Religious Conflict and Resolution in the Pluralistic Communities of Nigeria's Middle Belt

Confronting Theory and Practice in the most Populous state in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Although Nigeria is becoming an important economic and political actor in the world, it is facing many security challenges. In the Middle Belt region of the country where the Christian South and the Muslim North meet, exists a high level of intercommunal religious violence. While first establishing the developments that have led to this violence, this thesis looks to answer the following question: Why are some pluralistic communities in this region more prone to intercommunal religious violence than others? It does so by comparing local political systems in several LGAs (Local Government Areas) with similar ethnic-religious make-up. What has been found is that in those LGAs where a mechanism of *informal local power sharing* had emerged, very little to no violence took place, whereas in those LGAs where one group was in power, tensions easily turned violent. The final chapter explores what use these findings might have for conflict resolution programs in Nigeria, and Africa as a whole. Another result of the analysis is that the Nigerian situation represents the same causes as religious tensions in Europe, where the influx of Muslim migrants causes tensions. I suggest that there might be more lessons learned from Nigeria's situation, than most people think.

Key Words: Religious Violence, Local Power Sharing, Pluralistic Communities, Nigeria, Christianity, Islam, Europe, Islamophobia

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 2014, the Ground Truth Project covered a story about Pastor James Waye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa who live in Kaduna city, in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. In a long interview, both men describe the battle they wage against one another's parties. They talk of the deep hatreds they feel and how it has been fuelled by a long history and petty grievances. Pastor James trains Christian youth to attack Ashafa's men. In one attack, a Christian militia ended up 'killing several of the imam's cousins and throwing the imam's beloved mentor, a Sufi sheikh, down a well and burying the boy with stones' (Sennott, 2014). In return Imam Muhammad Ashafa dispatched a gang of young men with the intention to kill the pastor. He did not succeed, but the pastor lost his hand. Kaduna state is full of examples like these. Intercommunal religious violence is a serious problem in Nigeria.

Nigeria is an important actor in regional politics and, with over 186 million inhabitants and its rapidly growing economy has been named one of the MINT countries (together with Mexico, Indonesia and Turkey), to become the next economic giant (The Street Journal, October 2014). Nevertheless, Nigeria faces many challenges as it struggles with the global conflict between world religions, the legacy of colonization, environmental damage, and the impact of economic globalization. Regional disputes over political control already surfaced shortly after the country's independence in 1960. The Biafra War almost split the country apart. Nowadays, the tensions concerning the "Republic of Biafra" are once again surfacing. On a different level, there are growing clashes between farming communities and Fulani cattle-herders that have become a problem in the central region of Nigeria. Due to rapid population growth and the desertification of northern grazing lands, the two groups find themselves fighting over pieces of fertile territory (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). At the same time, the Niger Delta region is being terrorized by a militant group that calls itself the Nigeria Delta Avengers, who have been blowing up pipelines and oil-installations to destruct the Nigerian oil economy. Their actions have caused the cutting of oil production by one third in June 2016. The group condemns the Nigerian government for failing to bring development to the poor regions in the country (Ewokor, 2016). Additionally, the full potential of this giant source of income is hobbled by high levels of corruption.

At the same time, given its religious pluralism, Nigeria offers an interesting case for analysing the development of violent religious conflicts. For many years Muslims have made up about half of the population, but over the past fifty years Christianity has grown from about a quarter of the people to approximately the same proportion. The remainder (formally) belongs to other animistic religious groups. In 2004, Nigerians were ranked 'the most religious people in the world with 90% of the population believing in God, praying regularly and affirming their readiness to die for their beliefs' (Adoba, 2004, 24). In the north of Nigeria an eastward-looking and Sahara-facing Islam can be found. There, one can observe militant fundamentalisms, most recently appearing in the form of Boko Haram, a terrorist organisation that has proved more fatal than the Islamic State (IS) (Bourne, 250). Marriage between Muslims and Christians is seen as a taboo and, when it occurs, often causes violent raids. Whereas in the South, in the city of Lagos a very different Islam can be observed. In Lagos, it is common for families to contain people of both beliefs, living together without much friction.

Since 1980 clashes between Muslims and Christians have increased tremendously (Vinson, 2017). At least two of the security issues aforementioned include the two groups standing against each other. The Biafra War was one where the Igbo people, who are predominantly Christian, fought the Nigerian government that, after a coup, consisted of mostly Hausa elite, who in turn are Muslim. The Fulani cattle-herders originally inhabit the Muslim north and are now fighting over the pieces of fertile land with mostly Christian farmer communities, which often leads to deaths and burned villages. Lastly, there are also clashes between Christians and Muslims who live in the same pluralistic communities.

This thesis centres on religion, because religion is shown to be a 'key factor in determining identity and defining politics in a society' (Blanco-Mancilla, 2003, 1). Blanco-Mancilla states that religion is therefore a crucial factor to understand citizenship in the context of developing countries. This thesis zooms in on a specific part of Nigeria; the Middle Belt Regions. This is where the Muslim North and the Christian South come together and where the largest demographic shift (from Animism to Christianity) has occurred. It is here where in some pluralistic regions formerly ruled by Muslims, Christianity has become a majority.

Research Questions

The research question in this thesis is the following: **What are the reasons that some pluralistic communities in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria are prone to inter-communal religious violence, while others are not?**

In order to answer the main research question, three sub questions will be discussed, which will shape this thesis. They are stated as follows:

> **To what extent and in which way is religion a factor in the increase in violence in these communities since the 1980s?** (Chapter Three)
>
> **Why are some pluralistic communities prone to inter-communal religious violence, while others remain peaceful?** (Chapter Four)
>
> **To what extent can answering these questions generate insights in containing or resolving religious conflict in cases where a formerly privileged elite fears the power of a growing minority?** (Chapter Five & Six)

In order to answer these questions, this thesis is structured as follows:

Roadmap

The next chapter, Chapter Two, will discuss some theories of conflict. Most important are two frameworks. The first derives from Karl Marx's *scarce resource theory*. With the contribution of Avalos (2017), it states that religion specifically can cause a lack of resources that groups find worth fighting for, such as a sacred city or holy land. It might also concern a scarce resource, like land or water, with competing groups using religion as a mechanism of *otherising* to justify its own violent acts against the other: 'they' somehow do not deserve control over the scarce resource.

In the second framework 'identity' is key. The rationale behind this is that for fear of losing one's identity, or the expression of that identity in one's environment, a group might prepare for violence. This violence often happens when the influence of other groups threatens to change the experience of public space, especially when the control of a central authority is declining. Some groups may feel that they can or have to take matters in their own hands, which leads to violence. Since religion is a large part of a group's or person's identity, this last theory is especially interesting for this thesis. From this chapter derives the main part of my research question: 'a formerly privileged elite fearing the power of a growing minority'. Is one group afraid for losing its own identity due to the growth of another group?

To put everything into context, the third chapter will outline the history of religious change in Nigeria. This, I believe is necessary in order to come to a full understanding of the dimension of the conflict(s). It will demonstrate how a sacralisation of politics in the pre-colonial period,

and the maintenance of it during the colonial period shaped the inter-religious relations in Nigeria. It shows how the Muslim North has always kept its powers and customs, including its control of the middle belt with large animistic minorities. It seems that animistic minorities experienced a benefit from conversion to Christianity as they became part of a larger whole. The rapid growth of Christian Pentecostalism after Nigeria's independence caused the Muslims elites to call out Sharia law. This in turn made the previously apolitical Christians become politically engaged in order to fight for their rights and the continuation of the democratic institutions through which their rights and growing influence were guaranteed. This chapter, in sum, tracks the process of the politicisation of religion on a national level.

Chapter Four zooms in on two states in the Middle Belt of Nigeria in order to conduct a more detailed and comparative analysis as to why conflict occurs in particular pluralistic communities. In this chapter, the second research question will be reviewed. Here, I discuss the difference of governing between some Local Governmental Areas (LGAs) and reveal that there is a considerable correlation between one way of governing and the maintenance of peace in certain communities.

Chapter Five discusses several possible solutions for religious conflict that have been attempted in Nigeria or in similar regions and situations. The first part focuses on military intervention (aiming to restore central authority) as a possible solution for these kinds of inter communal conflicts. It discusses why this method has not worked in the past, and additionally why the Nigerian state will most likely not have the authority to succeed in using the military effectively and without violence. It also briefly touches upon the possibility of external intervention. The second part discusses the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda, and whether or not it could be applied to the Nigerian case. Since Rwanda's situation has had a similar ethnic (but not religious) conflict resulting in genocide of the formerly privileged elite (the Tutsis under the Belgian colonizer). Thirdly, the notion of *local power sharing* will be discussed as a possible solution. This involves local politics and the local elites.

In Chapter Six, some parallels to Europe will be drawn to see whether the Nigerian example can generate more general insights into situations in which the influence of a growing (religious) minority is feared. In the final chapter I will summarize and reflect on my findings, discuss its limitations and provide questions for future research.

Research Design

The research design of this paper consists of the combination of two methods: *process tracing* and *congruence analysis*. As can be observed in the 'roadmap', the first part of the paper

contains theory development, process tracing, rich description, and historical narrative of religious conflict in Nigeria. The goal of this section is not to answer the research question directly, but to instead gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of this very complex situation. The analytical part of this study will be a within-case comparative analysis on subnational level. This will force me to look at local-level politics. In this section, I will examine the reasons for conflict in pluralistic communities in similar states in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. By comparing events in several pluralistic communities in Nigeria, and considering two frameworks of conflict theory, I will be able to answer the first part of my research question: What are the reasons for inter-communal conflict in these states? A final method that will be applied is another form of congruence analysis. I will discuss three different possible solutions to inter-communal conflict. Whereas I believe one approach to be more effective, it is mostly a chapter that will hopefully spark a discussion and provide incentive for further research. This way, I hope to create a triangulation, by using both comparative case studies, and the two research methods. The data is collected through secondary sources i.e. books, journals, newspapers/magazines, articles and data from documents. The scope of the study is from 1979, when the religious conflicts increased, until 2017, the latest year during which I was able to collect data.

Relevance

This thesis regards Nigeria, but its theoretical analysis might go beyond one country. Terrorist organisations have influenced the relationships between Christian and Muslims, not only in Africa and the Middle East, but in Europe as well. This paper might speak to scholars interested in ethnic/religious conflict, and hopefully it will help policy makers, activists, developmental organisations in their attempts to deal with the ethnic cleavages in Nigeria, and other by terrorist ravaged countries. Finally, I hope that this thesis might show that the study of religion might be used for peace building rather than for explaining violence only.

CHAPTER TWO

Theories of Religious Conflict within the State

In International Relations (IR) exist some common assumption about religion and politics. These include first of all that the relationship between religion and politics is governed by the public/private debate, secondly, that religion is primarily institutional, individual and irrational, causing violence and chaos and should therefore be restricted to the private realm, and thirdly, that religion is only relevant to understanding the political of pre-modern societies (Snyder, 2011; Wilson, 2012). Since September 11, 2001, however, religion is no longer considered irrelevant to the study of international relations. For several years now scholars are attempting to bring religion back into IR theories. In their works, they are trying to show that religion is not privatized, and that politics are often far from secularized. Instead, they state, religion's role and place in politics and society is not fixed, but constantly shifting and changing (Hurd, 2009). Mark Juergensmeyer (2017), author of *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence,* even argues that a new era of what he calls 'religious nationalism' is on the rise all over the world. He is pointing mostly towards a rise in religious activism, including suicide bombers. Despite his prediction, there is still some confusion under which circumstances religious tensions arise. The aim of the following chapter is to discuss some of the theories on (religious) conflicts that have been developed. The first part of this chapter is devoted to a literature review on the theory of conflict and the role of religion in conflict. The second part will show that from these theories and ideas two frameworks can be derived. These will be used further on in the thesis to apply to the Nigerian case.

Theory of Conflict

The foundations of conflict studies can be traced back to Chinese philosophers such as Han Fei Tzu (280-233 BC), who taught that men are 'innately weak and lazy and should therefore be punished'. Tzu argued that society is therefore controlled by those with the power to punish, keeping them in check through fear. Early Greek philosophers, such as Polybius (205-125 BC), believed that people were like a herd of animals, and that society moves in cycles of peace and conflict, the latter being a necessary part of society (Richmond, 2010). These are ideas from long times ago, whereas in this part of the chapter, I will focus on conflict as a sociological theory, a discipline formalized only in the 19th and 20th century.

A first theory, initially developed by Karl Marx (1818-1883), who is often considered (by the west) to be the pioneer on (modern) in the field of conflict studies, assumes that conflict arises

when there is a scarcity of resources. Marx focused on conflicts that occurred between the western bourgeoisie (the elite) and the proletariat (the working class and the poor). More specifically, he stated that conflict occurs when the bourgeoisie and the proletariat compete for control over certain scarce resources. For example, capitalism, which at that time was on the rise in Europe, builds on the existence of a powerful minority class and an oppressed majority between whom resources have been unjustly distributed. This unequal social order was maintained through the production of consensus among the common people by the ideological apparatus, determined by the bourgeoisie. Religion is one of the institutions that can function as a tool to help the ruling class to maintain the status quo in a society by promising the lower classes rewards in the afterlife, making them content. Through this, religion helps maintain social inequality, because it justifies oppression. At the same time, it is used as the legitimization of oppressive social conditions in order to maintain a status quo, and it can therefore be seen as the source for intergroup conflict. Additionally, it supports an 'us-versus-them' mentality towards those who are not of the same religion. This, in turn, would justify violence against other groups who do not belong to the same religion. One could say that the role of religion functions as a divisive power, rather than a cohesive one in society.

Max Weber (1864-1920) stated something similar by proposing that the ideas of power, prestige and property added to social tensions and that such conflict could be found in every layer of society, for example in politics, gender and religion. Once the socio-economic conditions of the proletariat would worsen, they could develop a class consciousness, possibly leading them to revolt and demanding changes. In sum, scarce resource theory regards the power of ideology in the hands of one group. Religion, as well as art, media, education and such, can be tools through which that ideology might be implemented or maintained.

There are several more scholars who have contributed to its development of conflict theory. Wright Mills (1916-1962), for example, argues that the creation of a social structure attributes to the likelihood of conflicts occurrence. Social structure includes fixed institutions that reflect the norms of society and influence people's everyday behaviour. Specifically, she describes 'the rise of a tiny "power elite" composed of military, economic, and political figures who have ruled America from the mid-twentieth century' (76).

Conflict theory is based on the assumption that individuals or groups in society attempt to maximise their part of limited resources that exist and that are desired by humans. A relatively recent contribution to this school of thought is made by Avalos (2005). He approaches religions through a rational-empiricist critique and has received some harsh criticism for his book *Fighting words: The Origins of Religious Violence*. Nevertheless, he has made one key

contribution to the theory of religious conflict, which is the application of scarce resource theory to religious violence. He observes that violence often occurs because of competition over scarce resources, a limited supply of food or land. He specifically talks of violent competition in the religious context. Alvalos suggests that religion can cause certain scarce resources through *'inscripturation', salvation, sacred space* or *group privileging.*[1] In short, an object, group of people, piece of land, or an idea is given a special value by the religion, which may prompt the struggle for that entity. He goes as far as to state that these kinds of struggles are less ethical than others, because religious scare resources are made that way only through religious traditions, and not because they are necessary to survive. He also makes the case that, therefore, religion is a more signification factor than authors such as Cavanaugh (2009), who I will discuss next, dare to admit. Although Alvalos tends to go too far in his other arguments by condemning all of religion, his scarce-resource theory is widely considered.

As already briefly touched upon, many theorists in conflict studies have focused on the question whether religion is essentially prone to violence. Cavanaugh (2009), for example, analyses violent conflicts that have been marked religious and discusses what he calls 'the myth of religious violence' (1). He argues that religious violence and secular violence cannot be distinctly separated. However, the myth constituting the idea 'that religion is a trans-historical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from 'secular' features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly dangerous inclination to promote violence' (3) remains powerful, because Western societies use it to legitimize the modern (secular) state. Whereas authors such as Charles Kimball (2009), Mark Juergensmeyer (2005), and Scott Appleby (1999) argue that religion is violent because of its irrational, absolutist and divisive nature, Cavanaugh notices their reluctance to provide a definition of religion in their arguments, in turn making it so broad that almost anything could be religious and thus be prone to violence. Therefore, the approaches of these scholars fail, because they are based on a clean separation between the secular and religion, whereas in reality, this is almost never the case.
Cavanaugh additionally argues that stating that religion is separable form secular experiences is 'itself a part of a particular configuration of power' (59). In Western history exist this idea that with the creation of the modern state around the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the elites of the nation-state helped and solved the crisis of religious violence. Contradictory, Cavanaugh argues that these elites helped to create violence for political ends. In sum, the myth

[1] *Inscripturation* is the designation of some texts, not no others, as holy and revealed by God.

of religious violence has been used to both maintain a separation of church and state, but also to influence Western policy making. While at the same time, the West often paints Muslim societies as 'irrational', those who cannot separate their religion from politics. This creates troubles in foreign policies as the West often condemns acts of violence by Muslims societies while justifying at the same time its own secular acts of violence. The Nigerian government is officially secular, and often uses violence in an attempt to stop conflicts. Would they use the same logics reasoning even though their politics is clearly permeated with religious dialogue and actors?

Although the discussion on whether religion causes violence is not necessarily relevant for this paper, it is important to realize that it is not as simple as saying that it does or does not cause violence. It is also crucial to understand that religion can be used as a tool that allows groups to *otherise* other groups, that it can be used for maintaining consent, and that it can be politicised. This is contested with the pre-existing common assumption in IR that I mentioned at the start of this chapter. Nowadays, these theories are often related with pre-modern or non-western societies. Especially Western European countries are considered to have stable democracies with rarely any religious intercommunal tensions. Or, when they are there, people say that they are not about resources, but due to more complex problems. Where it is often through that conflicts in countries, such as Nigeria are easily explained through, for example, scarce resource theory. In this thesis, I will show that in Nigeria, but also in Europe, religion can be used to strengthen a community, to create a feeling of belonging, but it is also a powerful (and dangerous) tool once it used for political reasons.

Conclusion - Two Frameworks

From the previous section, two underlying frameworks can be recognized. The first one, introduced by Marx and further developed and applied to inter-group conflict by several scholars, is the *scarce resource theory*. This is a theory based on western societies. Nevertheless, as stated above, scarce resource theory is nowadays often associated with conflicts in Second or Third World countries. Especially in multi-ethnic societies, resource rivalries can produce competing communal interests. However, Lake and Rothchild (1996, 45) state that, through multivariate analysis, the existence of competing interests over resources is often not a sufficient explanation for violence to arise. After all, they state, violence is never a favoured outcome for any of the actors involved: people might get killed, farms and houses destroyed, and the resources itself even made unusable.

Therefore, it is interesting to look at rationales in which 'identity' is the keyword. These are not developed into a theory, but one can call it a framework that includes the idea that once the identity of a group is linked with 'acute social uncertainty, a history of conflict, and fear of what the future might bring, it emerges as one of the major fault lines along which societies fracture' (Newland, 1993, 161). A peace activist in former Yugoslavia, Vesna Pesic, articulates it well: 'ethnic conflict is caused by the "fear of the future, lived through the past" (Pesic, 1994). Especially when central authority declines, or is non-existing at all, groups become fearful for the survival of their identity. This leads them to prepare for violence, making actual violence more likely to happen.

In the following chapters I will examine whether and to what extent these frameworks are applicable to the Nigerian case, and more specifically, to the case of inter-communal religious violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. In order to understand what causes such a fear of the future, the history through which these communities have lived needs to be described. I will do so in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Tracing Religious Change in Nigeria

Nigerian scholar Osaghae (1998) observes that the increasing ethno-religious tensions that started to exist after the 1978 Sharia issue, as well as the weakness of the Nigerian state, failure of civilian rule to take root, and failed economic policies, all contributed to the increase of religious, and regional conflicts that took place after. He also notes that Muslim-Christian conflicts manifested themselves predominantly in the Northern and Middle Belt region of the country. Vinson (2017) makes the same observation. The rise of interreligious violence since the 1980s, and an increasing amount of terrorist attacks by Boko Haram, make that the instability due to communal violence in the pluralistic communities of the Middle Belt region is often labelled as religious, rather than ethnic, economic or political (Vinson, 2017, 186). It is therefore important for this research to track the politics of religious change over the years, including the impact of the rapid postcolonial growth of Christianity, in order to understand what is currently going on.

In the following chapter I will provide an overview of past and current developments of religious change in Nigeria in order to answer the following question: **To what extent and in which way is religion a factor in the increase in violence in Middle Belt communities since the 1980s?** I will do so by presenting a history of religion of Nigeria and some of the groups living in it. The aim of this section is to understand the importance of ethnic and religious division in the country, and where it might come from. Many historians have started their historical works on Nigeria with the first day of 1914, the date on which Nigeria became 'one' and obtained its 'official' name under British rule. Different from their approach, I would first like to discuss what that mix of peoples on that piece of land in West Africa exactly was before the colonizers arrived. After all, this nation's history does not start with its name-giving, but with those who inhabited those planes for many centuries preceding the existence of Western forces in Africa. In this way, I hope to provide a relevant account of precolonial Nigeria history. As Bourne (2015) states in the preface of his book *Nigeria: A new history of a turbulent century*: 'Anyone who claims to understand Nigeria is either deluded, or a liar. It comprises so many ethnicities and perspectives, with a contested past and statistics to be taken with pinches of salt, that it is an act of immodesty to write a centenary history' (i). Instead I hope to provide some context in the form of a process tracing, which might help to shed a light on the situation as it is today. Most importantly, this chapter seeks to trace the development of the politicisation

of religion in Nigeria, as I will demonstrate that this is a significant factor in the facilitation of religious conflict in the nation.

The Introduction of Islam and Christianity to Pre-Colonial Nigeria

Before the British colonisation, the territories that would later become part of Nigeria were occupied by various ethnic groups that interacted through trade and sometimes through warfare. In the North, between lake Chad and the Niger River, one could find the Hausa and Fulani States, as well as the Borno Empire some more to the South. Other ancient African civilizations that settled in the region, which is now called Nigeria, were the Songhai Empire, the Benin Empire, the Oyo Empire, and the Kingdom of Nri. The latter was a kingdom of Igbo people. Archaeologists have found that the Igbo lived in the south-eastern region in the past 100,000 years ago, making it the oldest kingdom of Africa. These are the same people who tried to establish their own independent state during the Biafra war of the 1960s. Being aware of their history, their longing for independence over their own region which has been inhabited by them for thousands of years does not seem so strange now[2] (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Every group had a different way of governing their populations. For example, the Yoruba, who have mostly dominated the west bank of the Niger River ruled through patrilineal structures, whereas the Igbo made use of a more or less republican form of governing. The Hausa had a feudal system. All groups had a rich culture with many myths and stories that would explain the origin of their people (ibid.).

The religious archives of the Borno Empire reveal that during the reign of king (*Mai)* Idris Alooma at the end of the 16th century, a large part of the leading figures had adopted Islam as their religion (Miles, 2000). Scholars have come to the conclusion that the religion must have reached the Borno Empire between the 9th and the 11th century and the Hausa states in the 14th century, most likely along caravan routes (Chalk, 2004). The Islam was eventually accepted at the courts and used to reinforce social and political structures of state. At the same time, many of the already established customs remained. In the state of the king of Kanem, for example, women maintained a considerable political influence. The Islam did not only come to the in the northern states, it also came to the Yoruba-speaking areas in the south-east during the time of the Mali Empire, around the 14th century, although that region never converted to Muslim belief entirely (Chalk, 2004).

[2] I am referring here to the Biafra War.

Christianity arrived in Nigeria only in the 15th century. Capuchin and Augustinian monks from Portugal arrived at the shores of the region (Kalu, 1978). However, they seemed to be unsuccessful in a wide scale spreading of the religion. Scholars suggest this was the case, because their real intent was in establishing a basis for slave trade rather than any missionary goals. Most missionaries arrived in the 19th century by sea, mostly being Roman Catholics and Anglicans who arrived as merchants. African-American churches also entered the field at this time.

After the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1833 a noteworthy shift took place. The slaves that had once been captured by Europeans were now sent to Freetown in Sierra Leone, where they would live as free men and free women (Crampton, 2004; Olajutemu, 2013). At the end of the 19th century these freed slaves, who were already familiar with the Christian religion and some of the costumes, made their way back to Nigeria on sea vessels, arriving in the southern parts of the country. There, they were offered education by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Many of the former slaves converted to the Christian belief. The spreading of Christianity continued well into colonial times and beyond, but only slightly in the North (Ibid.).

The 19th century brought a change for the North, with the growing European impact and the rise of larger states. Muslim reformer and warrior Usman dan Fodio (1754-1874) and his Islamic jihad led to the formation of the 'Sokoto Caliphate' in 1803.[3] Through this, he managed to bring the Hausa states under one government, as well as some parts of Borno, and other territories in that region. It is clear that these developments had a political aspect to them. During the colonial times that followed many aspects of the caliphate structure, such as the Islamic legal system, and thereby also its political ideology, were retained (Kenny, 2001).

Religion and Politics in the Colonial Period

On the first of January in 1914, Fredrick Lugard, the new Governor-General of the colony, announced that the large piece of land in West Africa would from that day onwards be 'One Nigeria', part of King George V's empire (Bourne, 2015, 4). This Nigeria was an amalgamation of two British colonial territories, as an act of 'colonial convenience'. Other than for practical reasons, it made little sense, and the merge is often used by Nigerians to point out the origin of

[3] The Sokoto Caliphate became one of the largest slavery-regimes in the world. Even after slavery was more or less abolished, former slave tribes in the North seem to have never been able to overcome a feeling of inferiority. This is seen as one of the reasons that these people would later be quite eager to convert to Christianity; in order to belong to a group (Stillwell, 2000).

the poor relationship between the northern and southern region. Roughly speaking, Nigeria could be divided in three large cultural and religious blocks. The Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba and the South-East and the Igbo in the South-West. Be aware, however, that this division is only a very general one. Bourne (2015) even calls it a mistake 'to dwell too much even on the larger groupings' and that 'no ethnicity has a majority' (250). How then, would Lugard be able to create a 'modern nation' out of some 300 ethnicities in that region? He and his successors set themselves to an enormous challenge by trying to rule this large and diverse space.

Lugard took a liking to the Muslim north - he admired their warrior mind-set (Bourne, 2015, 4). In the North, the efforts of Christian missionaries did not gain a strong foothold at first, because the British government had promised the Muslim elite to limit Christian missionary operations in order to maintain the system of British Indirect Rule. In fact, Lugard had promised the installed Muslim rulers that the 'government would not interfere with the Muslim religion' (Crampton, 2004, 45). Nonetheless, at the edges of the general Hausa-Fulani territory, primarily in what is now called the Middle Belt of Nigeria, Missionaries managed to make some inroads (Vinson, 2017, 64). In general, colonial governments welcomed missionaries to the 'pagan' societies of their subjected population, as they were a civilizing force, facilitating a subjection under the Western governments. But, as Vinson (2017) states: 'While Christianity and colonialism are often spoken of as two sides of the same coin, the history of colonialism in Nigeria dispels this notion. Religious imperatives were secondary to the British political agenda in the north. Although missions and commerce worked together to create inroads in the north in the first part of the 19th century, missionaries were restricted and few in number until the 1960s when Nigeria achieved independence and the British policy against evangelizing the north ended' (65). The manner in which Lugard decided to rule his new colony made sure that the Sokoto Caliphate with its political ideology could continue to exist. It can be concluded that the colonizers did not deliberately cause the politicisation of religion, but their method of ruling, by giving the North indirect rule, and letting the South become Westernized and Christianised, caused religious identity to become a political category.

Post-Colonial Period, Biafra War, and Boko Haram

Ochonu (2014) states that 'since colonization established the basis for using identity politics as a means of accessing political and economic resources, religious differences have exacerbated political crises and have been implicated in major national conflicts such as the Nigeria civil war (1967-70)' (1). This three-year civil war, called the Biafra War, started only

years after Nigeria's independence in 1960 and killed over two million of Nigerians. There were various economic, political, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions that eventually led to the clash between the secessionist state of Biafra and the Nigerian government. The Biafran government represented the aspirations of the Igbo people who wanted to regain their autonomy over the region where they have been living for thousands of years. What is remarkable in this conflict, is that the Igbo mostly consist of Christians, while the Nigerian government of that time (created out of a coup), was mostly dominated by northerners, and therefore mostly Muslims (Korieh, 2012).

Although the Biafra War has ended several decades ago, protests by pro-Biafra movements still take place. Additionally, in early 2017, fourteen youth-groups from northern Nigeria published a 'notice' stating that all members from the Igbo tribe should quit their jobs and move from the northern states by October that year, or 'face consequences' (John, July 2017). What their consequences entail is not clear, but with the backing of some elders and elite groups, and the hate speech that has re-emerged makes this threat very worrying. One might say that it has once again heightened the tensions between Christians and Muslims in the country, especially in the Middle Belt region (ibid.).

These are not the only tumults Nigeria has to deal with at the moment. The nation is governed through an ethno-federal model in order to derogate the interests of all the competing ethnic interests. One characteristic is the unwritten rule that presidency should rotate between the North and the South of Nigeria. In 2010, Southerner Jonathan Goodluck became president. It was his prospective re-election, however, that raised quite some concerns among the northerners, as this would not be according to the rotation tradition. And indeed, after the election results, violent uprising and protests occurred, mostly among those living the Middle Belt, the region where South and North clash, taking 'on the coloration of Muslim-Christian communal conflict' (Vinson, 2017, xiv). Churches were destroyed, more than 800 people were killed and over 60,000 people displaced. Nevertheless, international players deemed the election fair, and an improvement compared to previous elections. The West was content and hoped that Goodluck's presidency would lead to stronger ties to the West and less corruption, and more democracy (Bunte & Vinson, 2016). Other challenges to national security, such as the threat of the Boko Haram terrorist movement, were poignant. I would like to discuss this organisation in the next paragraph, as it can be seen as an extreme case of the expression of dissatisfaction with Western powers and influence, expressed through religion.

Boko Haram is an extreme case of Muslim violence against the westernised Christian population in Nigeria, and the west in general. The organisation was first established in the early 2000s by Mohammad Yusuf in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern state of Borno, Nigeria. In the Hausa language '*boko'* means something like 'Western civilisation' or 'Western style of education'. *Haram* means 'forbidden' (Thurston, 2017). To them, Western civilisation and its institutions are in its core anti-Islamic. Over the past two centuries, the essence of their message has been preserved, but the self-presentation, strategies and tactics of the organisation have shifted several times (Mahmood, 2017). While this organisation already received a reaction of the West in 2011 when they rammed a car at the gate of the Headquarters of UN in Abuja, killing eighteen, it mostly gained attention with the abduction of 276 girls from the town of Chibok in 2014. Suddenly the West became aware of the atrocities Boko Haram was committing in Nigeria (Walker, 2017). However, the Nigerian government has difficulty combating the terrorist organisation. While it wages battles in the North, it is under criticism by the West for violating human rights and causing collateral damage among civilians (ibid., 2017). Many Muslims of different parties and sects fiercely reject Boko Haram's methods and ideas and notable Muslim leaders have openly condemned the violent acts of the group.[4]

It is clear that the Sahara-facing Islam of the North, with its recurring fundamentalisms, is very much different from the Islam that can be observed in the southern city of Lagos. There, it is not uncommon for families to contain both Muslims and Christians, living together in harmony and converting in both directions (Bourne, 2015). Why then, is it so different in the North and in the Middle Belt region? And what developments spawned these violent insurgencies such as Boko Haram's terrorist campaign?

Pentecostalism, Sharia Law and Political Engagement

One explanation for this, and an important development to discuss is the Pentecostal-charismatic wave that led to new forms of political engagement in many communities (Marshal, 2009; Vinson, 2017). From the early 1970s onwards, this strand of Christianity, with a particular political ideology, started to grow all over the world, especially in Africa and Latin America. From all the countries on the African continent, Nigeria has seen one of the greatest explosions of Pentecostalism. Whereas the early Pentecostal churches in Nigeria focused

[4] Note that the movement's prehistory has not been included in this literature review. The events in the decades from 1970s to 1990s, when the future founders of the organisation were growing up, are critical for fully understanding Boko Haram's emergence. There are several works in the bibliography section that provide a more inclusive picture.

largely on individual salvation and personal holiness, Christian leaders taught that this holiness, prayer, and conversion would eventually lead to social and possible political change. The Pentecostal-charismatic movement resulted in a theological shift; one more focused on personal prosperity and ultimately more political. According to Marshal (2009), 'Pentecostalism constitutes the single most important sociocultural force in southern Nigeria today, and over the past decades has played a central role in the increasing political cleavage and violence along religious lines' (2). Not only in the South, but also in the northern region communities that were still adhering to African Traditional Religion converted to Christianity. This caused a significant development in the religious demographics in Nigeria. For the first time in a long time, the isolationist stance towards politics by the North became challenged. By the 1980s, the percentage of the Nigerian population adhering to African Traditional Religion had declined tremendously. Suddenly, both Christianity and Islam constituted of almost an equal size of the population. A series of events led to a heightened tension between the two groups (Ochonu, 2014).

In the late 1970s, several Muslim states appealed for the inclusion of a 'federal-level Sharia' in the 1978 constitution. In 1999, Governor Sani of Zamfara state 'proclaimed a constitutional basis for the adoption of Sharia criminal law in the state's judicial system' (Vinson, 2017, 78). Between 2000 and 2002, several other northern Nigerian Muslim-majority states adopted the Sharia criminal legal system. This was a highpoint of the new politicization of religion. The introduction of Sharia raised alarms among the Christian political leaders, who started to fear an Islamization of the country (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Paden, 2008). Especially the Christians in the Middle Belt regions felt effected, and started to protest. What followed were clashes between Christian and Muslim communities, even between those that had been living in peaceful cohabitation before (Ochonu, 2014). Thousands of people were killed and many displaced. Gwamma (2010) states that 'The Shariah re-introduction of 1999 created strong consciousness along religious divides that polarized inter-religious relations to unprecedented heights than prior to this period' (43).

Along with this, there was an incident in 1986, when Nigeria joined the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) under the regime of Ibrahim Babagida (1985-1993). Christians accused the president of acting covertly by joining this organisation without consulting the population, giving rise to more religious violence. A consequence of these events was that religious groups felt the need to organize themselves politically in order to defend their interests (Paden, 2008). This created an us-versus-them narrative and fed the religious clashes.

Conclusion

Officially, Nigeria has declared itself to be a secular state. However, this chapter has demonstrated that religion seems to function as an expression of political identity. It has discussed the question: **To what extent and in which way is religion a factor in the increase in violence in Nigerian pluralistic communities since the 1980s?** We can now say that it was sacralisation of politics in the pre-colonial period, and the maintenance of it during the colonial period that shaped the inter-religious relations in Nigeria. Other than is often through, the rapid growth of Christianity in the last part of the 20th century was not determined by Nigeria's colonizers. It also did not cause the religious violence that has emerged in the Middle Belt over the past decades. However, it does explain how religious identity has been integral in the constitution of a political identity from a very early period onwards. The events that followed next, such as the rapid spread of Pentecostalism, and the implementation of Sharia law further politicized religion and created cleavages between the two groups. To answer the question precisely; the 1980s were the turning point when Christianity had reached the same number of followers as Islam. The reaction of groups to this development is when religious tensions began to culminate into conflicts in several communities. In sum, this chapter has highlighted the dimensions of religious change that has reformed the politics of religion in Nigeria. It has also shown that intercommunal religious conflict is not (merely) about scarce resource theory, but much more about power and identity, as suggested in the previous chapter. The next chapter will look more closely at the communities themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis – Why Here and not There?

In the previous chapter, it could be observed that the implementation of the Sokoto Caliphate was the first moment in 'Nigerian' history that a large number of people gathered under one religion with a political ideology. The Sokoto Caliphate was also one of the largest slave frontiers. Even though slavery in this case did not take the form of the well-known cattle slavery - they provided labour for plantations and were given the opportunity to become Muslim and join society - these people were still oppressed and often raided (Sitwell, 2000). When Pentecostalism spread throughout Nigeria and reached the North, these communities of (former) slaves were eager to join the Christians. This way they would no longer be a minority, but they would become part of the 50% of the population that practiced Christianity, possibly giving them a feeling of security.

By the 1980s both religions consisted of nearly half of the national population. When indigenous people who had always seen the Hausa-Fulani tribes as intruders or their lands, also converted to Christianity, we can see the Islamic elite becoming concerned. The Islamic communities had been in charge of the public space for hundreds of years, but this now began to change. Whereas in the local markets alcohol and pork meat would never be displaced, this has become an increasingly common sight in the North. Tensions began to rise. Whereas Kaduna State had been mostly peaceful despite its fifty-fifty division of Muslims and Christians, a college riot in a small village in the south of the state sparked several other violent conflicts, eventually spreading even outside the states. Now, violent conflicts take place frequently throughout the year and is part of the security threats the Nigerian government has to face. However, the inter-communal violence between Christians and Muslims does not occur in every pluralistic community in the Middle Belt. **Why are some of these communities prone to violence while others are not**?

This chapter compares communities with similar ethnic and religious make-up in which religious conflict occurs and those where it does not. As stated in the introduction, a congruence analysis is used here. By making use of data and interviews conducted by Laura Thaut Vinson, and some other scholars, in the communities of some Middle Belt states in Nigeria, I hope to find the answer to this question. Different ways of governing a Local Governmental Areas (LGAs) are discussed and it will be revealed that there is a considerable correlation between a way of governing that is called *informal local power sharing* and the maintenance of peace in certain communities.

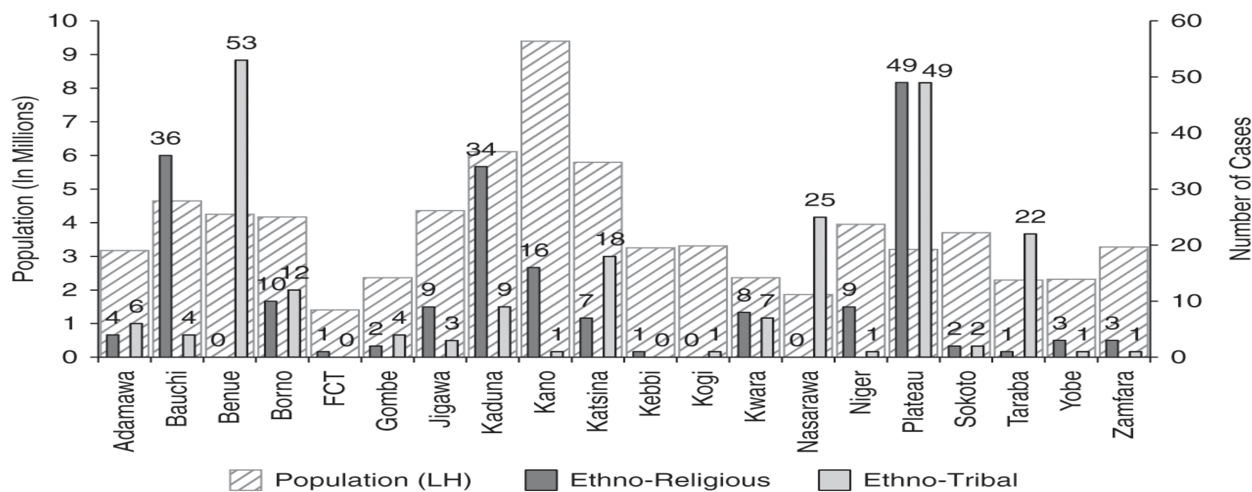

Figure 1.1 Frequency of communal violence in Middle Belt States (1979-2011) - (Vinson, 2017, 144).

Case Selection

As has been made clear in the previous sections, it is within states in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria that clashes between Muslims and Christians take place most frequently. This section will trace the causes of these clashes in two states in order to conduct a comparative study. The choice of states is based on their similar colonial history, and the presence of a mixed ethnic/religious make-up. At the same time access to data on conflicts in local communities had to be necessary. Due to the rapid growth of Christianity of the last decades, in Plateau State is around 70% Christian. The southern part of Kaduna state saw a similar growth, and although the majority is still Muslim, with the conversion of non-Muslims to Christianity, the religious demographics between Christians and Muslims is now close to fifty-fifty. Additionally, as can be observed in the figure below (figure 1.1), of the Middle Belt states, Plateau and Kaduna state have a relatively high amount of cases of religious communal violence. Bauchi state also sees a large number of clashes, but Kaduna and Plateau state have more similarities in ethno-religious make-up and

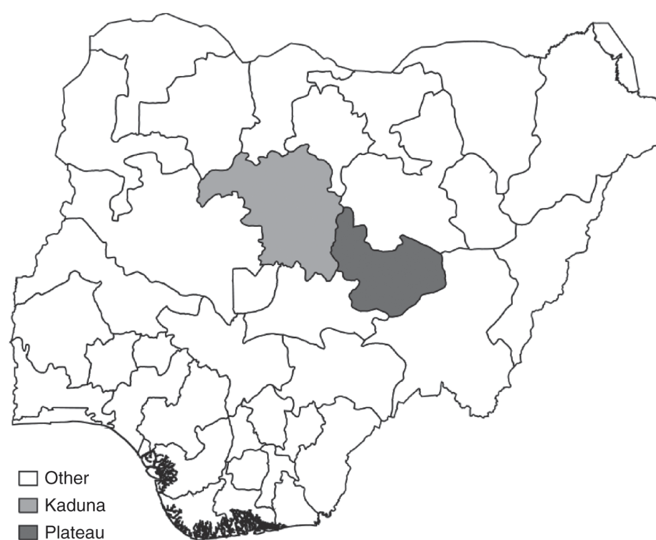

Figure 1.2 Outline of Nigerian States, Kaduna state and Plateau state emphasized - (*Vinson, 2017, 143).*

geographically (see figure 1.2). Kaduna and Plateau State adhere to the conditions mentioned above and are therefore functional for a comparative study.

Analysis - Plateau State

Plateau State, with its epithet 'Home of *Peace*', is created in 1976 and located in the north-central geo-political zone in Nigeria. The capital is the city of Jos, situated at 1200 meters above sea level. The state is inhabited by about 3.2 million people (according to 2006 consensus). Especially in Jos one can find a sharply divided society, split first of all in natives - (Afezeri, Anaguta, Berom) - and non-native - (Hausa-Fulani). These are the main groups, but Igbos, Yoruba, Ngas, and Tiv can also be found in the city (Haruna et al., 2017). Most native groups are Christians, whereas many of the non-natives are Muslim. Plateau state has been affected by several communal conflicts. Most are situated at places of worships. Since 2001, violence has become more frequent and deadlier in the state. A first episode of mass violence occurred in Jos, which claimed at least 1000 lives. Afterwards, the long-standing tensions in the smaller villages and town in Plateau State escalated into violence as well. Eventually, these killings seemed to come to a halt in 2004 when the government declared a state of emergency after another attack in the town of Yelwa in which over 700 had been killed (Krause, 2011). In 2008 and in 2010, there were more killings, which killed respectively 800 and over 1000 people. The violence in Plateau state caused more than 250,000 people to become displaced by 2010 (IRIN, 2010).

Haruna et al. (2017) conducted a study on a mechanism for peace-building in Plateau State. One of their aims was to determine what some of the causes for conflict were in that region. They conduct their research through interviews and administration of questionnaires in Jos North and Jos South. In total, there were 200 respondents from the general population, including students, security agency, and the victims of conflict. One of the statements in the questionnaire was: '*These are some of the causes of conflict in Plateau state (i) resources rivalry (ii) power politics'*. The respondents could fill in that they strongly agreed, agreed, were uncertain, strongly disagreed or disagreed. These were the outcomes:

Response Options	**Number of Respondents**	**Percentage %**
Strongly agreed	100	50%
Agreed	50	25%
Uncertain	20	10%
Strongly disagreed	-	-
Disagreed	30	15%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Table 1: (Haruna et al (2017, p. 35).

Whereas these results indeed show that resources rivalry, and power politics are factors that promote conflict in the Plateau Sate, this line of questioning is determined and biased as there are no other options to choose from. I have chosen to include this study in my analysis as there are not many scholars who have specifically assessed these questions in this region. And whereas I do not ultimately agree with this line of questioning, it can be concluded that most people indeed find the conflicts in their region to be a result resource rivalry and power politics. Laura Thaut Vinson is another scholar who has conducted research on exactly this topic in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. One part of her research (2017) involves a case study of violence in two Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Plateau State: **Kanam** LGA and **Shendam** LGA. The similarities between the two areas on geographical level were: a similar population size (180,000 / 210,00 inhabitants (Hoomlong 2008, 25), both do not have any major urban centres and both have considerably ‘bad’ neighbouring LGAs, in which many conflicts have occurred. With regards to identity, the two LGAs have more in common. They have a similar history of religious change, and a similar history of Hausa-Fulani rule. Additionally, in both LGAs exists tribal and religious pluralism and intra-tribal religious heterogeneity. Kanam exists mainly of the Boggham and the Jarh ethno-tribal groups. Other than many other LGA’s in Plateau state, Kanam’s population consists of a Muslim majority (between 50 and 75 percent)[5]. Shandam LGA contains the Muslim Jarawa, which are part of the Hausa clan, the Goumai, which are both Christian and Muslim, and various smaller ethno-tribal groups originally from surrounding LGA’s. (Vinson, 2017, 171).

Thus, the two LGAs are very similar in a number of respects. However, they diverge in their experience of religious violence. Shandam has been rendered one of the more volatile LGAs, due to the many clashes that have occurred since the 1990s. Some of the violence was due to occasional skirmishes between cattle-herders and famers. But while this has led to a mere handful of deaths, the cases of religious violence took hundreds of lives, and subsequently sparked retaliations in surrounding LGAs. In 2004 this led to a major round of Muslim-Christian violence, resulting in hundreds of deaths and a massive destruction of property (Hoomlong, 2008). To the contrary, Kanam LGA remained relatively peaceful during these times, despite their proximity to the violence, the influx of displaced people, and a similar ethno-religious make-up as Shandam LGA. The question is, why?

[5] Note that these figures are derived from an interview in Vinson’s work. There are no official census figures, therefore this is only a very rough estimation.

Before analysing any further, I would like to discuss the nature of the various occurrences of violence. Whereas I already briefly touched upon violence between farmers and cattle-herders, there are more distinctions to be made. For example, of the 18 cases of clashes in Kanam state, 15 were cross-LGA border clashes. These cross-border disputes stem from various historical factors, rather than the type of violence that this paper is looking at. One factor includes long-standing disputes between two ethno-tribal groups that happen to fit the Muslim-Christian dimension. A second factor is the heightened tensions from Shandam state that were mentioned before. Aside from these border clashes, the groups *within* the LGA are largely peaceful. I can understand that by making these distinctions, questions might arise on what kind of violence this paper is actually reviewing. Indeed, it is religious violence that I am discussing. Contrary to what one might expect, the levels of ethno-tribal and ethno-religious violence do not mimic one another. Several studies have even shown that LGAs with a high level of ethno-tribal violence are not automatically inclined to ethno-religious violence. However, some might still wonder whether religion is not simply a proxy for ethnic identity or tribe. This is a valid concern, and I will discuss this further in the discussion section at the end of this paper. For this case-study however, I specifically look at inter-communal violence that has increased since the 1980s. The third chapter has already explained roughly why this is the case. I am wondering, however, why some communities remain relatively peaceful. What could be the determining factor?

Bunte and Vinson (2016) noticed something interesting about the way in which the two LGAs are governed. According to an interview with a political figure and traditional leader in Kanam, the LGA is governed in the following way:

> "Power is shared between the two ethnic groups. If the chairman is from one ethnic group, then the deputy is from the others. It is the same with other positions. They believe in rotational/ zoning – if today the person comes from one side, the next is from the other side . . . There is no village that is not given an opportunity to present one or other for position. There are six zones for chairmen to come from, for example. Three for each tribal group. If the chairman comes from one zone of one ethnic group, for example, it changes to another the next time. That group/zone that represented the previous time will not even attempt to put up a candidate the next time around. It even goes this way with political appointments – it switches from one side to the other. It is practiced in the localities too – at even the village level."
>
> *Anonymous (K), interview by Laura Thaut Vinson, Kanam, Plateau State, October 18, 2011.*

This informal arrangement has prevailed since the 1970's. It has never been implemented by any national or international system, the people built the concept themselves, 'and everybody is respecting it, even the councillors' (Anonymous (K)). Note that the two ethnic groups, the interviewee talks of, are the Bogghom and the Jahr and do not constitute the Hausa-Fulani people or any of the other minorities.

Shendam knows four administrative districts: Dkoan Tofa, Dertin, Dorok and Shendam. Each is run by a District Head who in general hold allegiance to the *Long Goemai*. Long Goemai is the traditional ruler of the Shendam LGA and part of the Goemai people, who are considered to be the indigenes. In a report by the Human Rights Watch (Tertsakian, 2005), the conflict in the city of Yelwa, in Shandam LGA is elaborately followed and described. They state that historically speaking, religion was not the primary cause for conflict in Shendam LGA. Instead, people have often fought over land and political and economic privileges. However, in recent years, the situation has become polarized and groups have begun to target each other on basis of religion rather than ethnicity. Religion was used as a rallying cry to drag other groups into the conflict (ibid., 2005).

Similar ways of governing, with a rotating sharing system, like in Kanam LGA, are found in the LGAs of Mikang, Pnakshin, Mangu, Bokkos and Bassa.[6] Vinson calls this *local power sharing* (Vinson, 2017, 147). Interestingly enough, these LGAs experience no to low levels of violence. Among the other LGAs in which one can observe a more authoritarian way of governing, often with one ethnic group in power, we can make a division between LGAs with low levels violence and LGAs with high levels of violence. Low violence LGAs are Riyom, Kanke, Jost East, Langtang North, Langtang South, Barkin-Ladi. High violence LGAs are Jos North, Jos South, Qua'an Pan, Was, and Shendam. What is striking that in the group of low violence LGAs, the population seems to be mostly homogenous (Best, 2008; Goshit & Kums, 2007), and therefore religious conflict would be unlikely to occur. Thus, one could conclude that the way in which a LGA is governed might influence the likelihood of religious violence to occur.[7]

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[6] Note that these observations are based on interviews with local religious and political leaders by Laura Thaut Vinson (2017). I have not been able to find any other data on political systems on local scales to back this up. However, Vinson has worked on this in another study with Bunte (2016), in which they draw similar conclusions. Nevertheless, with only a rough idea of the power mechanisms in place clear differences between states could be made.

[7] See Appendix 1 for a map of LGAs in Plateau State, Middle Belt, Nigeria.

Analysis – Kaduna State

In Kaduna State, similar observations are made. As already stated earlier, Kaduna has an almost evenly divided Muslim and Christian population. In the North one can find LGAs that consist of a foremost Muslim population, whereas in the South, Christians are the majority. In the centre of the state, one can find mixed LGAs. Kaduna State therefore very much reflects the diversity of (the Middle Belt region of) Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Kaduna state consists of 23 LGAs. Of these, most are not homogenous; Birnin-Gwari, Chikun, Jema'a, Kachia, Kajuru, Kaura, Kaduna South, Kaduna North, Zangon-Kataf and Zaria. Of these LGA's, Kaduna South, Kaduna North, Zangon-Kataf, Jema'a and Zaria are subject to high levels of religious violence. The others, Birnin-Gwari, Chikun, Kachia, Kajuru, Kaura and Sanga LGAs, experience no or only low levels of violence (see Appendix 2 for map depicting all LGAs in Kaduna State).

In Chikun LGA the Gbagyi, the Hausa and the Kabilu are the groups to which the executive local governments seats are allocated (Vinson, 2017, 174). For example, a former chairman explains in an interview that, if the Hausa is the chairman, then the Kabily will represent the deputy chairman position, and the Kabilu the secretary. A local officer explained the following:

> "So in any zoning arrangement for positions, maybe the Gbagyi, we'll say, 'Okay, he's the son of the soil so he's taking the chairmanship.' You cannot go to Zango or Jos and contest for chairmanship there. So we understand with him and say, 'Okay, first born of the family, take that spot,' and then we the Kabilu and the Hausa-Fulani will now come and sit down in our kitchen cabinet and decide who [will] take number two. That is the vice-chairman[ship]. We can either give the spot to the Hausa-Fulani – perhaps they are more in number – or whatever arrangement ... we can give them that. And then we say, 'Okay ... now, the Kabilu, now we . . . take the secretariat,' so that we do all the right thing and include all . . . So that is the arrangement that has been helping us include."
>
> *Anonymous(J), interview by Laura Thaut Vinson, Chikun, Kaduna State, November 9, 2011.*

This mechanism does not only make sure that there are never the same people in power for more than one period, it has also incorporated a system that makes sure representatives are drawn from different districts. Vinson states (2017, 175) that all subjects she interviewed in Chikun agreed that this system was what sustains peace in the LGA. She does not go into detail about the subjects, but this answer to come from locals is definitely worth noting down.

Additionally, qualitative research methods in these situations are valuable because they provide crucial context for understanding the data that might otherwise be misunderstood.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have zoomed in on a specific region in which a great deal of religious conflict has occurred. I have narrowed the scope of this research by only including violent cases that were specifically religious and inter-communal, thereby dismissing cross-border violence over pieces of land or resources in which the actors happened to be respectively Christian and Muslim, and attacks by groups like Boko Haram or Fulani Herdsmen. In the introduction of this paper I asked the question: **Why are some pluralistic communities more prone to religious violence than others?** This part discussed the question: Why are some pluralistic communities more prone to religious violence than others, especially since 1980? The manner in which communities locally govern themselves, be it formal or informal, seems to play a part. Those places where the local elite worked together more closely and in which a power sharing or rotation system was in place, it could be observed that the rhetoric of elites is more conciliatory and cooperative in power sharing LGAs (Vinson, 2017, 164). The interviews on which these outcomes are based were with religious and political leaders. A research by Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2015) finds that ethno-religious leaders 'exert significant influence on ethno-religious conflicts (1)' in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Might they be able to be part of a larger solution to these cases? The next chapter considers some solutions to the inter-communal religious violence in Nigeria, and eventually explores what the findings on informal local power sharing can mean in the attempt to curb these tensions.

CHAPTER FIVE
Appropriate Solutions

This chapter attempts to answer the final sub-question of this paper: **To what extent can the outcomes of the analysis generate general insights in containing or resolving religious conflict in cases where a formerly privileged elite fears the power of a growing minority, especially in a democratic context?** Firstly, however, it discusses several alternative solutions for religious conflict that have already been attempted in Nigeria or in other, comparable regions and situations. Why would these solutions not be appropriate in the context of inter-communal religious violence?
The first part focuses on military intervention as a possible solution for these kinds of inter-communal conflicts. It discusses why this method has not worked in the past, and additionally why the Nigerian state will most likely will not have the authority to be successful in using the military effectively and without violence. It also briefly touches upon the possibility of external intervention. The second part examines an idea, first introduced in post-Apartheid South Africa; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Instead of discussing South-Africa's case, I would like to discuss whether such a commission would have a positive impact in Nigeria, by looking at its implementation in Rwanda, since the conflicts in that country have occurred under circumstances similar to this study. Finally, I will return to what has been discussed in the analysis: Local Power Sharing. I am wondering whether the outcomes in my analysis can help to think generate solution of inter-communal religious violence in Nigeria's pluralistic communities.

Military Intervention

The Nigerian government does not always have the resources to involve in small-scale conflict. According to the report by the Human Rights Watch on violence in Yelwa, Plateau State, which was mentioned in the previous chapter, the government mostly ignored what had been going on. Finally, after an attack on May 2, 2004, the scale of violence become so large that that it could finally no longer be ignored. Two weeks later, the Nigerian President declared a state of emergency in all of Plateau State. The Human Rights Watch report contains recommendations to the Nigerian government on ways to prevent further violence in Plateau state. One of the key recommendations is the deployment of a security force. In the following paragraph, I discuss the possible outcomes of this recommendation (Tertsakian, 2005).

Omeni shows in his book (2017) that in order to understand the Nigerian military, one needs an awareness of its historical background, institutions, doctrine, and culture. Especially its historical experiences have influenced the internal function that the Nigerian military has nowadays. In its formative years the military was not much more than an accessory of the British state. Now, its function is mostly focused on counter-insurgency. At the same time, however, the military has always played a very prominent role within the Nigerian state. In the Nigerian military model, coercive force remains the main focus, a legacy derived from British influence. However, in this case, force would only fight symptoms and not the root cause.

What the Human Rights Watch referred to, however, was the idea that a combination of socioeconomic development programs and military operations would lead to fewer violent conflicts in pluralistic communities. In this way, riots are put out by the military, and others would be prevented. At the same time, development programs would smooth the grievance and the perception of unfair wealth distribution between the two groups. This seems like a viable option, but this is not always how it works in practice.

For example, eight years into the war against Boko Haram, the Nigerian Army has found that ‘against the threat of insurgency, the utility of force is problematically slow to bring about victory’ (Omeni, 2017, i). Also, according to Haruna et al. (2017), military involvement in Plateau state since 2001 has not been successful so far as it has been characterized by misunderstanding and mistrust, sometimes even reinforcing ‘ethno-religious fault lines’ (34). This mistrust stems from military unprofessionalism including harassment at checkpoints and the violation of people’s rights. Although the state has attempted to provide logistic support for the communication between the military and the government, communication and the provision of information has been troublesome according to various accounts (Haruna et al., 2017).

Additionally, according to Mundy (2015), ‘some of today’s most prevalent forms of international conflict management (...) arise out of depoliticised understandings of late warfare’ (9). What this indicates is that the approach maintained by the Nigerian Army (just like many other development and security programs in the world) attempts to take out the messiness of politics by deploying an ‘anti-politics’ technique. However, I would argue that it is not possible to eliminate politics from a debate like this. At the beginning of the paper, especially, I have attempted to convey that by leaving out politics on this subject matter, the historical, geographical, ideational contours of the crisis and the whole question of relations of power becomes neglected. And there are other issues about using military force as a solution to inter-communal violence, which include a lack of military funding, and the presence of corruption (Akpan, et al., 2014). This does not mean that the military cannot be of any help, but it should

never be a sole tool to rely on for a solution towards peace. Power such as that should be used very carefully.[8]

Transitional Justice in Rwanda

According to Abdu (2011), what we have seen in the past is that the Nigerian authorities like to play the silence card. This strategy is one of 'not talking about it and moving on', and has not brought any good consequences yet. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission does exactly the opposite. The first time this *restorative justice* system was used was in South Africa after the end of Apartheid. Victims and witnesses who had experienced gross human rights violations were asked to give statements about their encounters. Some of these statements were selected for public hearings. At the same time, perpetrators of violence could respond to questions, give their own testimony, and request amnesty from criminal and civil prosecution. Rwanda, as well, initiated a national reconciliation process that captured the world's attention, but took a different path than South Africa. In the wake of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide in which an estimated 800,000 people were killed, tortured and raped, Rwanda set up the *Gacaca Community Courts.* This system was based on a pre-colonial Rwandan approach to justice. Here, the Gacaca Community Courts were asked to determine what happened to the Tutsi during the genocide. It focused on 'establishing individual perpetrators' accountability for genocide crimes' (Brounéus, 2008, 60).

The genocide in Rwanda was, quite similar to the September massacres in 1966 in Nigeria, the culmination of centuries of ethnic violence. Since before colonialism, three groups have been living in the region that is now called Rwanda: Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. The Tutsi, who were cattle herders and the small elite, held a higher social status and more political powers than the Hutu, who were seen as peasants. During the Belgian regime (1961-1961), these roles were gravely accentuated. After the country's independence in 1962, a radical group of Hutus took power in the country. This was the start of severe discrimination against the Tutsi. After the airplane carrying President Juvénal Habyarimana was shot on April 6, 1994, a surge of violence unleased (Brounéus, 2008, 56). This was the start of the genocide.

The events leading to the Rwanda genocide can be compared with what happened during run-up to the Biafra war in Nigeria. Many scholars state that because the Nigerian government

[8] A report by Para-Mallam (2011) for the National Institute for Policy & Strategic Studies offers a coherent overview of government interventions during conflicts in Plateau State until 2011. One can observe that as the conflicts evolve, the Nigerian government uses the military only to arrest and stop violence and adds more reconciliation programs. Nevertheless, the root causes of the conflicts are never addressed.

never provided any reconciliation program for the victims (and perpetrators) of the Biafra war, but instead remained silent, it has contributed to the level of tensions between the two groups (Igbo and Hausa) and to a certain extend between Christians and Muslims (Amadiume, Naim & An-Na'im, 2000, 65). In Rwanda, de Gacaca trials took place in every community across the country. Those that were guilty were identified and had to sit and listen while community members spoke out about the crimes that had been committed against them. Perpetrators then had to do community service, such as rebuilding homes and roads, among other things. This was the start of the healing process.

Several studies point out that since the two decades the genocide and the trials took place, it is clear that there have been forms of healing. One study demonstrates this by showing that in several communities, widows from both sides now work together on entrepreneurial projects (Boudreaux, 2007). Rwanda's Gacaca Community Courts are generally seen to have led to personal healing. But it has also been criticised by international observers for tending to open for manipulation (Chakravarti, 2013). This led to some people being accused of crimes they did not commit; it was one word against one another. The whole system has also been criticized for being micromanaged by the Nigerian government. Because of this several organisations became anxious not to criticised the reconciliation agenda of the government. This might have limited its impact.

Overall, reconciliation and transitional justice projects are beneficial for healing societies, but only to a certain extent. The Biafra war, however, has happened too long ago. Besides, the violence that takes place in Nigerian communities often stems from decades of tensions. The Biafra war was only one outburst. Nevertheless, reconciliation on local levels, in which victim and perpetrator are in dialogue with each other, might help in the process of healing between communities.

National Power Sharing

There are many scholars who argue that a heavy military presence in conflict areas such as Jos is no durable solution. Krause (2011) discusses that a long-term solution to the violence in Plateau State, together with other states in Nigeria, will need to tackle the indigene-settler divide. She states that religious leaders will have to 'take responsibility for deconstructing the perceptions of existential threat to religious identity that have become entrenched in many people's daily lives' (3). Sadly, many people tend to be suspicious of inter-religious dialogue, and due to previous conflicts in historical events, it is difficult to rebuild trust among communities.

Nevertheless, over the past few decades there have been quite some international scholars who have promoted the idea of consociationalism or power-sharing to end violent intra-state conflict and to create a durable form of peace. Power sharing is the agreement between two or more parties to share responsibility for decision-making and political action. It has been believed by many scholars that national power sharing in unstable democracies or post-civil war states offers representatives of the conflicting parties a stake in de decision-making process, thereby through participation, legitimizing the government and reducing the possibility of conflict between social groups. Traces of power sharing arrangements can be found in many countries, such as Chad, Ethiopia, South Africa, Benin, Philippines, Yugoslavia and more. All systems differ from each other, but according to lake and Rothchild (1999) they all share 'a form of coordination in which a somewhat autonomous state and a number of less autonomous ethnic-based and other interests engage in a process of mutual accommodation in accordance with commonly accepted procedural norms, rules, or understandings (59). However, recent scholarship finds that power sharing does not necessarily eliminate the manipulation of power, clientelistic politics (exchange of goods or services for political support), ethnic favouritism or misuse of resources in countries with a weak state system, such as Nigeria. Additionally, it has been observed that these power-sharing arrangements on national levels are also inevitably fragile and short-lived, since they rest on collective pillars on which they rest often remain firmly in place (LeVan 2011, Jarstad, 2008). As we have seen in Nigeria, ethnic and religious differences and historical events have made sure that it is hard to implement a system that leads to countrywide loyalties. Nigeria did implement power-sharing arrangements on national level. These have taken the form of ethno-federalism. As already stated in the second chapter, this includes an informal adoption of a rotating presidency system. It also includes a zoning mechanism that 'incorporates representatives in the National Assembly from all of Nigeria's states or senatorial zones, [...] the requirement that two-thirds of Nigeria's states be represented in party leadership, and that presidential and governorship candidates win 'a quarter of the votes in two-thirds of the states or localities, respectively' (Suberu, 2013, 89; Vinson, 2017, 110). Nevertheless, in this case too, power sharing is often used as a mutual veto weapon, creates government rigidity, and under opportunistic leaders it is proven difficult to enforce rules, and it is subject to power-hungry and self-interested politicians who are unwilling to accommodate their rivals. Lastly, it assumes that political interests are static rather than fluid (LeVan, 2011; Jarstad, 2008; Oyugi, 2006). Cheeseman (2015) notes in the discussion section of his book on inclusion in African democracies: 'There can be *too* much power-sharing when

it stifles political competition. Excessive inclusion it therefore just as bad for democracy as excessive competition' (205).

Making a case for Local Power Sharing

In the previous sections of this chapter I have discussed several viable options to combat or prevent violence. The Nigerian state has tried to implement many more programs with the intention to curb religious violence. Take for example the rainbow mechanism (Haruna et al., 2017) or the Search for Common Ground (SFCG) Program. These have the short-term goal of 'increasing the capacity of Nigerian civil society to prevent and resolve conflict, and specifically inter-religious conflicts related to the elections' and the long-term goal of *reducing the potential for inter-religious conflict in Plateau State.* (Ashton, 2013, p 3). Sadly enough, the effects of these projects are visible, but often last only temporary (Para-Mallam, 2011).

As a third kind of solution, I presented national power sharing. Clearly, however, there are significant critiques against the implication of these mechanisms in Nigeria. However, in the previous analysis chapter, an interesting phenomenon could be observed: there are communities that have included informal power sharing mechanisms in their local governments. And the reasons for the absence of violence in some communities and the presence of violence in others in the same region can seemingly be explained by the presence or absence of these local power sharing arrangements. I would suggest, that instead of forcing people to adapt to programs, scholars and leaders should observe how these communities came to adopt such informal arrangements. That information can then be used to help other communities to do the same. I agree with Vinson, who articulates that 'international and domestic actors concerned about instability and communal violence should focus attention on sub-national, not only national, political rights and representation' (111).

She and Jonas Bunte (2016) have argued that 'informal power-sharing institutions on the communal level are essential in shaping the incentives of potential perpetrators' (50). This entails the 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels' (51), thus creating informal institutional rules, 'followed by the local elite in order to create a more inclusive local government' (51). On a national level, they may increase the state's legitimacy and therefore reduce incentives for violence. Not all scholars agree on this. Some of them argue that power-sharing institutions might increase the government's stubbornness as it is not aware of the fluidity of political interests (Rothchild & Roeder, 2005). On local levels, however, these informal institutions might be effective, as the locus becomes closer to those it is supposed to affect. When

embedded in local communities, the actors are all known to each other, increasing the accountability for both the general population and the elites. Additionally, the issues of the group are presented specifically to that locale. It is also more sustainable, and it can foster greater 'institutional legitimacy' (Bunte & Vinson, 2016, 51).

There could be named various critiques against local power sharing. One is, that does not reduce the prominence of religion or ethnicity. Additionally, it is not a one size fits all. Therefore, however, I would like to stress the idea of *informal* local power sharing, such as emerged in the communities discussed in the previous chapter.

There are several reasons why, rather than national power sharing, a focus on informal local power sharing could be key in closing the cleavages between ethnic groups. For example, a national model of power sharing, one that is top-down, will not be able to tackle subnational and local variation in representation, political cleavages and identity issues. Informal power sharing mechanisms on a local level can provide this, because of veracious reasons. First, it can be more effective because of its proximity to the groups that are in conflict and political leaders can more effectively observe the effects of local-power sharing. Secondly, it is more sustainable on local level, because it is often legitimized by the whole community[9]. It also seems to have to potential of re-enforcing itself. It provides a foundation for peacebuilding. Additionally, local power sharing does not have to act as only arrangement, and can exist parallel to national power sharing or other programs implemented to foster peace.

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter the following question was asked: To what extent can the outcomes of the analysis generate general insights in containing or resolving religious conflict in cases where a formerly privileged elite fears the power of a growing minority? I have made a case for informal local power sharing as way to curb religious violence in pluralistic communities. Note that I am not making the argument that power-sharing would eliminate the corruption, missue of resource or the manipulation of power in (local) politics. It is far from perfect, and it is also not clear yet how it could be used to enforce peace in communities that have not made these arrangements themselves. The whole idea behind, informal, is, after all, that it is not forced. Nevertheless, the findings provide valuable insights for future research and reconciliation programs.

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[9] See one interview in the previous chapter, where a local chief from Kanam noted: "Whoever does not give us mixed, we will not go with him' (Vinson, 2017, 119). In other words, the whole community choses this kind of power sharing. National power sharing arrangements have more difficulty achieving this level of legitimization.

CHAPTER SIX

Reflections and Insights for Future Research

In this final chapter before the conclusion, I would like to explore whether a focus on informal local power sharing could be beneficial for certain states or communities in Europe and elsewhere. This chapter merely functions as a suggestive teaser as to what future research on this topic might look like. The choice to include this in a chapter separate from the conclusion stems from an attempt to show that this research goes beyond Nigeria. As was stated in the introduction, in Europe, just like in Nigeria, and the Middle East, migration and the fear for terrorist organisations have influenced the relationships between Christian and Muslims. I would like to open a discourse on the idea that a focus on formal local power sharing might possible speak to scholars interested in ethnic/religious conflict and hopefully help in their attempts to deal with the ethnic cleavages in Nigeria, and other by terrorist ravaged countries.

The idea of power sharing is not new in Europe. Especially in the Balkans, arrangements of power sharing on national level have been implemented in the past and plenty of scholars have studied its process. Several countries such as Macedonia, Herzegovina, Bosnia and Kosovo are interesting to look at, because some of their inter-ethnic tensions are similar to cases in Nigeria. The arrangements that were taken were a result of the violent conflict, and often implemented through international intervention. At the same time the arrangements have their origin in old traditions of already existed power sharing mechanisms. Florian Bieber and Sören Keil (2009), for example, discuss the use of power sharing instruments in the Western Balkans, with an occasional reference to Kosovo. They argue that this region has been a laboratory for power-sharing arrangements, but with rather mixed results. The arrangements were not always fair, as power was misused or certain minorities were left out. They conclude that in the region, power sharing as a part of a larger strategy for peacebuilding, has been supporting peaceful conflict resolution. Although several scholars have stated that power sharing has failed in the region, these authors articulate that at the same time, there does exist a viable alternative in order to curb the tensions. They also suggest that different types of power sharing need to be considered. This might be an opening to discuss the idea of informal power sharing. Or to investigate whether there are communities that have already developed such arrangements, and what kind of effects these have had.

Northern Ireland provides a similar case. The conflict there includes the debate whether Northern Ireland should remain within the United Kingdom. The groups that want this, have

been identified as Protestants, while the Irish nationalists were mostly Catholic. Nevertheless, the conflict is not rendered a religious one, but one where religion is used as an ethnic marker. According to Mitchell (2013) it is generally politically relevant when looking at the causes for the conflict (5). However, just like many other cases, on national level, power sharing here seems to be an 'elite-driven, top-down and imposed process which can be seen as contentious for many' (Jakala, Kuzu, & Qvortrup, 2017, 197). White (2018) argues that by focusing on the implementation of power-sharing mechanisms on national level is not about asking whether or not these prevent societies from overcoming conflicts, but rather about the 'willingness of parties to continue to operate under power-sharing arrangements' (92).
What was observed in the communities in Kaduna and Plateau state is exactly that; a willingness to share the power, in order to maintain peaceful relations. Therefore, this paper stresses the importance of *informal* power sharing. No formalities are needed, because every party has willingly choses to adhere to the arrangements. It could be stated that this is also what makes sure that these structures have managed to exist since the moment they were agreed upon. This willingness can also be led back to the manner in which communities have dealt with their difficult pasts. According to Vinson (2017), power sharing in Nigeria was more likely to happen when 'there was greater cultural assimilation and political integration during colonial rule (or where the Hausa-Fulani made up a small proportion of the local population) *and* post-colonial changes and political events did not exacerbate or create new local ethno-tribal cleavages' (198). The third chapter of this thesis emphasized that the legacies of colonial politics cannot be disregarded. At the same time, they are also not sufficient to explain how politics and ethno-tribal relations have formed afterwards. Thus, the legacies of history can linger, but the power of their effects depends on its interactions in following events and how those living in each LGA have responded to them.

Finally, I would like to discuss what countries in Western Europe can learn from the findings in this thesis. The tensions towards the Islam in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and France are similar to those observed in Nigeria. Aside from the danger of terrorist attacks, migration influx has caused anxiety among the established order there. Just like the Muslims in the North and Middle Belt region of Nigeria experienced anxiety for loss of identity when Christianity saw a tremendous growth, the same feelings can be observed among the majority population in Europe. So far, these tensions have not led to major outbursts of violence. I believe that it has not, because other than in Nigeria's generally, we have relatively stable democracies. What we do see however, is a politicisation of religion, even more than already

was the case. What I am talking about are politics focused on removing persons of a certain religious; anti-Islam movements such as Pegida in Germany, the Freedom Party in the Netherlands are examples. Whereas I am not making the case that, here too, informal local power sharing could help to solve these tensions, it is important to acknowledge that they are present, and ask why they are present and what could possibly reduce them. Eventually Muslim population in Europe is rising and tensions are too. I believe that Nigeria can serve as an example of what happens if no attention is paid to these tensions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Answering the Question

At that start of this thesis two general frameworks with regards to religious conflicts were presented. The first framework, Scarce Resource Theory, suggests that conflicts are created because of primitive needs. Africa is seen by many as resource-scarce and therefore this theory is often associated with conflict in this continent. Instead, Europe is regarded to exist of complex and modern societies. A framework such as the second one, which is built around the fear of losing identity, is seen as very applicable here. Instead of two groups fighting for resources we see people fighting for public space (for power) or identity. But is this generalization true?

Indeed, in Nigeria there are fights over scarce resource. The conflicts that concern the Fulani Herdsman invading the lands of indigenous farmers, due to a lack of fertile land of their own, is an example. However, in this thesis I have demonstrated that when it comes to religious conflict in pluralistic communities it lies more complex. In Chapter Three, I have elaborated on the history of religious change in Nigeria from per-colonial times until now. This included the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate, the implementation of colonial indirect rule which kept the existing structures in place in the North, the growth of Christianity due to Pentecostalism, and finally the tensions that arose which resulted in a politicisation of both Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. I have also shortly discussed the existence of Boko Haram, which I believe to stem from similar issues as the pluralistic conflicts. Through showing these developments, I have demonstrated that the nature of conflict in African countries can be just as complex or even more so than those in Europe. A better understanding of the nature of these conflicts is needed to come to better solutions.

In the fourth chapter I have taken a closer look at communities in which conflicts takes place. Through the interviews conducted by Laura Thaut Vinson in Plateau and Kaduna state, it could be argued that those communities in which an informal power sharing system is in place, tensions are less likely to lead to conflict situations, than in those where such systems lack. This is the answer to the research question: **What are the reasons that some pluralistic communities in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria are prone to inter-communal religious violence, while others are not?** These findings are important and are what makes this research relevant, for they shine a light on systems that have already been in place and it opens up a path to work towards reconciliation methods in those communities that experience a lot of

violence. The Fifth Chapter was created to look for alternative solutions that had been tried in Nigeria or elsewhere. None of these happened to provide structural peace, whereas informal local power sharing might provide just that.
Another surprising result of my analysis is that the Nigerian situation represents the same causes as religious tensions in Europe. Through these insights I hope to open up a discourse on the religious tension that exist in Western Europe at the moment.

Limitations

Before arriving at my final words, I would like to acknowledge some limitations to this study. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that Nigeria's situation is much different than the European one, where Muslims are the newcomers. In Nigeria, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side peacefully for long times. Violent uprisings that by some are explained as religious violence, but when looking closer, it becomes apparent that factors such as poverty among youths, economic inequality, and political factors play just as large a role (Sulaiman & Azeez, 2012). These issues have not been discussed thoroughly and deserve attention.
A second limitation is the lack of access to primary sources. As one could observe, I have made use of secondary data, mostly relying on one that of one scholar: Laura Thaut Vinson. Her research made me interested in this topic and in informal local power sharing. I have tried to back-up her findings by searching for data in other studies, while remaining aware of biases. However, it is hard to verify hard numbers, such as population ratios, since the census on Nigeria are very limited. Additionally, there is barely any data of governing forms in local LGAs. I therefore had to rely mostly on Vinson's interviews. Nevertheless, these are not very large problems, since an estimation of the ratios was enough to continue this study.
Thirdly, one might have wondered while reading this thesis whether religion is not simply a proxy for ethnicity. The conflicts discussed where after all, often between two ethnic groups, which happened to be either Christian or Muslim. On this topic, Vinson (2017) states that, 'although ethno-religious cleavages were not as politicised or pronounced in the 1970s, the construction of these agreements in pluralistic LGAs along *tribal* lines created a *religiously* neutral system of representation as well, offering a political bulwark against the subsequent politicization of religion in Nigerian national politics' (111). It is therefore the politicisation of religion that has (often) made local disputes into religious conflicts. Therefore, this thesis is about religious violence, and not about ethnic violence, although the two often overlap.
Finally, what I would have liked to touch upon, but I have barely done so, is the case of Nigeria as a failed democracy. I wanted to focus on local level politics. But if there had been more

space, I would have liked to dedicate a chapter to it as well. And, finally, this study discusses local power sharing between various ethnic groups, while I have made clear that my focus lies with *religious* intercommunal conflicts. One could therefore easily be confused and think that religion is simply a proxy for identity. Religious identity does indeed sometimes serve as a basis for mobilization in order to connect other indicators of identity such as tribe.

Conclusion and Final Message

The contribution of this study to existing literature is three-fold. The First contribution is focused on Nigeria and its communities. This thesis brings forward findings that show the key variable for answering the question why one pluralistic community in Nigeria can be less prone to violence than another, even when these communities exist of a similar make-up. Whereas Vinson (2017) hinted towards this, this study is convinced that *informal local power sharing* can be a part of the solution to curb tensions in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. It could also be applied to other communities in Africa.

Secondly, this study as a plea for the inclusion of ethnographic studies in and the consideration of the historical background when considering conflict resolution. The government and developmental or reconciliation programs should look what structures are already in place and work with those, instead of implementing programs are do not tackle the root causes for violence.

Thirdly, this thesis is a plea not to underestimate the value of studying conflict in radically different communities than those existing in Europe. Western scholars tend to find Africa (and other continents) interesting for studying conflict, but do not see it as an opportunity to learn from and apply their theories at home. In this thesis, I hoped to have created a bridge and opened a pathway for a change. As I have suggested in the Sixth Chapter, informal local power sharing could be useful for Europe too.

Lastly, I would like to return to the story of Imam Mohammad Ashafa and Pastor James Waye that was mentioned in the very first paragraph of this thesis. I used their testimony to illustrate what intercommunal religious violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria looks like up close. However, their fight with one another ended years ago. In 1992, Imam Ashafa recalls going to a sermon by a local Imam. After hearing the following words: ‘Turn the evil to that which is good... No one will have the courage to do this except the people of perseverance [...] If you do that the worst of enemies, will become the best of friends’, Ashafa states to have had a change of heart (Sennott, 2014), He decided to visit the Pastor and asked for forgiveness.

Nowadays, the two men are like brothers and they are working together to ensure peace between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna. The boys they once trained to kill, are now being 'deprogrammed' from the hatreds they had learned. One could call what they are trying to create, a form of local power sharing. Although it does not always go smoothly between the two, for 15 years now, they have formed an intense relationship and a productive partnership. Imam Ashafa states: "I am not a Christian and I don't want to be a Christian. James is not a Muslim and he doesn't want to be a Muslim. But understanding that *religion is about building bridges*, that article of faith, that principle in the Abrahamic tradition, is what keeps us going" (Sennott, 2014).

On that note, I would like to conclude this thesis.

Appendix One – Map of LGAs in Plateau State and map of LGAs in Kaduna State

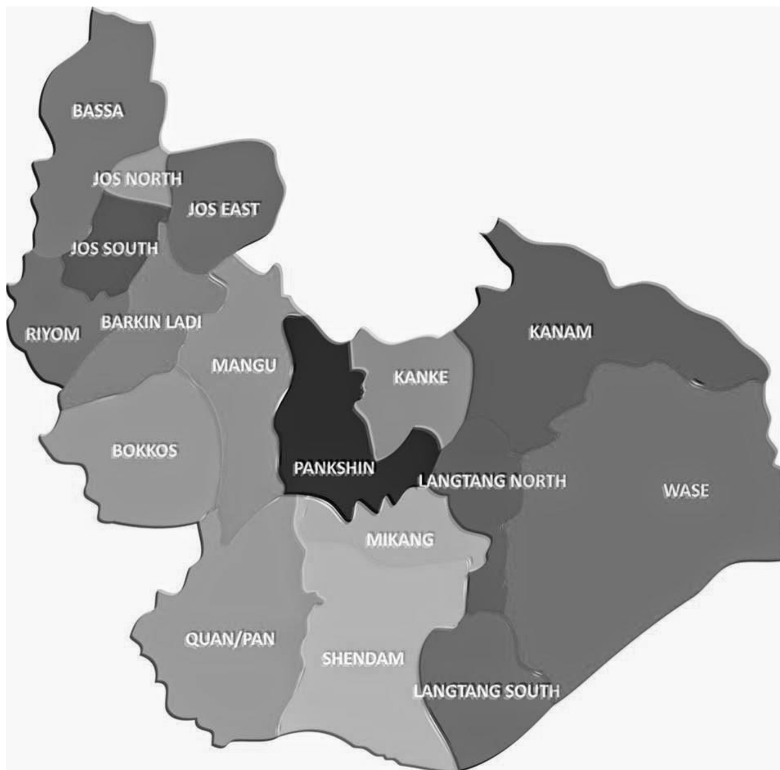

Figure 1.1: Local Government Areas in Plateau State, Middle Belt, Nigeria (Viewpoint Nigeria, 2017). Accessed June 28, 2018, [Online] https://viewpointnigeria.com/plateau-local-government-commission-plans-mass-redeployment-staff/

Figure 1.2: Local Government Areas in Kaduna State, Middle Belt, Nigeria, (Vinson, 2017). Accessed June 28, 2018, [Online] https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/religion-violence-and-local-powersharing-in-nigeria.

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