



WHY HAS PEACEBUILDING CONTINUED TO FAIL IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA?

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ABSTRACT

Persistent violence that tends to erupt periodically in Plateau State, Nigeria, has been a subject of great concern and has attracted the efforts of government agencies, traditional institutions, civil society actors, and international organisations. However, despite the enormous efforts devoted to addressing the violence, peace remains elusive in the state. This begs the question as to why peacebuilding efforts have not borne fruits. This paper seeks to examine the underlying causes of persistent violence in Plateau State that undermine peacebuilding efforts and explores possible strategies for promoting sustainable peace. The study looks at issues affecting peacebuilding in the state, such as institutional inadequacy, identity politics, indigene-settler tensions, land, and resource conflicts, poor inter-organisational collaboration, lack of community ownership, inadequacy in the security sector, and failure to address governance issues. The paper also highlights the inadequacy of some of the interventions used in responding to violence and attempts to derive lessons from other conflict-affected regions outside Nigeria. The study uses qualitative case study methodology while document analysis was the main data gathering technique. The paper reveals that peacebuilding failure is attributable to structural inadequacy, institutional and governance challenges, and lack of appropriate responses to community grievances. The paper argues that sustainable peace can be achieved through institutional reforms, inclusive governance, security sector reforms, community reconciliation, developmental intervention, and improved early warning systems.

Keywords: Plateau State, Peacebuilding, Conflict, Institutional inadequacy, Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

Plateau State is situated in the North-central geopolitical region of Nigeria and derives its name from the plateau that forms the topography of the area. Plateau is a land of great ethnic and religious diversity, and is made up of more than 54 distinct ethnic groups. These include the Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, Mwaghavul, Ngas, Tarok, and Goemai among others (Best, 2007). Jos, Plateau State capital city, grew to prominence as the colonial administrators discovered tin in the region in the early twentieth century and developed Jos as a mining centre. Jos became a melting pot for migrants from all parts of Nigeria and West Africa who came to work in the mines and to sell their wares, making it one of the most cosmopolitan towns in Nigeria before independence (Plotnicov, 1971). While the region underwent economic growth due to the rich mineral resources, the influx of migrants created great strain on the region's

resources. It also resulted in the creation of new societies whose interactions often led to inter-communal tensions. The colonial government did little to address the rising tensions. Colonial policies exacerbated the situation as government officials drew sharp distinctions between natives and settlers. The colonial administration did not give equal recognition to natives of Jos as it did to the people from other regions of Nigeria, thus creating ethnic and regional tensions.

Since independence, the situation did not improve, and the indigene-settler distinction became a major source of contention, with the colonial distinction between natives and settlers persisting (Suberu, 2001). The situation resulted in massive violence, especially with the political tension that characterised the transition to democracy. Political competition and resource control became major factors fuelled by identity politics, which continues to threaten peace and stability in the region. The state government is often viewed with great suspicion as the government is seen to be biased towards protecting Jos against the rest of the state. Violence in the state has taken different forms as citizens take to the streets to protect their interests against what they view as government-sanctioned violence by security agencies.

While the state government has attempted to address the violence through various peacebuilding interventions, these efforts have not yielded the desired results. The problem of communal violence is exacerbated by poor socio-economic conditions and the inability of the government to control the rising insecurity and address the underlying causes. The inability of the government to deliver on basic services and respond to the demands of the masses, as well as the lack of competent and professionalised security agencies, has further been a major impediment to peacebuilding. Armed youths have become a major security concern in the state as they take justice into their hands, targeting members of communities that take part in violence against members of their community.

Plateau State thus continues to be one of the most violent states in Nigeria despite decades of efforts by different government agencies, traditional institutions, religious bodies, civil society organisations, and international agencies. Various efforts have been deployed, ranging from military response to religious leadership, peace dialogues, warlords engagement, interfaith initiatives, community development, early warning systems, and community policing. Despite these efforts, violence persists and peace remains elusive. This raises the question as to why these numerous interventions have not succeeded in bringing lasting peace to the state. It also makes one wonder what role these interventions have played or will play in the long term and why peacebuilding interventions in the state remain vulnerable to failure. It also raises the question as to what extent violence prevention and peacebuilding interventions in the state have been able to respond to the community's demands, such as addressing marginalisation and resource control, and whether such demands will continue to cause tension in the state even after immediate violence has subsided.

An aspect that needs to be addressed in understanding why peacebuilding efforts in the state continually fail is the inability of formal institutions, such as the police and judiciary, to respond to violence and restore peace. Peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts are often undermined by the perception of these institutions as being biased and unable to provide justice in cases of violence. This paper will attempt to address the issue of the frequent violence in Plateau State and propose alternative peacebuilding measures that can help the state and the country in resolving similar conflicts in the future.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken using qualitative research methods. It employed a qualitative approach which enables the researcher to identify themes and trends associated with the problem under investigation as well as understand the underlying reasons and motivations behind specific behaviours and actions. This approach also enabled examining documentary

evidence on peacebuilding, governance, and security sector and analyse it to reveal thematic trends and areas of concern. The study used a case study approach to examine the situation in Plateau State. The case study approach is appropriate for conducting research on contemporary issues, investigating situations in real-life contexts, as well as exploring the relationships between variables, especially when the context of the study and its boundaries are not clearly understood (Yin, 2018). The paper focused on the case of Plateau State, which has been plagued by persistent inter-communal violence, farmer-herder clashes, and political tensions and has been the subject of various peacebuilding efforts.

The study rely mainly on secondary data gathered from various published and unpublished literature on conflict, peacebuilding, governance, and security sector reform. Secondary data offer a wealth of information, including extensive background, related matters, and supporting evidence for the research problem (Johnston, 2017). The data was gathered using the document analysis technique, which allow reviewing existing resources on the research problem. Document analysis enables investigating issues that cannot be accessed through direct observation and interaction (Bowen, 2009). It is especially useful when researching historical issues that require a comprehensive overview of different documents, including written, visual, and audio recordings.

The study employed thematic analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis to examine and interpret the data gathered through document analysis. The thematic analysis approach helped reveal key aspects of the research problem, including themes, trends, patterns, and areas of concern. On the other hand, content analysis enabled the extraction of essential information to better understand the phenomenon of interest and present it in a more structured manner. Lastly, comparative analysis facilitated examining research details from various sources to determine similarities and differences between them. It was found useful in comparing the situation and peacebuilding interventions in Plateau State with those of other conflict-affected areas in Nigeria and other countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical overview of conflict in Plateau State

Plateau State has been at the epicentre of Nigeria's many violent conflicts. While the unrest may appear to be primarily motivated by religion, it has a lengthy history rooted in colonial rule, indigene-settler politics, resource conflicts, environmental issues, and farmer-herder tensions, among other factors. Prior to colonial rule, the area that became Plateau State was largely inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, Mwanghavul, Tarok, Ngas, Goemai, and others, each controlling their territory (Best, 2007). However, colonial rule brought significant changes to the region. The colonial authorities imposed colonial laws and governance systems, which resulted in the breakdown of many of the traditional systems and institutions that had previously governed the area. Consequently, the relationships between the various ethnic groups that had existed before colonial rule were significantly impacted (Mamdani, 1996).

The discovery of tin in Jos prompted colonial authorities to develop the city as a mining centre, attracting thousands of immigrants to the region. This resulted in significant economic growth, and Jos became a major commercial hub. However, it also resulted in the creation of new societies whose interactions gave rise to inter-communal conflicts. Colonial authorities did little to address the unrest, as they were more concerned with economic interests than with maintaining social cohesion. This resulted in the emergence of several tensions, including indigene-settler tensions and ethnic and regional differences. Colonial laws and policies exacerbated the situation by drawing sharp distinctions between natives and settlers. The colonial authorities gave settlers extensive autonomy in the distribution of resources, which

caused considerable resentment among natives, who were denied similar rights. This discriminatory approach laid the foundation for the deep-seated ethnic tensions that continue to affect the state to this day (Plotnicov, 1967; Mamdani, 1996). .

With independence came further tensions, as natives sought to assert their rights. Political instability and violence characterised the immediate post-independence period as political elites vied for dominance in the newly independent state. The tensions were further exacerbated by the lack of resources, as the region was not endowed with vast resources to support economic growth and development. Furthermore, the colonial authorities had failed to invest significantly in the region's development prior to independence, leaving it ill-prepared to meet the challenges of governance and development. The situation was compounded by security challenges, which placed additional stress on an already struggling economy. These challenges, together with the inability of the state to provide basic services, created fertile ground for violence and hindered peacebuilding efforts (Suberu, 2001; Higazi, 2011). .

In addition to these factors, violence in Plateau State has been attributed to several other causes, including resource conflicts and environmental degradation. Resource conflicts have been a major source of tension and insecurity in the state. They are primarily caused by the competition between farmers and herders for grazing space and farmland, which has resulted in increased violence and insecurity. This has led to the emergence of several community-based security outfits that patrol their communities and mete out punishment to those found guilty of engaging in violence or being sympathetic to those who perpetrate it. Environmental degradation has also contributed significantly to violence, as it has exacerbated resource conflicts, especially between farmers and herders (Ostien, 2009; Krause, 2011).

The most common source of tension between different communities in Plateau State is the indigene-settler dichotomy. Indigeneity is a critical pointer for appointments, jobs, scholarships, traditional leadership, and even landownership in the state according to the Nigerian constitution (Suberu, 2001). Despite being in the state for generations, the Hausa-Fulani community is regarded as settlers and are often denied their share of political and economic rights. Members of this ethnic group in Jos claim to be politically marginalized since they cannot be regarded as indigenes of Plateau state despite settling there for generations (Higazi, 2011). However, members of indigenous communities argue that the indigene status protects them from being uprooted from their ancestral land. Since the two groups are often vying for political positions and recognition, the indigene-settler dichotomy always triggers tension and violence (Ostien, 2009).

Ethnicity is closely tied to religion since most indigenous communities are Christians while the Hausa-Fulani are Muslims (Ostien, 2009). Therefore, conflicts often erupt along ethnic lines with tension spilling over to religious beliefs and practices. Worse still, violence between the two ethnic groups has resulted in severe damage to properties and even loss of life (Human Rights Watch, 2005). In the wake of the frequent attacks, both religious groups have questioned each other's existence with places of worship being turned into temples of hatred and destruction (Human Rights Watch, 2005). Even after several attacks, the situation was still far from rest due to the cyclical nature of violence and the fact that retaliation is always met with equal violence. However, it is noteworthy that religion is not the root cause of the violence. Instead, religious groups have been used by political and community leaders to stir tensions and violence (Ostien, 2009; Krause, 2011).

Politics plays a significant role in fueling violence and tensions between several ethnic groups in Plateau State. Since the turn of the century, Nigeria has witnessed democratic transitions marred by violence and tension (Suberu, 2001). Political elites have always used ethnicity to mobilize support and votes which has led to violence in Plateau State and other parts of the country. It is estimated that local government elections in particular have been the

most deadly form of election in Nigeria (Best, 2007). Election results have often resulted in violence since the winning party always seizes control of the machinery of government which determines who gets jobs, contracts, and other political appointments. Even prior to elections, political parties have been at loggerheads over political positions and power distribution (Best, 2007). The 2001 Jos violence, for example, erupted after local government election violence which resulted in the death of several people (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

Land has always been a lucrative economic resource. Apart from its use for agricultural activities, it has also been a vital resource for political empowerment, economic development, and social amenities. For generations, land has been acquired based on ancestral occupancy and is passed down from one generation to another. Therefore, any changes to this practice or policies that threaten ownership of land by Nigerians result in tension, violence, and destruction of properties (Akinola, 2018). Even in the present time, land is still a major source of contention in Jos and other parts of Plateau State. The land use act of 1978 makes it difficult to distinguish between communal land and government land due to the overlapping of the two (Akinola, 2018). Violations and challenges in implementing the land use act have resulted in prolonged disputes over land and ownership. With rapid urbanization and a growing population, demand for residential and commercial properties continues to grow.

The main cause of farmer-herder conflicts is the competition over land between farmers and herders. Traditionally, herders and farmers had co-existed peacefully as each had access to space and resources without competition. However, increasing aridification, desertification, and climate change have significantly reduced grazing land, especially in the northern parts of Nigeria (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2009). This has led to increased competition over farmland between the two groups. In addition to the reduction of grazing land, farmer-herder conflicts have also been caused by high population growth and the fact that herders are increasingly using farmland for grazing. The lack of effective security apparatus to regulate or control these conflicts has been a major impediment to peace. Farmer-herder conflicts in Plateau State have been exacerbated by increased incidences of theft and destruction of property and the fact that these conflicts are now fueled by religion, ethnicity, and even political differences (Adelaja & George, 2019).

The main cause of environmental issues in Plateau State is the increased population growth and unplanned urbanization, which has resulted in increased pressure on the environment. Climate change has also had adverse effects on the state by reducing agricultural yields, causing desertification in the northern parts, and changing rainfall patterns (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). Desertification has led to the expansion of the Sahara desert into Plateau State from the north and has resulted in changes in land use practices. The shifting climate patterns have had adverse effects on agricultural activities and has increased the rate of environmental degradation. Even though climate change is not a direct cause of violence, it definitely exacerbates tensions and violence in Plateau State. In addition to environmental degradation, climate change has also brought about ecological imbalance, especially in the southern parts of Plateau State. The state has recorded significant increase in environmental degradation due to illegal mining activities. Due to years of tin mining, pits and excavated land have caused damage to farmland and the ecosystem (Best, 2007).

Government response to violence, and peacebuilding efforts

Studies on government response to violence and peacebuilding in Nigeria indicate that government responses have had limited short-term and long-term effects. The Nigerian government has responded to the frequent violence in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria through inquiries and reforms. There were several commissions of inquiry whose reports resulted in recommendations aimed at promoting sustainable peace in Plateau State and other

parts of Nigeria. The commissions that were set up included the Justice Niki Tobi Commission (2001), Justice Bola Ajibola Commission (2009), and several presidential commissions on security and reconciliation (Best, 2007; Higazi, 2011). However, their recommendations were not implemented due to a lack of political will, and the recommendations only addressed violence rather than focusing on peacebuilding processes (Kwaja, 2011).

Studies conducted in Plateau State indicate that government responses to violence have had limited effect in promoting peacebuilding in the state (Kwaja, 2011; Krause, 2011). For instance, Kwaja (2011) conducted empirical research on federal government responses to the 2001 Jos violence by interviewing government officials and community leaders on the effects of federal government responses to violence. Krause (2011) argues that the imposition of the emergency rule in 2004 reduced violence but failed to address the underlying causes of violence. Research studies also indicate that institutions and agencies in Nigeria tasked with peacebuilding responsibilities have had limited effects (Onuoha, 2020). Most of the agencies and institutions were formed with the purpose of accelerating peacebuilding as well as promoting coexistence. Examples of such institutions include the National Boundary Commission, National Orientation Agency, National Human Rights Commission, and the Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons. However, these institutions have had limited effects due to challenges in structure, funding, and even political interference (Albert, 2012; Onuoha, 2020).

Other empirical research studies on peacebuilding in Nigeria focus on local peacebuilding efforts and initiatives and their effects. Peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria are mainly community-based efforts that promote dialogue and address some of the underlying causes of violence. In addition to the local peace committees, studies indicate that peace efforts have been led by traditional rulers, religious leaders, and women's groups in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria (Adamu & Ben, 2019). Even though these efforts have helped to reduce violence, institutional structures lack the capacity to address peacebuilding issues in a comprehensive manner. Other community-based peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State have been led by community leaders and organizations by hosting inter-communal meetings (Lederach, 1997). Efforts by religious groups such as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) have also played a role in addressing some of the underlying causes of violence between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State. However, these efforts have been hindered by political interference (Adamu & Ben, 2019).

There has been growing recognition of the role played by women in peacebuilding and community development, including conflict resolution. Several studies conducted in Nigeria indicate that women have played a significant role in peacebuilding, especially in the wake of political violence in Plateau State (Olagunju, 2021). Women's organizations have contributed immensely towards post-violence conflict reconstruction, especially in facilitating community dialogue. Even though their role has been recognized, women's roles are not acknowledged in most of the formal efforts at peacebuilding. Empirical studies on peacebuilding in Nigeria also indicate the effectiveness of security responses to violence and communal clashes. The Nigerian government has deployed security personnel to Plateau State and other parts of the country to help reduce violence and boost security. However, the effectiveness of security responses to violence has been questioned since they only address part of the problem, and the violence persists (Higazi, 2011). For instance, Higazi (2011) argues that the deployment of the military to Jos in response to the 2001 violence reduced violence levels but failed to address the underlying causes for the tensions and triggered further violence.

Onuoha (2020) also argues that sharing of intelligence has played a significant role in addressing violence in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria. Security agencies are involved in sharing of intelligence on potential conflict hotspots. State-based intelligence networks have

played a critical role in ensuring that security agencies have the required information on violence or potential violence. However, there are still challenges in intelligence sharing due to poor coordination and logistics (Onuoha, 2020). Additionally, there is also the challenge of political interference with the intelligence and security agencies in Nigeria. Despite the fact that intelligence-sharing among security agencies and other government agencies enhances the ability to address violence.

Peacebuilding lessons from Rwanda, Kenya, and Northern Ireland

Following the genocide that resulted in over 800,000 people being killed, Rwanda has been regarded as one of the most successful post-genocide and post-conflict states globally. The country promotes and supports reconciliation, economic development, and peacebuilding in order to prevent future conflicts and violence. Clark (2010) conducted research on reconciliation processes in Rwanda so that lessons could be drawn for other conflict-affected states and regions. The main findings of the research indicated that the justice sector in Rwanda has played a critical role in promoting peacebuilding and preventing future violence. The establishment of community-based Gacaca courts and the involvement of the public in the reconciliation processes significantly helped in bringing perpetrators of the genocide to justice. The research also found that the transitional justice and reconciliation efforts have enabled Rwanda to strengthen its institutional and socio-economic development, thus promoting national cohesion (Clark, 2010). Despite the fact that Rwanda has made considerable progress towards peacebuilding and preventing violence, Reyntjens (2013) found out that democratic institutions and power-sharing mechanisms in Rwanda are limited, and there is also restricted freedom of expression to prevent dissent.

Following the violence that was triggered by the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya, there were great efforts made in order to promote peacebuilding and prevent future violence. In addition to the peacebuilding processes led by the government, there were also community peacebuilding efforts and mechanisms that helped reduce tensions and violence. Lynch (2011) studied mediation processes that were led by Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, and found that the mediation processes were successful in ending the violence and promoting peacebuilding. The mediation processes led to a power-sharing agreement between the two disputed political parties. The agreements that were reached allowed for the establishment of new institutions that promoted accountability, justice, and peacebuilding processes. The establishment of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) also helped in investigating and addressing the underlying causes of the violence and conflict (Lynch, 2011).

Studies on peacebuilding in Kenya indicate that there were both informal and formal mechanisms for peacebuilding. The formal processes were led by the government, while the informal peacebuilding mechanisms included community efforts. For instance, Kanyinga (2014) found that local peace committees played a critical role in helping local communities in Kenya to come to terms with the violence, especially in relation to land matters and power-sharing. On the other hand, the community-based violence prevention efforts did not have the institutional capacity to address political violence that was triggered by the 2007 presidential elections (Boone, 2014). Even with great efforts at promoting peacebuilding, Kenya still faces great challenges with regards to ethnicity-based conflict, especially conflict over resources such as land, as well as power and patronage politics.

Since gaining independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan has been facing persistent violence and conflict. The conflict that has persisted in South Sudan has greatly affected peacebuilding processes in the country. Rolandsen (2015) argues that South Sudan is a prime example of how state-building processes have not worked due to several factors such as ethnic tensions, political rivalry, and competition over natural resources, especially oil. He

also indicates that the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) has helped in reducing violence and promoting peacebuilding and state-building processes in South Sudan.

However, Rolandsen (2015) adds that there are still several limitations and shortcomings in the R-ARCSS, which has prevented peacebuilding from being realized. Young (2019) also argues that South Sudan faces great challenges in regards to institutional credibility and security sector reform that are necessary to promote peacebuilding and state-building processes in the country. Community-based peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan have also been hindered by the lack of national ownership and relevance, despite the great efforts by the churches in promoting peacebuilding in the country. According to UNMISS (2023), South Sudan needs peacebuilding and state-building processes such as reforms in the security sector, transitional justice, and institutional and constitutional reforms if it intends to achieve national cohesion and peace.

The peacebuilding efforts in Northern Ireland offer great insight into conflict-affected regions such as Plateau State. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 played a great role in promoting peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and brought an end to the violence that had lasted for decades. Darby (2003) conducted research to establish the factors that contributed to the successful peacebuilding efforts and help conflict-affected states such as Plateau State develop effective peacebuilding mechanisms. Mac Ginty (2008) argues that the success of the Good Friday Agreement can be attributed to the fact that it not only addressed the constitutional issues but also dealt with policing matters and restored the rule of law. Additionally, he argues that the peacebuilding efforts helped in building trust between different communities. Darby (2003) also found that community dialogue and consultation played a great role in promoting peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. However, he adds that these mechanisms failed to address the cross-cutting issues that fueled tensions and violence, especially the sectarian tensions. Although the Good Friday Agreement led to an end of violence, Brewer (2010) argues that it has not been sufficient in reducing the deep-seated divisions in Northern Ireland.

Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina has also been affected by several issues, including challenges in state-building, ethnic tensions, and political rivalry. Conflict-affected states such as Bosnia and Herzegovina need effective peace accords that can help in promoting sustainable peace. Chandler (2000) argues that peace accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina failed to reduce violence due to the fact that they relied on international administration rather than state-building. He states that the 1995 Dayton agreement was meant to promote power-sharing between the ethnic groups but failed to prevent violence and conflict due to weak structures and institutionalization of the state apparatus. Bieber (2006) adds that the involvement of international agencies in peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina hindered the role played by local institutions in addressing the conflict and promoting peacebuilding efforts.

Peacebuilding efforts in Colombia provide great insight into peacebuilding in other conflict-affected regions such as Plateau State, Kenya, and South Sudan. Colombia has been facing great challenges with regards to violence, especially due to the activities of left-wing guerrilla groups such as Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Several peacebuilding efforts have been made in Colombia, including peace dialogues and agreements that have promoted demobilization and disarmament of several groups. The peace agreement also addressed transitional justice, rural development, and protection of the political and social rights of the citizens. Kaplan and Nussio (2018) studied the peacebuilding efforts made in Colombia and the factors that contributed to their success. Their research revealed that most of the community-driven peacebuilding mechanisms that were employed in Colombia played a great role in addressing conflict at the grassroots levels.

They also found that the peacebuilding efforts were successful due to the fact that the citizens were involved in the process of rebuilding post-violence Colombia. Nussio (2020) also identified the activities of FARC as a part of the factors that inhibited peacebuilding in Colombia. His research indicates that violence is still persistent in various parts of the country due to the fact that the criminal and insurgent groups have greatly benefited from the natural resources such as oil. However, according to Nussio (2020), the efforts made in addressing the sources of conflict and violence have contributed to the reduction of violence in several parts of the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Conflict Transformation Theory, Peacebuilding Theory, Social Capital Theory and State Fragility Theory. Conflict Transformation Theory was pioneered by John Paul Lederach, a peacebuilder who realized the need to emphasize aspects of building sustainable peace after violence. The theory was developed in the 1990s after observing that various aspects of conflict and peace were being overlooked in most of the related studies. The failure of traditional conflict resolution approaches to address the complex nature of conflicts in various parts of the world prompted Lederach to develop a more comprehensive approach that emphasized not only conflict resolution and management but also peacebuilding. He argued that sustainable peace can only be achieved if several aspects of conflict are addressed.

Some of the aspects are Personal Transformation, Relational Transformation, Structural Transformation, Cultural Transformation and Transformation of Conflict and Peacebuilding approaches. Personal Transformation entails an individual's attitudes and behaviors and how they contribute to conflict. It further involves how personal relationships can be used to promote peacebuilding. Relational Transformation entails building relationships that promote peaceful coexistence. Structural Transformation emphasizes the need to focus on structural issues such as governance and development since. As Lederach observed, structural issues are the root causes of most conflicts. Cultural Transformation entails promoting a culture of peace as a means of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Transformation of Conflict and Peacebuilding approaches focuses on developing approaches to conflict resolution that emphasize peaceful means of ending conflicts.

Another theoretical perspective used in this study is the Peacebuilding Theory. According to this perspective, peacebuilding is a process that takes place in conflict-affected societies and involves promoting sustainable peace by engaging in a wide range of deliberate actions, including conflict resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction, and reparation. This theory was pioneered by Johan Galtung who argued that peacebuilding involved various steps and processes (Galtung, 1996). The theory focuses on promoting long-term peace in society instead of focusing on immediate cessation of violence. The theory holds that lasting peace can be realized through peaceful coexistence, especially through engaging in dialogue and deliberation among diverse groups of people.

A third theoretical perspective used in this study is the Social Capital Theory. This theory was pioneered by Pierre Bourdieu who argued that social capital helped in promoting trust among individuals, which in turn promoted cooperation (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital plays a significant role in promoting peacebuilding since it involves collaboration, cooperation, and mutual trust. High levels of social capital facilitate peacebuilding because it promotes mutual understanding and minimizes the likelihood of violence and conflict.

The last theoretical perspective used in this study is the State Fragility Theory. This theory is critical in understanding the various aspects of peacebuilding, especially in conflict-affected states such as Nigeria and other parts of Africa. According to the theory, there are

several reasons why states become fragile and therefore unable to promote peace even in the face of attempts at peacebuilding (Hegre et al., 2016). State fragility theory explains the factors that lead to state failure, weakness, and collapse. State fragility is a situation where the state apparatus is unable to exercise control and authority over its territory and population, resulting in the inability to deliver essential services and peace, therefore, creating a power vacuum (Rotberg, 2004). States become fragile due to various factors, including corruption, instability, and lack of essential services such as security and justice, resulting in weak governance and ineffective administration.

The Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) (2022) agrees that state fragility arises due to the interaction of various political, economic, social, environmental, security, and human factors. The weakness of the state has been a significant contributor to the violence and insecurity in the Plateau region. Armed groups take advantage of the weak governance structures to promote their agendas and gain control of the region. Lack of effective governance has also resulted in poor dispute settlement mechanisms and weak implementation of peace agreements, hampering peacebuilding efforts in the region. The state fragility theory has been used by various analysts to explain the failure of the state in responding to the violence and ethnic cleansing in the Plateau region effectively (Best, 2007; International Crisis Group, 2020). Nevertheless, state fragility theory has faced criticism for being too pessimistic in addressing conflict-ridden situations through restoration and reconstruction approaches that do not address the root causes of the violence (Call, 2011). Some authors also argue that the theory ignores the role played by local actors, communities, and non-state actors in conflict-ridden environments (Rotberg, 2004).

PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS IN PLATEAU STATE

Plateau Peacebuilding interventions have been carried out by various stakeholders, including the federal government, state government, Traditional leaders, Civil Society Organizations, and Religious groups. Most of the interventions have been focused on responding to violence rather than addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. As a result, peacebuilding in the Plateau region has been characterized by reactive approaches to insecurity and violence, thereby failing to address the root causes of violence, such as identity politics, the indigene-settler problem, and environmental degradation (Lederach, 1997; Galtung, 1996; ICG, 2022).

The Nigerian federal government has shouldered the primary responsibility for conflict management in Plateau State by intervening through military operations, judicial commissions of inquiry, and peace committees. These measures have helped restore security in the wake of violent confrontations, but they have proven to be largely ineffective in managing the root causes of the violence. Military interventions have dominated the federal government's response to ethno-religious riots in Jos, which have occurred intermittently since 2001. The Nigerian Army and other security agencies have been deployed on numerous occasions to quell the violence and protect civilians. Operations such as Safe Haven, which was launched as a task force in 2010, have helped prevent further attacks, protect vulnerable communities, disarm civilians, and respond to emergencies (Albert, 2005; Best, 2007; ICG, 2022).

The military has played a significant role in de-escalating the violence and ensuring peace is restored. It has helped prevent further loss of civilian lives, avert reprisal attacks, and create room for humanitarian assistance to reach affected communities. Military operations have also created security, which has enabled joint patrolling and intelligence-gathering operations with other agencies (Best, 2007). However, the heavy reliance on military interventions has been questioned, with some analysts arguing that it has failed to address the root causes of the violence, thus resulting in its persistence (Lederach, 1997). The security

apparatus has focused on responding to violence rather than investing in sustainable conflict transformation strategies such as institutional reforms and community dialogue. The use of force has also resulted in increased violence as people become afraid of the military and resort to self-defense. Further, allegations of human rights abuses, ethnic targeting, and lack of accountability have eroded trust in the security agencies, undermining their ability to manage conflicts effectively (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Amnesty International, 2021). In addition, military operations have created negative peace, which has failed to promote positive peace in the state. Consequently, the violence continues to resurface long after the military operations conclude.

The federal government has responded to the persistent cycles of violence by establishing numerous judicial commissions of inquiry, including the 2001, 2008, and 2010 commissions in Jos. The commissions were tasked with investigating the causes and consequences of the violence, as well as recommending actions to prevent future violence (Best, 2007; Higazi, 2011). The findings by these commissions have helped illuminate the root causes of the violence, including political and security institutional failures, indigene-settler tensions, and land disputes. The reports also recommended reforms, including reforms in the security sector, prosecuting individuals and institutions responsible for the violence, and providing compensation to the victims of the violence (Best, 2007).

However, the recommendations have not been implemented, and the reports have not been made public. Even when the recommendations were implemented, they did not result in the punishment of those responsible for the violence, with many individuals getting away with their actions (Higazi, 2011). This outcome has created a sense of impunity in the communities, which has contributed to the persistence of violence. In addition, the commissions of inquiry have failed to promote accountability, with many of the recommendations being ignored or implemented long after the reports were published. The commissions have also become politicized, with political elites using them to advance their interests rather than promote peace and security. As a result, they have failed to provide an effective institutional framework for addressing the causes and consequences of violence.

The federal government has also established numerous peace committees to promote peace and security in Plateau State. These committees have included stakeholders such as government officials, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and security agencies. They have promoted dialogue between feuding communities, as well as coordinated peace efforts in the state (IPCR, 2019). The committees have helped promote trust between the feuding communities by providing a platform for dialogue, as well as facilitating ceasefire agreements. However, the peace committees have not been effective in preventing the cycles of violence due to their reliance on the government for funding and support. They have failed to develop long-standing mechanisms for peacebuilding, with many of them dissolving immediately after the violence subsides (IPCR, 2019). In general, the peace committees have proven to be ineffective in promoting lasting peace in Plateau State. The federal government's reliance on peace committees, military operations, and judicial commissions of inquiry has failed to promote positive peace, with negative peace dominating the state.

Plateau State governments have made several efforts to promote peacebuilding by engaging in various initiatives that emphasize dialogue, reconciliation, and early conflict resolution. These efforts have helped demonstrate the state's commitment to addressing the causes of violence and promoting sustainable peacebuilding. The various initiatives have helped facilitate discussions between feuding ethnic groups, as well as youth, women's groups, religious organizations, traditional rulers, and security agencies (Best, 2007). The discussions have helped promote trust between the various stakeholders by providing a platform for airing grievances and addressing the root causes of the violence. The state government has promoted

dialogue as a way of promoting peaceful coexistence and reducing tensions between the various communities. However, the efforts have not been effective in promoting peacebuilding due to several challenges. For one, the dialogue initiatives have been used to promote negative peace rather than positive peace. The various stakeholders have used the meetings to negotiate terms of coexistence rather than address the root causes of the violence. The initiatives have also been used to promote self-interest, with each party advancing its agenda rather than compromising. For dialogue to be effective in promoting peacebuilding, it has to be used to promote positive peace by addressing the root causes of the violence.

The Plateau State government has promoted reconciliation by establishing various committees that have emphasized dialogue and conflict resolution. The committees have included community elders, religious leaders, and government officials. They have helped promote healing by encouraging the feuding communities to engage in dialogue, as well as carry out various symbolic activities that promote reconciliation. In addition, the committees have promoted trust between the various stakeholders by facilitating ceasefire agreements and promoting peaceful coexistence. In some cases, they have helped facilitate the return of internally displaced persons and promoted economic development in the affected communities (Kaigama, 2012). However, the committees have not been effective in promoting sustainable peacebuilding due to their inability to address the root causes of the violence. The committees have focused on promoting dialogue between the feuding communities without addressing the root causes of the violence.

The state government has promoted early warning and response systems as a way of promoting peacebuilding. The various initiatives have emphasized the need to address the root causes of the violence, as well as respond to emerging conflicts in a timely manner. The response component has been geared towards responding to violence by promoting security and ensuring that the violence does not escalate. The initiatives have relied on local government and traditional rulers to help monitor the situation and report to the security agencies. In addition, local government has helped establish community rapid response mechanisms that have helped respond to the violence (IPCR, 2019). However, the early warning and response systems have not been effective in promoting peacebuilding due to inadequate funding and institutional capacity, with many agencies being ill-equipped to respond to the violence.

Traditional rulers have played a significant role in peacebuilding due to their ability to influence their subjects. They have helped promote peace by encouraging their people to engage in peaceful coexistence and avoid violence. The traditional rulers have also helped facilitate negotiations between the feuding communities, as well as promote reconciliation efforts. In addition, they have helped promote community policing by encouraging their people to report criminal activities to the security agencies. Traditional rulers have also helped promote conflict resolution by relying on their knowledge of customary law to help address disputes amicably (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). However, the traditional rulers have faced several challenges in promoting peacebuilding, including political interference and the weakening of their institutions. The traditional rulers have been used by political elites to promote their agendas, with many of them being reluctant to take action against individuals who commit crimes. The weakening of the traditional institutions has also limited their ability to promote peacebuilding effectively.

Community elders have helped promote peacebuilding by relying on their knowledge of customary law to help resolve disputes amicably. They have helped promote peace by encouraging the various communities to engage in dialogue and address the root causes of the violence. The community elders have also helped promote reconciliation by facilitating negotiations between the feuding communities. In addition, they have helped promote community policing by encouraging the youths to report criminal activities to the security

agencies. The community elders have played a significant role in promoting peacebuilding due to their ability to promote dialogue between the various stakeholders. However, the community elders have been weakened by the changing social dynamics, with many youths becoming reluctant to heed to their advice.

Religious leaders have played a critical role in promoting peacebuilding by encouraging their followers to engage in peaceful coexistence and avoid violence. They have helped promote dialogue between the feuding communities by calling for an end to violence and promoting reconciliation. Religious leaders have also helped promote community policing by encouraging their followers to report criminal activities to the security agencies. In addition, they have helped promote conflict resolution by relying on their knowledge of religion to help address disputes amicably. Religious leaders have helped promote peacebuilding by establishing various inter-faith organizations that have helped promote dialogue between the Christian and Muslim communities (Kaigama, 2012). However, religious leaders have faced several challenges in promoting peacebuilding, including political interference and the promotion of hatred by extremist groups.

Civil society organizations have helped promote peacebuilding by encouraging the various stakeholders to engage in dialogue and address the root causes of the violence. They have promoted community policing by encouraging the community members to report criminal activities to the security agencies. The organizations have relied on dialogue to promote reconciliation between the feuding communities, with many of them having facilitated ceasefire agreements between the various stakeholders (Search for Common Ground, 2020). Civil society organizations have also promoted peacebuilding by encouraging the youths to participate in development activities rather than violence. However, civil society organizations have faced several challenges in promoting peacebuilding, including limited funding and political interference. The organizations have limited institutional capacity, making it difficult for them to address the root causes of the violence effectively. Women and youth organizations have also helped promote peacebuilding by encouraging their members to engage in dialogue and address the root causes of the violence. They have also helped promote reconciliation by encouraging their members to participate in peacebuilding efforts. In addition, the organizations have promoted social services by providing basic needs to the affected communities. However, the organizations have faced several challenges in promoting peacebuilding, including limited funding and political interference.

International organizations have helped promote peacebuilding by providing technical assistance, funding, and humanitarian aid to the various stakeholders. The organizations have provided funding to the various stakeholders, which has helped promote development and reduce the levels of violence in the state. However, international organizations have faced several challenges in promoting peacebuilding, including political interference and donor dependency.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST PEACEBUILDING IN PLATEAU STATE

Social divisions have significantly compromised peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State. The state has witnessed recurring violence, which has led to mistrust between various ethnic and religious groups. Even after peace accords, interactions between the communities remained limited, as each side viewed the other as a threat due to the violence in the past (Lederach, 1997). Psychological trauma resulting from attacks, killings, and destruction of properties has also hindered reconciliation processes. Most victims of violence and attacks have suffered grief, loss, and displacement while perpetrators remained at large. This lack of justice and healing has compromised peacebuilding in the region.

The culture of revenge has been deeply entrenched in the communities, with every ethnic group recalling stories of being victimized by the other groups. As a result, every conflict between the ethnic groups has been perceived as a justification for revenge and has resulted in severe violence (Best, 2007). Peacebuilding efforts have also been limited by the fact that they have mostly been directed at the political elites and have failed to involve ordinary citizens. Peacebuilding requires rebuilding relationships and trust between individuals and groups and encouraging dialogue, especially on matters that trigger violence. It also requires promoting psychosocial healing and institutional reforms in the region.

Economic factors have also compromised peacebuilding in the Plateau State. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality have often been triggers of violence and have easily mobilized people into conflicts (World Bank, 2023). Land has also been a contentious issue that has compromised peacebuilding in the region. Land has been a crucial resource for livelihood, identity, and power, and its control has often resulted in severe clashes between communities (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2019). The competition for land between farmers and herders has escalated as climate change has made land use patterns more challenging. The two communities have been competing for farmland and pasture, which has resulted in violence (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2019).

The competition for resources has also been triggered by increased population growth, reduced agricultural yields, youth unemployment, and environmental degradation. The tension over natural resources has often easily been exacerbated into full-scale violence, especially when combined with ethnic and political factors. Peacebuilding efforts have been compromised by the fact that they have mostly been short-term interventions with little emphasis on long-term economic development. The lack of sustainable economic development has made it challenging to address the underlying causes of violence and has limited peacebuilding efforts. Institutional factors have compromised peacebuilding in the Plateau State. There has been a lack of effective implementation of peacebuilding policies and agreements, which has further exacerbated mistrust between communities. Various government institutions have been involved in peacebuilding efforts, including the federal government, state governments, traditional leaders, civil society, religious leaders, and international organizations. However, the lack of effective coordination between these institutions has limited peacebuilding efforts. The institutions have implemented various peacebuilding initiatives without a unified strategy, which has resulted in duplication of efforts and wasted resources. The lack of coherence in peacebuilding efforts has also caused confusion among the citizens of the region.

Peacebuilding efforts have also been compromised by the lack of adequate funding and resources to support the initiatives. The budget allocated to peacebuilding efforts has been insufficient to address the scale and complexity of violence in the region. The security agencies have received more funding compared to other institutions, which has compromised the overall peacebuilding efforts. The absence of a clear policy framework has also hindered effective peacebuilding. The frequent changes in government policies have discouraged peacebuilding initiatives, as political instability has often interrupted the implementation of existing policies. Sustainable peacebuilding requires a clear and stable policy framework that promotes institutional coordination and cooperation.

Peacebuilding in the Plateau State has been compromised by external factors such as the proliferation of small arms and regional insecurity. Small arms and light weapons have been easily available in the region, which has exacerbated violence and compromised peacebuilding efforts. The proliferation of arms has been facilitated by transnational criminal networks that have exploited the porous borders of Nigeria (UNODC, 2021). The instability in the Lake Chad region has also compromised peacebuilding in Plateau State. The regional insecurity has triggered migration and has resulted in increased ethnic and communal violence.

While Plateau State is not the epicenter of Nigeria's insurgency, the instability in the region has affected security and peacebuilding efforts in the State.

Climate change has also compromised peacebuilding in the Plateau State. The desertification process has resulted in environmental degradation, which has displaced many people from the northern parts of Nigeria. While climate change has not directly triggered violence, the lack of effective policies to address the challenges has exacerbated ethnic and communal tensions. The increased competition for resources has resulted in violence, especially between farmers and herders. The external factors that have compromised peacebuilding in Plateau State require regional and international cooperation to address effectively.

Another weakness in peacebuilding efforts is the lack of local ownership of peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding requires ownership by local actors including traditional leaders, women, youths, religious leaders, and civil society in addition to state and international actors. There are indications that many peacebuilding initiatives are designed by international actors and not by local communities, which reduces their effectiveness. Mac Ginty's (2011) analysis of international peacebuilding interventions and Richmond's (2011) discussion on international peacebuilding and local ownership explain the contextual insensitivity of many peacebuilding interventions that are designed externally. Local ownership is critical for sustainable peacebuilding, and the findings in this study indicate the need for communities to take a more active role in peacebuilding efforts.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING FRAMEWORK

The findings in this study suggest the need for a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy that promotes institutional reforms, preventive governance, community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, early warning and response systems, and sustainable development to promote peace and security in Plateau State. The strategy should focus on addressing the root causes of violence and insecurity and enhancing the capacity of state and community institutions to respond to conflicts and promote peacebuilding.

The first step towards peacebuilding should be preventive governance as opposed to the current reliance on military action and response. Preventive governance will require peacebuilding actors to conduct early warning and response, including conflict-sensitive development planning, facilitated dialogue, and early mediation to prevent conflicts from arising and escalating. Evidently, the state lacks effective early warning systems that can provide timely and accurate information on the causes, nature, and context of conflicts to enable effective responses. Therefore, peacebuilding interventions should focus on enhancing early warning systems through the use of technology, community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, and formal/state-based conflict resolution mechanisms. The findings indicate that traditional leaders, youths, women, religious leaders, and civil society play a critical role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Their involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution will enhance community ownership and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. The early warning systems should be complemented by appropriate responses, including conflict resolution mechanisms such as local peace committees and mediation efforts.

Second, there is the need to institutionalize community-based conflict resolution mechanisms such as traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Local government should be involved in peacebuilding efforts, and local peace committees should be established to promote mediation and reconciliation in the communities. Institutionalizing conflict resolution mechanisms will enhance sustainability and community ownership of peacebuilding efforts. There are indications that many conflict resolution mechanisms are informal and ad hoc and therefore not effective in promoting sustainable peace.

Third, peacebuilding efforts should focus on both justice and reconciliation to promote sustainable peace. The findings indicate that the state lacks effective mechanisms for delivering justice, including punishment for those found guilty of perpetrating violence. Justice is a critical aspect of peacebuilding because it promotes punishment for those responsible for violence and addresses the grievances of the victims. Reconciliation is also important in peacebuilding because it focuses on restoring relationships, promoting healing, and repairing the harm caused by violence. Reconciliation efforts such as restitution, apology, and compensation have the potential to promote sustainable peace. It is also suggested that peacebuilding efforts should be informed by restorative justice approaches that focus on repairing the harm caused by violence. Restorative justice approaches promote community involvement in the justice delivery process and emphasize reconciliation, restitution, and healing. The experience in Rwanda and Colombia indicates that peacebuilding efforts that emphasize justice and reconciliation are more likely to promote sustainable peace.

Fourth, peacebuilding actors need to invest more in development to promote economic growth and reduce poverty, which are important factors in promoting sustainable peace. Peacebuilding should be informed by the human security theory to promote peace at the individual, community, and societal levels. The theory emphasizes the need to promote personal security, food security, health security, community security, and environmental security to promote sustainable peace. The people of Plateau State are experiencing personal insecurity, lack of access to adequate food, health services, and education, and insecurity in their communities and environment.

CONCLUSION

Plateau State's persistent cycles of communal violence present a challenge to the Nigerian state and national security. The federal government, along with the state's authorities, has made considerable efforts to end violence and restore peace. This includes substantial political, military, and economic resources allocated to the region in the past decade. This paper argues that the state's inability to respond to recurring violence emanates from governance challenges, institutional weaknesses, politicization of ethnicity, and the absence of inclusive peacebuilding mechanisms. Accordingly, achieving durable peace requires reforms in institutional governance and community engagement.

Among all the other findings, the main reason why peacebuilding has failed in Plateau State emanates from the fact that the various interventions have focused on addressing the immediate causes and effects of violence while neglecting its underlying determinants. For instance, the response to the communal tensions has been primarily securitized, with the military and police deployed to contain the situation instead of targeting deep-seated issues that make communities prone to conflict. Violence is both a cause and an effect of a confluence of political, economic, historical, and institutional factors. Armed conflict emerges when political elites exploit ethnic, religious, and regional divisions to advance narrow political gains, especially when they face little resistance from the opposing communities. Violence, therefore, becomes part of the political economy of identity, particularly where the ruling class benefits from exacerbating tensions to consolidate power. Consequently, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and institutions are either weak or easily manipulated, rendering them ineffective in preventing or halting recurring violence.

Besides political exclusion and institutional failures, economic factors, including poverty and unemployment, contribute to the cycle of violence, as the youths resort to looting, destruction of property, and even targeted killings due to personal grievances or revenge (International Crisis Group, 2012). Similarly, as a predominantly agrarian economy, Plateau

State is highly vulnerable to ecological disruptions, such as desertification and water scarcity, which can exacerbate resource-based conflicts and undermine food security.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on peacebuilding by advancing different theoretical perspectives that cut across conflict transformation, peacebuilding, social capital, and state fragility. The study's findings add to the understanding of Peacebuilding Theory, which emphasizes the role of institution-building, reconciliation processes, and community-driven initiatives in fostering durable peace (Paris, 2004). The research also demonstrates how conflict transformation informs peacebuilding practice, particularly the need to go beyond managing the symptoms of conflict to tackling its root causes, as well as promoting sustainable peace at individual, communal, national, and international levels (Lederach, 1997). Similarly, the analysis contributes to Social Capital Theory by illustrating the mechanisms through which trust and networks influence peacebuilding efforts. Specifically, the paper shows that the erosion of social capital undermines conflict resolution and reconciliation processes, particularly in settings characterized by tension between different ethnic groups. In addition, the study builds on State Fragility Theory by highlighting the factors that facilitate the breakdown of community relations, including weak governance capacity and institutional inadequacy in responding to community expectations (Rotberg, 2004).

The findings from this study provide several policy recommendations, which cut across institutional, security, and socio-economic aspects of peacebuilding. First, the Nigerian government needs to adopt a preventive state approach to conflict management, focusing on sustaining peace rather than responding to acute crisis situations. Investing in early warning systems and grassroots mediation mechanisms is likely to be more efficient and cost-effective than military interventions in mitigating conflict (OECD, 2020). The second recommendation is to initiate institutional reforms to promote constitutional rights, social justice, and equitable governance in Plateau State. This will require removing discriminatory indirect rule policies, promoting social equity through inclusive public appointments, and providing adequate public services to different communities (Suberu, 2001).

The third recommendation is to transform the security sector by enhancing inter-agency coordination, community policing, and civilian police units to complement traditional security approaches. Improving transparency and accountability mechanisms will promote public trust and reinforce the rule of law (United Nations, 2015). Fourth, institutionalizing community-based peacebuilding mechanisms and involving traditional leaders in peacebuilding activities can complement government efforts in conflict-prone areas. Civil society organizations, religious institutions, women's groups, and youth networks need to be integrated into formal peacebuilding frameworks to amplify their effectiveness. The fifth recommendation is to invest in socio-economic development to promote broader-based economic growth, job creation, and human capacity development, particularly in rural areas. Such an initiative will help alleviate poverty and reduce the vulnerability of the youths to violence, as well as promote social cohesion and peacebuilding processes (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

The recommendations highlight the need for a paradigm shift in peacebuilding, which goes beyond military interventions to emphasize institution-building and community-driven approaches. Such a framework recognizes that conflict resolution and sustainable peace require long-term transformations of political, economic, and social systems while promoting people-centered governance. This study also reveals the limitations and drawbacks of the existing peacebuilding strategies, with institutional, policy, and implementation challenges hindering effective interventions. The first challenge is the lack of coherence between Nigeria's peacebuilding agenda and domestic priorities, as well as limited capacity to deliver on existing initiatives. Despite the government's commitment to promoting peace in Plateau State, various state agencies and policymakers lack the technical expertise and institutional capacity to

implement the proposed reforms. Such shortcomings hinder progress towards achieving sustainable peace and security. This observation underscores the need for enhanced institutional capacity-building and technical assistance, particularly for state agencies and local governments.

Another limitation emanates from the fact that many of the existing policies and programs aimed at promoting peace and security have not been adequately monitored or evaluated to assess their impact on conflict mitigation. Although the government has introduced several initiatives to address communal tensions and promote socio-economic development in Plateau State, there is limited information on their effectiveness in promoting peace and stability. This lack of information makes it challenging to identify gaps and tailor interventions to the specific needs of the affected communities. Moreover, many of the proposals put forward by various commissions appointed by the government have not been fully implemented, which raises questions about their efficacy in addressing the conflict drivers.

Another constraint involves the role played by Nigeria's political and economic elites, who do not benefit from peace dividends, as well as regional tensions and divisions that continue to undermine national cohesion and stability. Political elites have instrumentalized violence to advance their self-interests, including accumulating wealth and power, which has resulted in the emergence of parallel power structures and fragmentation of authority. These divisions weaken the capacity of the government to promote effective governance and security, particularly in regions such as Plateau State, where ethnic and regional tensions exist. The findings reveal that political parties advance divisive agendas and reap substantial rewards from fueling violence to gain votes, which perpetuates the cycle of insecurity (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Consequently, the political landscape in Nigeria is characterized by the capture of state institutions by private interests, weakening accountability mechanisms and the rule of law. These factors contribute to the proliferation of violence and impede efforts towards achieving sustainable peace.

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