneurs in the pursuit of power, but it is the transactional logic that often dominates. The PMF provides a framework to identify and separate them.

# Nigeria's Multi-tiered, Rentier Marketplace

> "We are intoxicated with politics, the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures in order to win and maintain political power . . . Politics becomes warfare, a matter of life and death." – Claude Ake, 1981[4]

> "Where does the wealth which we are for ever scheming to appropriate come from? We do not want to know. All we want to know is whether we can muster the power to appropriate it." – Claude Ake, 1992[5]

Nigeria officially operates as a federal republic, but the real contemporary politics are transactional, rent-based politics often cloaked in ethno-religious rhetoric (Falola 2021; Agbaje 2023; Adebanwi 2023). Elections are the official way that leaders are chosen, but it is the deals struck among the elite that determine who holds and can exercise political power (Miller 2024a; LeVan 2019). This plays out within, in the guise of, and outside of formal institutions, across the three levels of government – federal, state, and local – and in deals brokered with the public.

Two of the defining features of Nigeria's political marketplace are its rentier structure and the oil rents that flow through it. Since the oil boom of the 1970s, oil has usually accounted for 65-85% of government revenues and these rents are collected by and distributed from the federal government.[6] Over time, the growth of oil rents has reshaped the political economy of the state making its political system dependent on them (Falola and Heaton 2008; Ellis 2016; Watts 2003; 2012). Oil rents have enabled massive government spending and have been a key source of political budgets, the money that actors use to buy political loyalty and services.[7] The flow of oil rents has also made the state a key source of wealth for enterprising politicians and those connected to them (Gillies 2020; Page 2020; Ellis 2016).

Due to its federal structure, Nigeria operates as a multi-tiered, hierarchical political marketplace. In part because of its control over oil rents as well as the military and police, the marketplace is dominated by the federal government, but no single actor or entity has a monopoly on political power or violence. While the three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—are meant to be equal and maintain checks and balances on each other, in practice, the executive branch maintains an outsized share of power with the legislature often unable to limit executive power, and the judiciary as something that seeks justice, but is prone to manipulation to rubber stamp the decisions of those in power.

Some of the most prized positions within the government are executive offices (e.g., president, vice president, governors, deputy governors, local government chairmen and deputy chairmen). Executive positions have control over government budgets, and the federal and state-level executives each have immunity while in office.[8] Executive offices can be lucrative positions, even at the local government level, and they can be effective positions from which to direct patronage to supporters (Ellis 2016; Page and Wando 2022; Suberu 2001). This becomes especially important during elections when politicians need to "share money around." Executives are limited to two terms in office – one of the few agreed upon rules of the marketplace – but as Bayart (2009) noted in similar contexts, there is a circulation of elites across other positions within the government.[9] For example, many governors go on to (or "retire to") the National Senate after their terms as governors expire.

The Nigerian marketplace is complex in its differing configurations. At the national level, the marketplace often resembles a rivalrous oligopoly with the two major parties—All Progressives Party (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP)—battling for control over power and their piece of the national cake. States, however, are more often dominated by a single party, often the governor's, making their structure closer to a collusive oligopoly if not a centralized, authoritarian market. However, the marketplaces at each level shift during election cycles. While the markets do not move towards free competition entirely, competition is more common. In a sense, elections are the equivalent of market days (Miller 2024a). Major vendors may still dominate market days and try and raise barriers to new vendors, but the existence of the market day (elections) demarcates an opportunity to compete.

Because it has embraced the African Union Charter provision that democratic elections are the only legitimate transfer of power, elections are one of the few periods when open competition is permitted.[10] This is also when political actors put themselves back on the market to see how much actors are willing to pay for their political support. High-level actors attempt to maintain high barriers to entry by keeping the cost to enter extremely high and maintaining tight control over the political parties. In between elections, the structure return to their previous structures in which high-level officeholders may be in competition with each other, but do not have the same level of risk of losing their position.

Given these dynamics, elections are the most competitive time periods in Nigeria's political marketplace. They are also the most expensive. Aspiring candidates need deep pockets to be able to contest for office or be backed by someone who does. While they may be able to ideologically draw some support, to date, money remains one of the surest ways to guarantee that one will win a party primary and in the general election. Where money falls short, strategic uses of paid violence (i.e. political thuggery)—to intimidate opponents, mobilize voters, suppress votes, or outright disrupt voting—can elevate one's competitiveness. In essence, political competition can be described as money politics mixed with violence or as one interviewee put it, "criminal politics."[11] Some of the most influential actors within this competition are Nigeria's infamous "godfathers." Godfathers are individuals who can use their wealth and influence to back candidates and work to ensure their success at every step of the electoral process and once they take office (Albert 2005). With their candidate in office, the power of the sponsoring godfather grows because they have "a piece of the state in their pocket" that they can lean on for government contracts and favours (Albert 2005, 83). Once in office, officeholders exercise the authority and benefits of the office as their personal property—not just as a perceived opportunity to do so, but as a perceived right (i.e. prebendalism) (Joseph 1987). The relationship between the godfathers and their chosen candidates is a type of patron-client relationship. Like other types of patron-client relationships, these can be reinforced by genuine ideological support, as well as ties such as kinship, ethnicity, religion, and regional origin (Joseph 1987). They can also break down and need constant renegotiation to keep parties invested in the relationship.

During boom times, money flows easily within the marketplace. During bust times, political budgets become constrained—though the price of competition does not necessarily decrease at the same rate (Miller 2023). For actors who want to hold onto power, this means trying to strategically spend one's political budget where they may have the greatest returns or have the greatest commitments and relying on other types of ties–such as ethnicity or religion—to whip up support that they are not able to buy.

One of the complex aspects of Nigeria's political marketplace is that while transactional politics is the dominant political logic – with the elite often treating ethnicity agnostically or opportunistically – it is interwoven with and may exploit ethnicity, religion, and regional rivalries in the pursuit of power. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Hoffmann et al. have called the use of ethnic identity as a political resource "ethnic capital" (2020). These logics also exist alongside and in competition to democratic ideals, what Kaldor and Radice have termed "civicness" (Kaldor and Radice 2022). In practice, it can be extremely difficult to discern the politician who argues that they are fighting for the rights of their group from the politician who recognizes that ethnic fear is an effective way to whip up votes. The reality is that each can be operationalized at different times to mobilize different types of support. This is especially true in times of economic hardship or violence in which ethnoreligious divisions are heightened and connections to the state become even more important.

Plateau State epitomizes these dynamics. It embodies the ethnic and religious diversity of Nigeria, and violence emerged only in the 1990s when the political marketplace became less centralized and more competitive.

### Plateau State: A Microcosm of Nigeria

Plateau State is seen both as a microcosm of Nigeria and as a bellwether for Nigeria's ability to function as a peaceful, democratic state (IPCR 2003, 138; Miri 2015). This is the view that if Plateau can manage its ethnic and religious diversity, perhaps there is hope for the rest of the country. This also cuts the other way. Violence within Plateau has shown the potential to spark broader conflict across the region and stoke divisions felt across the country—especially as it takes on a north-south or Christian vs. Muslim dimension. Plateau State epitomizes the interplay between ethnoreligious identity, political competition, and violence that plays out in different forms across the country. This makes it especially useful as a case study in that it offers close examination of these dynamics in a way that likely speaks to other parts of the country.

Plateau is located in heart of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria – a section of 14 states and the federal capital territory that cuts across the centre of the country. This is the region where the predominantly Christian south meets the predominantly Muslim north. Plateau State has more than 50 different ethnic groups, none of which constitute a majority of the population. The largest groups are the Berom, Anaguta, Afizere (often referred to as the BAA), who are predominantly Christian, and the Hausa and Fulani, who are predominantly Muslim.[12] The Hausa-Fulani who have lived for generations within Jos are known as the Jasawa. They share some customs and ethnic ties with the broader Hausa-Fulani communities, but see themselves as distinct (Ostien 2009).

Historically, Plateau State was known as "the home of peace and tourism." Named for its geological terrain, Plateau State was home to a tin mining bonanza in the early 1900s, and a historic international tourism hub due to its natural resources, temperate climate, and beautifully rocky terrain.[13] Its ethnic diversity was not a source of violent conflict and conflicts that did arise prior to the 1990s were not framed in religious terms (A. T. Higazi 2007).[14] Yet, this image has been eclipsed by cycles of violence in the early 2000s rising to what Krause (2016) described as a "communal war", which claimed thousands of lives, drove hundreds of thousands to flee, and sent shock waves across the country.

### Settlers and Indigenes: Contested Sons of the Soil

One of the fault lines in Nigeria is the question of who is considered an indigene, and who is considered a settler. In the contemporary setting, this question is salient because it is used to grant indigenes preferential access to land, education, and government services and as a tool to determine who is eligible for certain chieftaincy titles and government positions (Sayne 2012; A. T. Higazi 2007). In practice, however, it has become a tool to more broadly shape patterns of development and politics, and a tool that has frequently also been manipulated by political elite for their own benefit (HRW 2006; Suberu 2001, 111–40).

The concept of indigeneity originally comes from the era of decolonization.[15] As the British began withdrawing to hand over control of the government to Nigerians, indigeneity was used as a tool to attempt to give Nigerians with historic roots in a specific geographic area preference to take up leadership positions in the government of that area. Distinguishing between indigenes and settlers became a formalized practice in 1954 in the regionalization of the Nigerian civil service (Bach 1997, 338). At that time, 'non-indigenes' were defined as "any Native [Nigerian] who is not a member of the native community living in the area of its authority."[16] Over time, indigeneity became a requirement for individuals to run for public office, be eligible for government positions, have access to land, as well as educational opportunities.

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999 – present), the question of indigeneity is tied to the Federal Character Principal (FCP) enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (Section 14(3-4)). The FCP stipulates that the composition and conduct of any part of the federal government must reflect the federal character and diversity of Nigeria, meaning that it should promote national unity and that no aspect of the government should be dominated by individuals from certain ethnic groups or states (Suberu 2001). Specifically, the FCP required that "the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State."[17] This was intended to ensure power-sharing among all of the different groups within Nigeria and across every level of government (Suberu 2001; Mang and Ehrhardt 2018). However, the fundamental issue is that the 1999 constitution does not offer a definition of indigene. Federal guidance stipulates that an indigene of a local government is one whose parents or grandparents was or is indigenous to that local government, or someone who has been accepted as an indigene by that local government—but it is left to state and local officials decide (Ehrhardt 2017). State and local officials determine whose historical claims to a certain place are legitimate. This left it open to the dealmaking politics of the marketplace.

This runs into many problems, notwithstanding the implications this has for enabling a two-tiered form of "differentiated citizenship" in which state and local officeholders decide which groups receive certain rights and privileges and which groups do not (Fessha 2018, 75). These challenges are also practical and political. Practically, it is extremely difficult to prove historical claim to a location.[18] This is especially true for those who cannot trace their family, been internally displaced due to conflict, are nomadic, or simply do not have physical proof of their history (Sayne 2012). Local officials often award or deny indigene certificates because they appear to be from a certain ethnic group or religion.

In addition, as Odinkalu argues, "claims of indigeneship privilege recent settlement activity backed by settler-colonial records and often amount to no more than 'the concoctions of the mind of a not-so-clever diviner" (Odinkalu 2015, 106). Next are the issues of how awarding indigene certificates has been politicized and commercialized. In a sense, the buying and selling of indigene certificates has created a market offering membership into different citizenships. "Often the process becomes a toll-keeping exercise, in which corrupt officials christen anyone who pays a bribe as an indigene. The well-heeled buy up certificates from multiple LGAs, then pick and choose among them like passports to wealth" (Sayne 2012, 3). All of this comes together to grant those in positions of power to determine who should be the legitimate constituency of an area—and who is not.

These questions of—who is an indigene, who is a settler, and therefore what rights and privileges does each have? —are at the heart of the conflict in Plateau. The Hausa-Fulani have argued that they are the rightful indigenes because Jos was originally built on land owned by the Hausa-Fulani and that they historically ruled the town since 1902 (Fiberesima Commission 2004). Yet this claim, and facts supporting it, are contested by the BAA, who argue the Hausa-Fulani first came to Jos in the early 1900s as settlers to work in the tin mines. Four of the most influential commissions of inquiry – the 1994 Fiberesima Report, 2001/2002 Niki Tobi Report, 2004 Plateau Peace Conference (Plateau Resolves), and 2008/2009 Ajbola Report – all stated that they believed the BAA to be indigenes, and the Hausa-Fulani to be settlers (Fiberesima Commission 2004; Niki Tobi Commission 2002; Plateau State of Nigeria 2004; The Ajibola Commission 2009).[19] However, this finding has continued to be rejected by the Hausa-Fulani community. As Higazi argued, "the potency of indigeneity in Plateau is reinforced by its frequent conflation with religion" with most Muslims being categorized as settlers, and most Christians being categorized as indigenes (A. T. Higazi 2007, 5). Thus, the question of indigeneity also took on a religious connotation of which groups were legitimate constituents, and which were not.

# The Evolution of Conflict Dynamics: Proximate Triggers and Fundamental Issues

In the early 2000s, Plateau State and specifically Jos, went from being known as "the home of peace and tourism" to being known as an epicentre of horrific violence that raised tensions around the country. The following sections trace the evolution and intersection of political marketplace competition and conflict dynamics in Plateau State from 1991 to 2008, a period that claimed more than 7,000 lives and displaced more than 250,000 (Bagu and Smith 2017, 12).[20] While the fundamental grievances of the conflict also stem from the pre-colonial and colonial histories, a full analysis of those is outside the scope of this paper.[21] However, relevant legacies from these periods are noted throughout the analysis. Future research papers will focus on the post-2008 conflict dynamics and peacebuilding processes.

The 1990s were a tumultuous time in Nigeria. On the national level—then military head of state, Ibrahim Babangida, was trying to hold onto power and delay elections by manipulating existing and creating new patronage lines—some of them coming from criminal enterprises (Ellis 2016).[22] This came after a period of self-imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) intended to address the country's fiscal problems, but which caused inflation and the level of poverty to soar, and "all but destroy[ed] the middle class" in Jos (A. T. Higazi 2007, 14; Falola and Heaton 2008, 212–34). While scaled down, the state—through patronage networks, contracts, or cronyism—was still one of the few viable paths to wealth or even stable employment (A. T. Higazi 2007). Yet at the same time, the state was not flush with oil rents, and they were concentrated among the elite. Essentially, the marketplace was operating in conditions of austerity, and the frustrated population was demanding a shift to free market competition.

One of the tactics that Babangida turned to at this point was the creation of new states and new LGAs—the decentralization of political authority and patronage. Minority groups across the country had been demanding that the government create new states and LGAs for decades. Babangida's own administration had studied these demands and provided a range of proposals on how to respond (Suberu 2001, 98–99). Historically, the creation of new states was a policy decision that could arguably meet demands for more locally accountable government, demarcate and guarantee a group's control over federal resources, while simultaneously acting as a bargain chip between elites at the federal level (centre) and those at the state and local levels (periphery).

Given that the resources flowed from the federal government to states and localities, it also created dependency of newly established states and localities on the federal government – akin to a Boone's (2003) "power-sharing" (decentralized institutional structure and devolved authority). The redrawing of state and local political boundaries also reshaped which elites were connected to the resources of the state, a way to reorganise which local allies and opponents controlled a territory – Boone's (2003) "usurpation". While serving extremely different purposes and logics—decentralization was the common mechanism.

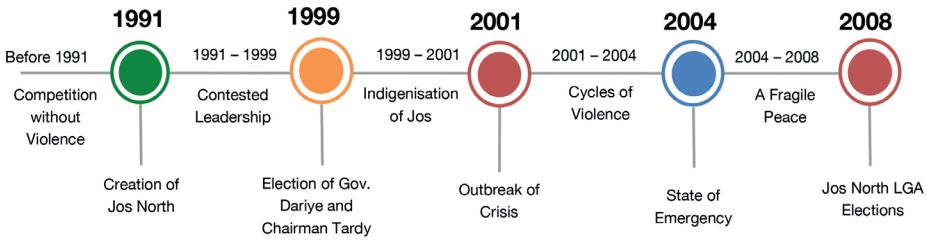
In 1991, in response to significant pressure from minority groups across the country and his increasingly tenuous hold on national power, Babangida established nine new states and a total of 140 new LGAs. These would prove to be the most contentious redrawing of political lines in Nigeria's post-colonial history (Suberu 2001). While previous decentralization processes had guidelines for the new political units to be created, the 1991 reforms stood out for "their arbitrariness, contentiousness, and inconclusiveness" (Suberu 2001, 107). While this could be seen through the lens of Babangida bowing to the demands for more local governance – seemingly aligning with a restructuring of power away from the centre, a political marketplace analysis suggests an alternate analysis.

As Suberu argued, one of the only overriding logics to the 1991 local government reorganisations was that they were drawn to favour the administration's key supporters, members, and local elites (Suberu 2001, 107). This transformed minority groups into majority groups within local political units. The creation of new states and LGAs triggers the required public spending to build government buildings, hire personnel, and invest in public services – a seeming loophole around the public hiring freeze (Bach 1989). As Bach argued, "the division of a state, far from victimizing its elites, increases their resources and local capacity for accumulation, while improving their positions and guarantees of representation at the federal level" (Bach 1989, 227). Babangida created these new states and LGAs at a time when he was also working to institute a series of reforms that would give local governments greater autonomy over their federal allocations and remove some of the states' ability to intervene in their affairs or divert their budget allocations—making new local governments especially attractive to local elites (Suberu 2001, 107-108).

The cumulative effect was that formerly minority groups were now majority groups in certain LGAs and states, giving them increased say in political processes, mandated representation in each level of government, and most notably, a statutory budget allocation from the federally controlled oil rents. Babangida's decentralization process addressed the grievances of those who had been advocating for greater local autonomy and federal recognition and did so through resources he could justify spending even in a time of austerity. However, while this may have been prudent as a tactic to maintain power at the national level, it created new geographies of competition over political authority and access to the decentralized oil rents at the local level. The establishment of these new political units—especially the new LGAs—sparked violence across the country. One of the most striking examples of this occurred in the newly created Jos North LGA in the capital of Plateau State.

Over the next three decades, Jos North would be a flashpoint for violence and the centre of competition over political authority within a context of competitive rentierism. These processes would take on an ethnoreligious framing as the competition activated and manipulated ethnic and religious identities and historical grievances. The outbreaks of violence can be summarized as the interaction between political crisis caused by the monied politics of the political marketplace and competition among the population for access to resources—all of which played out against a complex history of oppression, poverty, and kleptocratic politics (IPCR 2003, 28; 2008). The following sections trace these evolutions segmented by the critical junctures shown below.

Figure 1: Timeline of Critical Junctures in the Conflict (1991 – 2008)



### 1991 – 1999: A Transformation of Political Boundaries and Leadership

As previously discussed, 1991 marked the creation of Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) and one of the first outbreaks of violence in Jos since the 1960s.[23] Jos North divided the capital city of Jos into two LGAs. Jos North now encompassed the economic centre of the city (known as Jos metropolis), as well as the palace of the Gbong Gwom Jos, the paramount Berom ruler and chairman of the Plateau State Joint Traditional Council—giving Jos North both economic and cultural significance. Whereas the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta populations had been the majority populations (cumulatively) in Jos, the Jasawa (the Hausa-Fulani who had lived in Jos for decades), were now the majority group in Jos North.[24] Many of the BAA interpreted this as a favour to the Jasawa (and Hausa more broadly), and some even saw it as a "grand play" by the Jasawa to take control of Jos from them (Mang and Ehrhardt 2018, 335; Ostien 2009; Fiberesima Commission 2004).

The Jasawa's new majority in Jos North was significant for several reasons. First, Babangida was repeatedly promising upcoming elections and was already allowing elections for local government (LG) chairmen – the top local government executives – to be held across the country. This meant that majority groups could select their own leader to decide how the LGA would be governed. This leads to the second reason – being a majority population and controlling the chairmanship meant that groups had control over allocations from the federal budget. Put simply, they had an avenue to the oil wealth.

As previously discussed, the president, followed by the governors, and then the local government chairmen are some of the most powerful positions in Nigeria for their control over how resources are directed, who they are directed to, and for what purposes. Historically, they have had significant latitude in making decisions, with little ability of the judiciary or legislatures to effectively check their power. They have the potential to also be extremely wealthy positions – for the individuals who hold them and their allies (Mang and Ehrhardt 2018, 335).[25] Governors and chairpersons take on additional importance because of the discretion they have to determine who is considered an indigene of a specific local government. In a sense, they choose who they see as a legitimate constituency of that local government, and therefore, who should benefit from the resources of the state.

The first chairman of Jos North, Sama'ila Mohammed, a Jasawa, was elected in 1991 in largely peaceful elections (Ostien 2009, 11). While his tenure did spark complaints from indigenes that he awarded indigene certificates to Jasawa in addition to the BAA, and appointed Jasawa to key positions in the local government, there were no widespread episodes of violence (Ostien 2009, 11). However, this shifted when the military head of state from 1993 to 1998, Sani Abacha, reshuffled officeholders.

When Abacha seized power in November 1993, he dissolved all of the democratically elected offices and appointed replacements. He appointed Col. Mohammed Mana, a Muslim originally from Adamawa state, as Governor. In 1994, the military governors appointed caretaker committees to run local governments and Col. Mana chose Alhaji Aminu Mato, a Jasawa to lead Jos North (Ostien 2009, 11).[26] This sparked a backlash from BAA indigenes who protested Matos's appointment.[27] When Col. Mana ignored their protests, they showed up in mass at the local government office to prevent him from taking power (Fiberesima Commission 2004). Col. Mana give in and left the Director of Personnel Management (DPM), a high-ranking LG civil servant, in charge for the time being (Ostien 2009, 12). The Jasawa saw this as the government giving into pressure from the BAA, thereby disadvantaging the Jasawa (Fiberesima Commission 2004).

On 11 April 1994, the Hausa-Fulani community launched a counter-protest over the BAA's interruption of power being handed over to Mato (Odinkalu 2015, 110). This protest began by the Jasawa slaughtering cattle along a major highway to raise attention to their grievances. The next day, a mass protest, believed to be led by the Jasawa Development Association, took place and escalated to violence (Fiberesima Commission 2004). It is unclear exactly what sparked the violence, but four people were killed in the violence and multiple buildings, including part of the Jos market, the Gada Biyu market, and an Islamic school were destroyed (Fiberesima Commission 2004; Ostien 2009). The government saw the Jasawa Development Association and members of the Jasawa as primarily responsible. Eighty-four of the 104 rioters arrested were Hausa-Fulani, which created perceived bias on behalf of the BAA (Fiberesima Commission 2004; Ostien 2009).

The 2004 Plateau Peace Conference (Plateau Resolves) would later note that the peace that followed the 1994 violence was only a "quiet peace", which was "not deep or broad enough to sustain any form of stability" (Plateau State of Nigeria 2004, 1). "Indigenes had the feeling that they were being schemed out of Jos, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalries, leadership problems, and feelings of political marginalization remained unresolved" (Plateau State of Nigeria 2004, 1). In essence, the Jasawa's grievances of representation and inclusion in government remained unaddressed and many within the BAA felt that the Jasawa should not have control of Jos North. Against this backdrop, in 1998, the military dictator Sani Abacha died suddenly, and Nigeria was quickly ushered into multi-party elections—opening the door to competition in every tier of Nigeria's political market.

### 1999 – 2001: "Reengineering" Power and the Constituencies it "Serves"

From 1991 to 1999, when Plateau State was led by a series of Hausa-Fulani military appointed governors, and Jos North was led by a series of appointed BAA chairmen – indigeneship certificates[28] were granted to everyone who applied for one (Crisis Group 2012, 10). However, in 1999, this changed, and with it – fears of domination and exclusion grew.

In 1999, after a largely peaceful election, Joshua Dariye, an indigenous Christian from Bokkos LGA, was elected governor, and Frank Tardy, a Christian from the Anaguta community of Jos, was elected Chairman of Jos North (Milligan 2013).[29] Then began what Dariye called his "indigenization" agenda:

> "From the on-set, let me say it again, as I have before that Jos, capital of Plateau State, is owned by the natives. Simple. Every Hausa-man in Jos is a settler whether he likes it or not. In the past, we might not have told them the home truth, but now we have . . .They are here with us, we are in one state but that does not change the landlord/ settler equation, no matter how much we cherish peace. . . Our problem here today is that . . .the tenant [is] becoming very unruly. But the natural law here is simple: if your tenant is unruly, you serve him a quite notice! . . .This unruly group must know that we are no longer willing to tolerate the rubbish they give us. The days of "over tolerance" are gone forever. All of us must accept this home truth" (Governor Dariye, quoted in HRW 2006, 44).

After being sworn in, indigene certificates were only issued to members of the BAA communities, excluding the Jasawa. This began a period where the Jasawa and other Hausa-Fulani settlers elsewhere in the state were increasingly excluded and removed from state and local government positions. Critically, settler groups were excluded from the resources that flowed through these offices into government program and patronage networks (Ostien 2009, 13). Tardy would hold office until 2002 when elections were suspended in Jos North and the local government was run by a caretaker committee appointed by Dariye—essentially acting as an extension of both his power and his beliefs about who "owned" Jos North.

### 2001 – 2004: Cycles of Violence & Deepening Distrust

The first major outbreak of violence occurred on 7 September 2001. It was sparked by an everyday altercation which escalated exponentially, becoming an outlet from the tensions that had been rising throughout the 1990s.

The proximate cause was President Obasanjo's appointment of Mukthar Usman Mohammed, who was Kannuri but intended to represent the Hausa-Fulani community, to the office of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and chairman of the Local Government Monitoring Committee. Mohammad previously was elected chairman of Jos North, but his election was overturned when it was discovered that he did not meet the age requirements (Ostien 2009, 13). His appointment to the NAPEP board – an important government program offering livelihood support to the community – was seen as an affront to the indigenes and as fear that indigenes would not be prioritized.

The spark of the violence was traced to a female Christian pedestrian who was alleged to have disrupted Friday prayers by crossing a blocked street near a mosque in the Congo Russia area of Jos North (Bawa and Nwogwu 2002). She was refused passage and then slapped by a guard who pursued her with a gun, though there are disputes about how this interaction played out (HRW 2001; Ostien 2009; A. T. Higazi 2007). A crowd gathered after Friday prayers and stoned her father and set Christian houses on fire. Loudspeakers were used to call Muslims to "come out and fight the infidels as God has given them into their hands" (HRW 2001).

This sparked retaliation from Christian communities and set off cycles of attacks and reprisal attacks. Within one week, violence claimed over 1,000 lives and displaced several thousand (Bawa and Nwogwu 2002, 110). The violence that consumed the city during those six days was described by those who experienced it as chaos or crisis. Groups of armed young men setting fire to houses burning people alive, attacking people on the streets, destroying places of religion and businesses – largely on the basis of their religion (HRW 2001; A. T. Higazi 2007).

While there are differing opinions on why the violence broke out, there is consensus on the fact that the government failed to act to prevent it (HRW 2001). The LG chairman received complaints from both indigene and settler groups, each raising grievances about the other. Hausa-Fulani groups complained that they were being denied indigeneship certificates—a grievance to which the chairman responded by saying they should go back to wherever they came from (HRW 2001). In one letter to the Governor, the (Christian) Plateau State youths called for security forces to bring the Jasawa group under control or the youth would "surely call them to order" (HRW 2001, 6). BAA groups wanted the poverty eradication coordinator of Jos North to go to an indigene – not a perceived settler. If there was any doubt about the rhetoric and the level of tensions – fliers began circulating across the city with rhetoric threatening violence and emphasizing the perceived stakes of competition between the groups: "The seat is dearer to us than our lives. In that case, do you have the monopoly of violence? Blood for blood. We are ready."[30] (HRW 2001, 6). Local human rights organisations visited security offices to plead with them to address the threats of violence – but security forces did not act (HRW 2001).

What started as a political conflict over representation in government and access to government resources turned into an "outwardly religious feud: religion was increasingly used and manipulated to deepen division" (HRW 2001, 22). Some of the first violence targeted mosques and churches. One University of Jos professor interviewed by HRW at the time said, "religion was simply an excuse. It is not the main issue, but it played a role in widening the conflict. It was a tool of manipulation. People are more emotional in situations of poverty and religion is used to inflame passions" (HRW 2001, 22).

The September 2001 violence in Jos set off a cycle of more than 80 attacks and reprisal attacks that would continue over the next three years claiming more than 7,000 thousand lives, and displacing an estimated quarter of a million people (Ostien 2009; Crisis Group 2012).[31]

These cycles of violence differed from the violent clashes in the 1990s in three important ways (Crisis Group 2012; Ostien 2009). First, for the first time, religious and sectarian rhetoric and identity were used to mobilize participants to participate in the violence. Second, the scale of killing and destruction were much higher than past outbreaks of violence due to the spread of small arms. And lastly, the violence in Jos spread to other parts of the state. Violence broke out in neighbouring towns and LGAs, especially across the Southern Senatorial Zone.

This violence also spilled into the election cycle.[32] On 2 May 2002, fighting broke out at the local government PDP primary between BAA and Hausa-Fulani PDP members. There are differing reports on how the violence started, but most point to the suspicion that one group was attempting to manipulate the primary results to favour their group (Ostien 2009; HRW 2003). This suspicion was heightened by the fact that the primary location had been moved several times without telling the Hausa-Fulani supporters and was eventually held in a predominantly BAA area. While there are disputed reports over how the violence began, it is believed to have claimed as many as 78 lives (HRW 2004). LGA elections were later suspended in Jos North due to concerns that they would spark more violence. Jos North was the only LGA across Plateau State that did not hold LG elections. Though if the pattern of the PDP's success in other local, state, and national elections applied to Jos North, the PDP candidate (incumbent Chairmen Tardy) would have likely won against a backdrop of violence, intimidation, widespread fraud and rigging (HRW 2004).

On 18 May 2004, in response to the violence, President Obasanjo declared a State of Emergency, suspending Governor Dariye and imposing an administrator as governor for six months to regain control of the situation and end the violence. Obasanjo's radio broadcast announcing the state of emergency is telling in how what he saw as the reasons for the violence:

"As at today, there is nothing on ground and no evidence whatsoever to show that the State Governor has the interest, desire, commitment, credibility and capacity to promote reconciliation, rehabilitation, forgiveness, peace, harmony and stability. If anything, some of his utterances, his lackadaisical attitude and seeming uneven-handedness over the salient and contenting issues present him as not just part of the problem, but also as an instigator and a threat to peace. . .His personal conduct and unguarded utterances have inflamed passions" (Ostien 2009; TNH 2004; HRW 2005).

In an attempt to end the violence and prevent future violence, President Obasanjo was using his authority to remove a contentious figure and put in place structures to moderate competition for local public authority. This would have mixed results.

### 2004 – 2008: Attempted Reconciliation & the Primacy of Zero-Sum Politics

In addition to mobilizing the military to quell the violence, one of the most significant efforts Gen. Ali, the temporary administrator, undertook was to organise a statewide peace conference which would lead to a consensus document about how to restore peace and prevent future violence between the different ethnic groups. This has become known as the 'Plateau Resolves' resolution.

By many accounts, Plateau Resolves was the dialogue process that offered an opportunity to air grievances and forge a new path forward. It sought inputs from across communities, interest groups, local government councils and senatorial zones. At the actual conference, it brought together two representatives from each ethnic group for a total of 143 participants. The report itself documents a wide range of grievances, many of them not associated with the violent conflict, but with poor governance and complaints about how politicians use power for their own benefit (Plateau State of Nigeria 2004, 13–15).

While it was a well-designed consultative process, many felt that it did not provide durable solutions, address the main issues or actors, and that it arrived at a definition of indigene the Hausa-Fulani would not accept (Krause 2011, 51). As a result, the Hausa-Fulani and Jama'atu Nasril Islam, an influential Hausa-Fulani organisation, refused to sign the post-conference communique.

While the Plateau Resolves report was officially published—one of the few commissions of inquiry reports to ever be published—many of its recommendations went unheeded and unimplemented. Unfortunately, this was a trend across all of the government-backed commissions of inquiry (Oosterom and Sha 2019). Notably, many of the individuals and groups recommended for prosecution for the role in the crisis would never be held accountable – including the government actors. Though notably, the finding that recognized the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta as the sole indigenes of Jos North would be a tool politicians would lean on.

The aftermath of the Plateau Peace Conference was again a tenuous peace. Though the cycles of reprisal attacks had been temporarily stopped, many of the underlying grievances remained unresolved. Tensions still boiled below the surface waiting for a spark to ignite them. It is at this moment when the six-month state of emergency was set to end, and the polarizing Governor Dariye reemerged on the scene. It is worth a closer examination of Dariye as he epitomizes how political actors can leverage their position to maintain control by amassing political budgets, how actors spend those budgets, as well as how these tactics are also intertwined with self-enrichment schemes.

After being temporarily removed from power in 2004, Governor Dariye had travelled to London where in September, he was arrested on money laundering charges. At the time of his arrest, the London police found £93,000 in cash and believed that he had purchased millions of pounds' worth of London real estate even though his official salary totalled £40,000 per year (Shirbon 2007). Dariye skipped bail, returning to Nigeria where he went into hiding as he was also indicted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Shirbon 2007).[33]

Dariye remained in hiding until the day that the appointed military governor was scheduled to hand power back over to the elected Plateau government (Ostien 2009). As previously discussed, under Nigerian law, governors are immune from prosecution while they hold office so in resuming his position as governor, Dariye was temporarily protected. However, the immunity shield is not absolute – it can be removed if the official is first impeached. Two years after Dariye resumed office, the Plateau State legislature did just that.[34]

In 2006, Dariye was impeached by the Plateau State legislature, but his impeachment was overturned, allowing him to return to office and providing him with an immunity shield until his term expired in 2007.[35] Immediately after he left office, the EFCC indicted him on a range of charges, mostly alleging a misappropriation of funds and criminal breach of trust.[36] During his trial, evidence showed that Dariye had become so wealthy while in office that at points, he was richer than the state (Olyede 2018). Dariye was convicted of misappropriating N1.16 billion of ecological funds while he was the governor of Plateau and sentenced to 10 years in prison (Igwe 2022; Okakwu 2018).[37] These ecological funds were intended to address environmental degradation caused by past mining activities, but testimony showed that these funds were diverted to friends, his own accounts, and notably, to the PDP—evidence that part of his political budget was used for purchasing loyalty and influence in the market, not just self-enrichment (FRN v. Dariye 2018; ICIR 2018).[38] At the time of his conviction, Dariye was serving as the national Senator representing Central Plateau. In 2022, Dariye was pardoned by President Buhari and upon his release from Kuje prison, Dariye launched a legal battle to regain control of his financial accounts that had been frozen as a result of his earlier conviction (Igwe 2022; Premium Times 2023).

The stakes for the 2007/2008 elections were high at every level of government, and mobilization for candidates frequently happened along ethnoreligious lines. Nationally, term-limited President Obasanjo wanted to ensure that his party – the PDP – won everywhere, his so-called "do or die" order (Ostien 2009, 22; Larewaju 2007).[39] At the state level, Dariye's PDP gubernatorial seat, Dariye having only been reinstated for the last month of his term, was open. And at the local government level, elections were being held across the state.

For Jos North, this was the first local government election since 1999. In essence, the most lucrative and powerful positions in the marketplace were open at every level, setting the stage for a contentious election. At the local government level this also meant the opportunity to change who controlled indigene certificates. While the electoral processes did show signs of manipulation, in contrast to other parts of the country, polling days for each level of government were largely peaceful (NDI 2008). It was in the aftermath that violence broke out.

At the gubernatorial level, the chosen candidate for PDP, the incumbent's party, was Jonah Jang. Jang had actually run for governor of Plateau in 1999 and 2003 – first under the PDP umbrella, then the ANPP, and then returning to the PDP in 2007. Jang had a strong view that the majority of Jos, and specifically Jos North belonged to the Berom—a view on which he was unwilling to compromise (Ostien 2009). In 2003, Jang attempted to court votes from the Jasawa, meeting with the Council of the Ulama, but he refused to agree to the conditions for their support: for a district to be created in Jos North for the Jasawa (thus enabling them to get indigene certificates) and for Jang to choose a Muslim deputy governor—the so-called "balanced" Christian-Muslim ticket (Ostien 2009, 23).

In 2007, Jang did not attempt to solicit support from the Jasawa, but campaigned on a platform of returning land to the Berom that was rightfully theirs. Given that Jang was ignoring them, the Council of the Ulama appealed directly to Yar'Adua, the 2007 PDP candidate for president when he visited Jos. They said they wanted to support Yar'Adua, but they would not support PDP unless Jang agreed to their previously outlined concessions of recognition and a balanced, Christian-Muslim ticket. Again, Jang refused. However, on election day, Jang carried the vote without the support of the Jasawa. Nationally, Yar'Adua won, and did go on to appoint a Jasawa to a national ministerial position to the annoyance of Jang (Ostien 2009).

Once in office, Jang used his authority to try and bolster the Berom's control in positions of power—including as chairman of Jos North. Local government elections were delayed twice, and finally set to take place on 27 November 2008. Governor Jang imposed Timothy Gyang Buba, an ally and fellow Berom man from Jang's hometown of Du (which is actually in Jos South LGA, not Jos North) (Milligan 2013). Buba was an indigene of Jos South and therefore should not have been allowed to contest for elected office in Jos North, but Jang bent the rules to make it happen (Ostien 2009). Buba was the "younger brother of Jacob Gyang Buba, immediate past comptroller-general of the Nigeria Customs Service (a very lucrative position) and a long—time supporter of Jang; in April 2009 Buba the Elder became the new Gbong Gwom when the old one died" (Ostien 2009, 28).

Jang's manipulation of the primary to install Buba as the PDP's gubernatorial candidate angered both the Anaguta and Afizere leading the Afizere to ally with the Jasawa in their support of a settler opposition ANPP candidate (Milligan 2013; Ostien 2009).

The lead up to the election in November 2008 saw mobilization along religious lines as well as through religious institutions. Pastors and imams both called for their followers to support specific candidates – for Christians to support the PDP, and Muslims to support the ANPP (Ostien 2009). Some Christian pastors warned that the Muslim candidates wanted to Islamize Jos. Hausa praise singers were heard around the city saying that winning the Jos North chairmanship would make the Hausa more powerful than the governor. Across the religious rhetoric were direct and indirect threats of violence if each group did not win.

The 27 November 2008 local government area elections were largely peaceful, but some Hausa-Fulani believed that the Jos North LGA chairman vote was being rigged in favour of the PDP, a party associated with the BAA. The central collation centre location was secretly changed multiple times, and the final count was done from a different LGA (Mustapha et al. 2018). In addition, adding to suspicions, the PDP candidate at one point was trailing his main opponent, a settler from the All-Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) by 26,000 votes (Crisis Group 2012, 12).

There were six simultaneous attacks across six locations. Some included individuals reportedly wearing fake military uniforms, creating the perception that the attacks were premeditated and not spontaneous (Crisis Group 2012, 12). The attacks focused on destroying churches, but they eventually spread to Muslims burning their Christian neighbours' homes to the ground. This set off a cycle of responses in which Christians burned down the homes and businesses of Muslims (Crisis Group 2012, 12).

The Ajibola commission later estimated that at least 312 were killed and an additional 323 were injured (Ajibola Commision 2009). There were also reports that as many as 130 of those killed were extrajudicial killings done by soldiers who went house to house killing "apparently randomly, without targeting any religious or ethnic group in particular" (Crisis Group 2012, 12). A HRW investigation into the violence found that Nigerian police and army forces were involved in more than 90 arbitrary killings in the violence across the two days (HRW 2008). According to the witnesses interviewed, almost all of the victims were Muslim, nearly all were young, and most were unarmed when they were killed (HRW 2008). Some eyewitnesses said these were not just men in the streets, but those seeking shelter in homes.

### Crisis on the Plateau: Kleptocrats, Believers, and Grievances

> "Conflict in Nigeria may be conceptualized as an interaction between political crisis (caused by politics of money) and resource competition taking place against a background of various predisposing factors" (IPCR 2003, 26).

The violence that Plateau State has seen from 1991 to 2008 is a story of kleptocrats, believers, and grievances (Mustapha and Ehrhardt 2018; Ostien 2009; IPCR 2003; IPCR 2008). It is also an example of how the two categories of competition – of elites for power and of the population's access to the rentier state – intersect and can lead to violence. The conflict lines that emerged in Jos and across broader Plateau were defined by who controlled key government positions and therefore access to federal patronage and goods (Odinkalu 2015, 109). As the above quote from the first conflict assessment of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in 2003 argued, conflict dynamics across the country could be distilled down to the tragic interplay between political crisis caused by politics of money and competition over administrative-political authority and resources allocation.

In Plateau State, these dynamics played out against a history of perceived economic and political marginalization, growing ethnoreligious distrust, and competition over access to one of the few avenues to wealth – the state's revenue flows. With a population who had seen more than a decade of economic decline and stolen political dreams, conflicts over resources were sparked, deepened, and transformed because of the rules of the political marketplace and the ways in which elite actors sought power. Long-existing conflicts over administrative authority over territory and its resources became intermeshed with the logic of the political marketplace, with the contours and the outcomes determined by the rules of the political marketplace.

Violent conflict from 1991 through 2008 reshaped the city and the relationship of groups to each other (Krause 2011, 61). Neighbourhoods and business districts that were once integrated became segregated. Parts of the city became "no-go" areas depending on one's religion or ethnic group (Bawa and Nwogwu 2002). Moreover, a generation was growing up in the midst of violence that they only understood as violence that the Christians or Muslims had done to them. For them, an identity-based conflict was all they had ever known.

What started out as a competition over resources and representation in government became something else altogether. With it, came changes in the social fabric of the communities, the shape of the political institutions and most importantly, the tactics used to stake one's claim within the political marketplace.

# Conclusion: Understanding Identity, Violence, and Competition in Political Markets

The creation of Jos North LGA and the decentralization of government (and revenues) did not lead to the more inclusive democratic politics for which citizens hoped. Instead, it defined a new political unit originally intended to appease Hausa elites, but did so in a way that left the question of who a legitimate constituency was, and therefore had claim to the oil rents, unanswered and subject to manipulation. Jos North became a new political topography and site of competition without an effective mechanism to regulate it. As actors obtained elected (and appointed) offices instituting their own answers to the questions of who should control and benefit from the oil rents, those who disagreed were increasingly marginalized by the government. Eventually, the powder keg of pent-up frustrations caught fire and erupted in violence that engulfed Jos North and rippled across the region. A political battle turned violent that was increasingly drawn along ethnoreligious lines.

This paper has presented a focused analysis of conflict dynamics within Jos North as they intersected with competition for power at multiple levels of Nigeria's political marketplace. It has sought to demonstrate how violence in the streets of Jos North related to competition over who would control power and therefore Nigeria's oil rents at the national level. These dynamics were shaped by the rentier structure of the political system, the conditions of poverty and sustained insecurity, and Nigeria's complex history and ethnoreligious composition. While the details explored in these pages are specific to Nigeria, I argue that they do offer four lessons for understanding violent conflict as it intersects with identity politics and resource competition within marketplace settings.

First, that the causes of conflict and the manifestations of it may be different. For those who study and work on violent conflict, this likely comes across as an obvious point. However, it is worth reiterating because of how difficult it can be to separate the causes from the manifestations, especially as they occur over a long period of time. The violence in Jos is often first described either in ethnic or religious terms based on the divided groups that can be clearly identified. Even in the recounting of the history, my own analysis focuses on the interaction between specific ethnic groups. However, this attributes a salience and division to the ethnic identities that did not always exist. Yes, these groups have historically existed, but the grievances between them were not necessarily religious nor ethnicity-based. In fact, people from across various ethnoreligious backgrounds shared very similar grievances stemming from poor governance.

Moreover, these groups have a longer history of peacefully coexisting than they do of violence. Identity-based grievances were fostered as officeholders at the national, state, and local levels began to operationalize and exploit indigene-settler distinctions to maintain their own political power and serve their own agendas. Jos North as a case study is striking in the unprecedented violence that was sparked there. There were small-scale violent clashes in the 1990s, but nothing to the level that Jos experienced between 2001 and 2004 and again in 2008. This leads to the second implication – the evolution of the conflict developed its own legacy.

While the ways in which the conflict manifested may be different from the original causes, these manifestations develop their own legacy over time. This is certainly true within Jos. As previously discussed, neighbourhoods, businesses, religious worship centres, and places of social interaction became segregated, and there were "no-go" areas for each religious and ethnic group (Krause 2011). Moreover, generations were growing up only knowing identity-based violent conflict. This has contributed to a situation where incidents not related to ethnicity, religion, or indigene/settler status can quickly escalate along identity lines.[40] As Kaldor and de Waal observed, ethnic identity under these circumstances becomes entrenched (Kaldor and de Waal 2020, 529). Building peace in this environment requires not only addressing the underlying issues but addressing the legacies of the violence as well.

Third, that violence was not inevitable – there were ways to deescalate tensions and avenues to provide recourse for grievances. In its ideal form, democratic institutions have the potential to be non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms – yet these mechanisms were manipulated to prevent the inclusion or consideration of certain populations' grievances. That was not inevitable – it was a choice made by those in power. Both Dariye and Jang's administrations, along with the Jos North Chairmen pursued identity-based, zero-sum, kleptocratic politics, and in doing so actively enflamed tensions and closed democratic channels for the Jasawa to seek recourse. These administrations did not see the Jasawa as legitimate constituencies that they should serve.

Lastly, as observed by Odinkalu, throughout this time period, while there were many responses to the violence (military, investigatory, and from civil society), the architecture of the conflict during this period—the causes and exacerbating factors—remained unchanged (Odinkalu 2015, 114). This is perhaps the most significant implication for understanding how to prevent future violence and work towards sustainable peace in political marketplace contexts. These underlying and unresolved issues need to be addressed.

The hope is that by offering detailed cases like that of Plateau State, the fragmented and exclusivist forms of identity politics that emerge in political marketplace countries can be better understood so that violent conflict can be resolved and prevented. Attempts to address these dynamics, specifically the impact of local level peacebuilding efforts on them—will be the focus of the next research paper in this series.

# Endnotes

[1] Note that Obasanjo was in office from 1999 to 2007, but it was during his second term when the PDP consolidated power vis-à-vis other power brokers.

[2] See for example Somalia (1992–1998) (Majid et al. 2021) and Sudan (1988–89) (de Waal 2019).

[3] Also see (Hoffmann et al. 2020; de Waal 2020; Pendle 2020; Hadaya 2020; Kaya 2020; Watkins 2020).

[4] (Ake 1981)

[5] This quote comes from a speech Claude Ake, a renown Nigerian political scientist, gave in December 1992 (Claude Ake as quoted in Suberu 2001, 10).

[6] As of 2020, the IMF (2020) noted that Nigeria has one of the lowest levels of internally-generated revenue in the world. In 2015, in the midst of a global downturn for the price of oil, Nigerian government oil revenues dropped to 47%. For a discussion of these dynamics, see (Burns and Olly 2023; Miller 2023).

[7] For a more detailed discussion of political budgets and the political role of corruption, see (Miller 2024b). The concept of political budgets comes from (de Waal 2015).

[8] Section 308 of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution provides an immunity shield for executive officeholders while they are in office. For a discussion of this clause, see (Okeke and Okeke 2015).

[9] Bleck and Van de Walle (2018) note a similar dynamic across Sub-Saharan Africa.

[10] African Union Charter, Article 4(p): http://www.achpr.org/instruments/au-constitutive-act/#8. However, Nigeria has a history of military coups that were welcomed and seen as legitimate by the public because they overthrew corrupt civilian regimes. Even in contemporary discourse, some Nigerians wish for a military regime to return because that is the only way they think that corruption in the government can be addressed. (See Falola and Heaton 2008.)

[11] Participant response in a focus group discussion with author (FGD 4), November 2022. Jos, Nigeria.

[12] The Hausa and Fulani are sometimes referred to as Hausa-Fulani, but members of these groups define themselves differently based on their geographic location and specific customs. For a more detailed discussion, see (Ostien 2009).

[13] For more detail on the historical evolution of Plateau and Jos specifically, (see A. T. Higazi 2007).

[14] A notable exception to Plateau's largely peaceful past was the 1945 'potato riot' which evolved into a pogrom against the Igbos (see A. T. Higazi 2007).

[15] Nigeria gained its independence on 1 October 1960, after a mutually agreed upon withdrawal of the British over a 14-year period that began in 1946. For a more detailed discussion on the history of indigeneity and the legal interpretations of it, see (Odinkalu 2015).

[16] *The Native Authority Law*, 1954, Appendices, Part III, 47(1) (in Bach 1997).

[17] Section 147(3)

[18] Author interview with peacebuilding practitioner (Intv. 210). October 2022. Abuja, Nigeria.

[19] It is worth noting that outside the 2004 Plateau Resolves declaration, these reports and white papers have historically not been made public by the government. However, those with access have made sure they have made it into the public's hands. For a discussion of this, see (Oosterom and Sha 2019; Right to Know (R2K) 2010). Copies of these reports are available at: https://r2knigeria.org/index.php/campaigns/inquiry-on-jos-crisis-campaign.

[20] Estimates of the lives lost, those injured, and the long-term impact on displacement range though most put the number of killed and displaced close to 7,000 and 250,000 respectively. However, one Nigerian government report estimated that more than 53,000 were killed prior to 2004, meaning the overall number killed prior to 2010 was likely much higher (TNH 2004).

[21] For more on the history of Plateau State and Nigeria more broadly, (see Mustapha and Ehrhardt 2018; Falola and Heaton 2008; A. T. Higazi 2007; Ostien 2009).

[22] Babangida's regime was notorious for corruption. It was under his administration that the political marketplace emerged in Nigeria. See (Ellis 2016; Falola and Heaton 2008; Diamond, Kirk-Greene, and Oyediran 1997).

[23] For more on the history of Plateau State prior to 1991, see (Krause 2011; Falola and Heaton 2008).

[24] The Berom were the largest single group in Jos (A. Higazi 2016).

[25] This is a pattern that has continued through 2021 in Nigeria. See (Page and Wando 2022).

[26] Local governments were run by the Directors of Personnel Management (DPMs) in the interim between when the LG chairmen were dismissed in 1993 and caretaker chairmen appointed in 1994.

[27] It is not entirely clear why Mato's appointment sparked such a backlash compared to the previous election of Mohammed. This may have been due to the way in which each officer holder was selected. Mohammed was elected whereas Mato was appointed and imposed—negating even the semblance of public input and fitting with a larger fear and narrative of northern dominance and control of Christian groups within Plateau State. The imposition of a second Jasawa also could be seen as evidence of an emerging trend of Jasawa control of Jos North. For a broader discussion of these dynamics, see (Ostien 2009).

[28] These were official documents issued by local government verifying that certain individuals had ancestry in that area (A. T. Higazi 2007).

[29] Reports allege that Dariye won the election by rigging the PDP primaries and general election using money he amassed while financial director of the Benue Cement Company, a public-private enterprise (A. T. Higazi 2007, 15).

[30] This language comes from fliers allegedly made by a Hausa-Fulani organisation, though given the number of actors impersonating others to stoke tension, this may have been from an impersonator.

[31] One government report estimates that as many as 53,787 people were killed in the violence. This is one of the higher estimates. Most estimates put the death toll closer to 7,000.

[32] It is worth noting that the 2003 election cycle at every level demonstrated a significant advantage to incumbents, especially among PDP candidates who benefitted from the party's national political dominance.

[33] Dariye's associate, Joyce Oyebanjo was also arrested in London and later convicted for laundering £1.4 million, allegedly on behalf of Dariye (Shirbon 2007).

[34] At the time of Dariye's impeachment, the Plateau State legislature was led by Simon Lalong, who would be Speaker of the House from 2000 to 2006. Lalong would later go on to become governor of Plateau from 2015 to 2023 before becoming a senator representing Plateau's South Senatorial District.

[35] His impeachment was overturned on the grounds that the state legislators voting in favour of impeachment did not meet the necessary quorum for the two-thirds majority needed for impeachment (Mohammed 2007). It is worth noting that after Dariye was impeached, he went into hiding until his impeachment was overturned.

[36] Lawan (2010) argued that Dariye's impeachment was strongly encouraged by the EFCC at the direction of Obasanjo in retribution from Dariye alleging that some of the misappropriated funds were for the PDP.

[37] Dariye was originally sentenced to 14 years in prison, but his sentence was reduced to 10 years upon appeal.

[38] For example, disbursements allegedly included N100m for PDP S/West collected by Yomi Edu, the former Minister of Special Duties; N100m for PDP N/East credited to Marine Float, a company allegedly controlled by then Vice-President Atiku Abubakar; and N66m for the PDP in Plateau to be disbursed across the state's 274 wards (Olyede 2018). The payments also included a N176m payment to Ebenezer Retina Ventures, a company allegedly owned by Dariye, and N80m paid to Union Savings & Homes, which was believed to be a bribe paid through Union Savings & Homes to bribe Dr Kingsley Ikuma, the Permanent Secretary of Ecological Funds where the money originated (Olyede 2018; FRN v. Dariye 2018).

[39] The 2007–2008 elections were conducted over the course of two years. The State elections were held on 16 April 2007, the Federal Elections on 21 April 2007, and the Local Government elections were delayed until 27 November 2008. The PDP would go on to sweep elections at every level winning the presidency, both houses of the National Assembly (90% of the seats), 28 of 36 governorships, and all 17 LGA chairmanships in Plateau State though some election reports called it the worst election in Nigeria's history because of the degree of election manipulation, violence, and rigging (Ostien 2009; NDI 2008).

[40] This was repeatedly emphasized in several author interviews with community members, peacebuilders, and humanitarian actors in Jos. October – December 2022.

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