

# The Myth and Reality of Middle Belt Geo-Politics in Nigeria: A Discourse

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## Abstract

The middle Belt is a relatively big complex multi-ethnic religious geographical area, where unlike the Hausa — Fulani and the Kanuris of the far North is populated largely by minority ethnic groups. The areas since before the pre-independence period have been agitating for its region characterized by separation from the Hausa Fulani and Muslim domination, it also characterized by insecurity in terms of political instability, conflicts and ethnic crisis especially in the past two decades. The paper seeks to look at the pre-independence movements for the creation of middle Belt region since 1909, the myth and reality of the middle Belt region, conflicts and crisis especially in the Benue valley and Plateau State with the view of making recommendations and possibly laying the foundation for finding solutions towards peace, stability and development in the Area.

**Keywords:** Middle Belt, Geo-Politics, Politics

## Introduction

It is often argued that establishing a viable definition of the Middle Belt is a most arduous task. To properly capture the very essence of the true meaning of Middle Belt, it is imperative to identify and appreciate the geographical location, the population, and people of the area and the history of the people. According to Gyuse and Ajene (2006; 65) describe the middle Belt, include all that geographical section of Nigeria which incorporates states such as Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Nasarawa and Federal Capital Territory. This paper discover that some of the features of the Middle-Belt region is the presence of several heterogeneous communities with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds who all claim indigene ship of different portions of the region.

The area therefore lacks homogeneous characteristic, which other regions such as South West and South East hold. These ethnic groups which include Tiv, Birom, Bassa, Angula, Hausa, Fulani and several others have in general terms inhabited their present locations ever before Nigeria's political independence in 1960. The social relations between these ethnic groups over the decades have often been characterized by peaceful co-existence, symbiotic relationship in terms of trade and commerce. (For instance the Tiv who were predominantly farmers and the Jukun who were fishermen) as well as the retention of traditional ruler ship institutions despite the presence of the western style, legal institution and process, (Oga and Gyuse 2006).

The ethnic groups in the middle belt in spite of their salutary role in political and constitutional development of Nigeria remains the most under developed in terms of employment, security, infrastructural development and capital income remain one of the lowest in the country. There is hardly any redistribution of capital, socio-economic programmes from the centre to this area.

The region is in serious economic decline and is dependent on primary commodities. Undoubtedly, the valley is at high risk of violence given its social and economic characteristics. This cocktail is as it has created a pool of improvised and disaffected young men who can always be cheaply recruited by "entrepreneurs of violence". Expectedly, the interaction between their different peoples and the attendant competition for political and economic advantages has at several times in the history of the region, created social friction which snowballed into full-scale conflict, resulting in the massive loss of lives and properties as well as the overall disruption of the social equilibrium.

## Conceptualizing Middle Belt

Several contesting definitions of the Middle Belt abound, especially since the Middle Belt is a geographically fluid existence. In general it is agree that a conservative territorial estimation of Middle Belt comprises of Benue, plateau, Kwara, Kogi, Southern Kaduna, FCT, Niger, Adamawa and Taraba states. Even though this territorial description is imperfect, since in all these states, there are significant numbers of Muslims non Hausa as well as Muslim Hausa people, that who may or may not be captured by specific delineations of the Middle Belt.

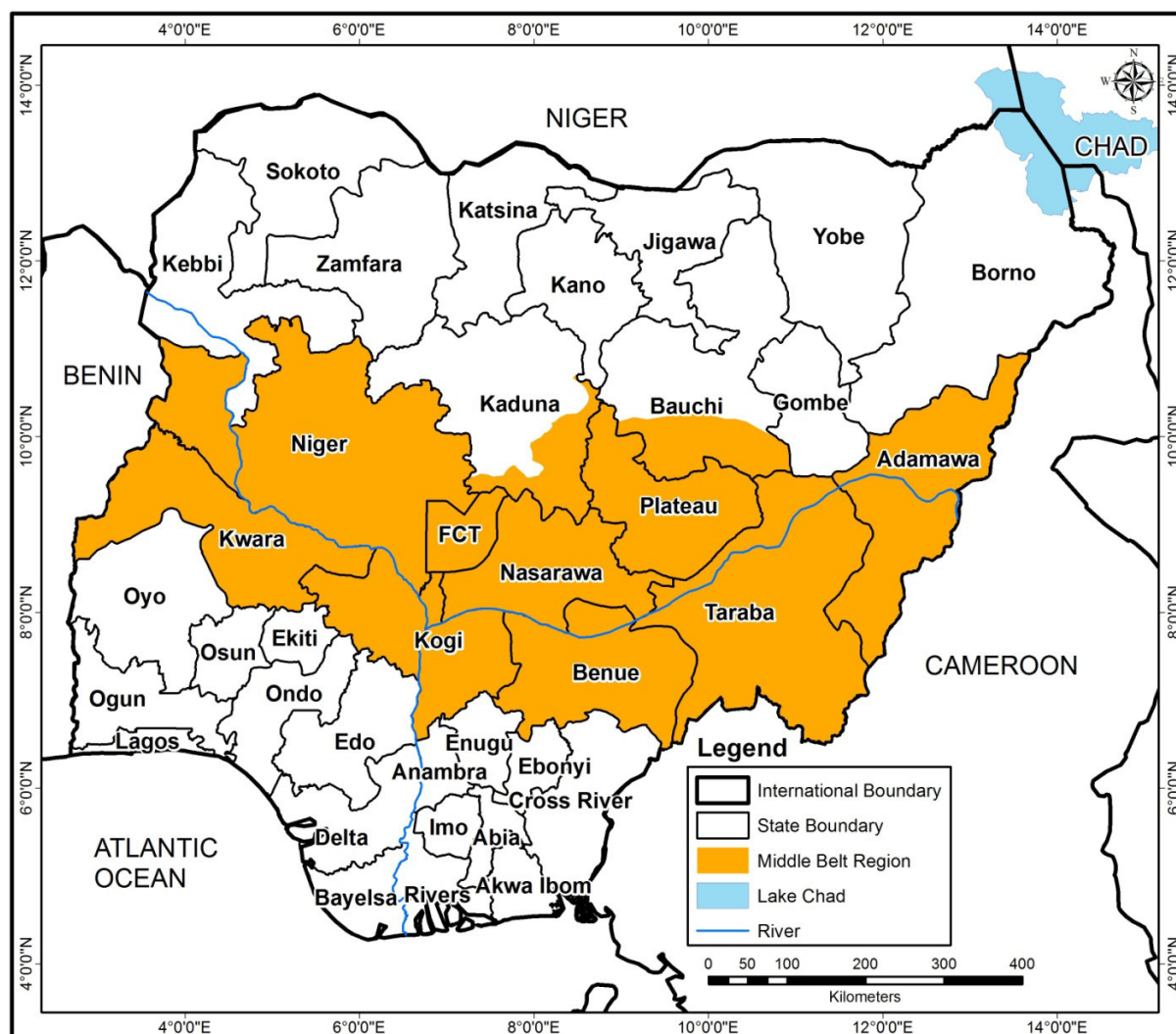
According to Suleiman (2012) states like Kebbi, Gombe, Bauchi, Borno and even Katsina and Kano contain pockets of non-Hausa, on Muslim populations that may qualify as Middle Belters in the political sense of the word, since Middle Belt identity is often politically constructed against Hausa-Fulani, Sokoto Caliphate Muslim identity. What do we actually mean by Middle Belt of Nigeria? This seems to be a very simple question

but a difficult one in reality. In connection to this, Agaba (2006) argued that there is some difficulty finding sound criteria for this area and agreeing on its geographical and cultural limit. In a similar vein, T.T Shut has attempted to capture the meaning of the Middle Belt. To him

The middle Belt comprises people that existed in Nigeria with a consciousness, identity and culture that is difficult from the Hausa/Fulani and the Kanuri of the far North. There is no consensus between scholars on what constitutes the Middle Belt region, while some scholars perceive the Middle Belt in the context of religion i.e northern Christian as against their Muslim counterparts, others perceive it to include all non Hausa/Fulani speaking people of the north. The area covers the people of Benue, Plateau, Kogi, Nassarawa, Taraba, Niger, Southern Kaduna, Southern Borno and Kebbi states. The Abacha regime created six 6 geo political zones. The North West, North East, North Central (Middle Belt), South West, South East, and South-South. The central zone Middle Belt comprises of Benue, Kogi, Niger, Nassarawa, Kwara, Plateau and FCT. The Middle Belt perceived either as a geographical concept of people found in a particular geo-political area that is fairly contiguous as described above or a religious grouping that have a share identity and belief that is distinct from the followers of Mohammed or a collection of minorities whether they are Christians, Muslims or Animist (Logans, 1985, Hembe 1983, Ayoade, 2011, Duddley, 1968, Dent, 1966, and Tyoden, 1993). Whatever definition one gives to the Middle Belt, one fact remains that this area has suffered serious political and religious manipulation by the Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly found in the North East and North West geo-political zones of Nigeria (Shut, 2007:91)

The description definition of the term Middle Belt is near a mirage. All the definitions attempted above are inconclusive or not exhausted as Egwemi (2014) assert that it is not possible to categorize all Middle Belters as Christians because a significant number of Muslims exist across the length and breadth of the region. Egwu (2001) also make us to believe that Hausa/Fulani speaking people constitute the region will not be true also as a significant number of Hausa/Fulani 'settlers' have been in the region for over a hundred years.

This paper affirms that the Middle Belt of Nigeria also called central or lower North is the geographical belt of the South of Northern Nigeria and the North of Southern Nigeria. Historically, no aspect of Nigeria has been so designated or demarcated officially after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, the component part of Nigeria have been designated first as regions and today as states. While it is true that there was a major agitation for a Middle Belt region in the First Republic, such a region never came to be. Thus, in spite of the sentiments about a Middle Belt group in Nigeria, no such group exist in reality. It is indeed the care that the elites of the belt use the sentiment to further their interest in relation to their core-Northern 'Hausa-Fulani 'oppressors 'in particular and the Nigeria state in general (Egwemi, 2012)



**Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the Middle Belt Region**  
**Source: Adopted and modified Map of Nigeria, 2014**

### Theoretical framework

The middle belt movement which stated before independence was a reaction to colonial relationships and domination by culturally different groups. The reaction took the form of activating tribal support for creation of a middle belt region. This was meant to separate the middle belt from the Northern region which was purely dominated by the Hausa Fulani.

The existence of a plural society is an essential condition for the analysis of political problems with conflict models. This is particularly with the theory of internal colonialism which suggests that a situation of plurality exist with inequalities among the group members of the societies. This in turn produces potential and sometimes, actual unequal socio-economic and political relationships between the political different groups, they also generate conflicts, the conflict is essentially between dominant groups and the minorities Logmas (2004).

### The Middle Belt: History and Politics since Pre-Colonial Independence Period

The history of the middle belt region can be traced to pre-colonial era. The region being in the central part of Nigeria federation shows that they are subjected to domination and being control by Hausa/Fulani and it is felt that there was need for the creation of the Middle Belt region in order to have its own area of jurisdiction just like the South West and South East regions.

Preceding the political demands for the creation of the paramount chiefs, some non-Islamic chiefs in the middle belt areas, made request for the separation of their areas of authority from Fulani and Islamic leadership. as early as 1908 for example, some non- Islamic chiefs in the Chamba, and Bachama areas of Adamawa, the Lere district in Southern Bauchi and the non-Islamic chiefs of Zagon-Kataf in Southern Zaria demanded from British Residents in Adamawa, Bauchi, Zaria and some parts of the Plateau, separation from control by Fulani

and Islamic rulers, particularly among areas where British conquest had succeeded in establishing authority. These are areas that had come under the direct impact of the Fulani jihad and where partial political incorporation into the structure of political sphere of Islamic rule had been achieved before 1900 (Yoroms, 2002).

These demands, however, were not made in terms of a middle-belt identity or regions but rather in context of a distinct cultural identity that was meant to restore indigenous control in the affairs of the groups. In the 1940's the demands were taken over by the tribal unions which had emerged from achieved social and political consciousness from Christian missionary activities. When this happened, the demands became characterized by violent protests and riots. This was so the case of the demands for separation from the Emir of Bauchi by the Sayawa in Lere districts, the Madagali from the Emir in Mubi, Higgi, Kilba, Chamba and Batta under Fulani district heads, centered on the Emir of Yola in Adamawa Province. Later in 1958, the Kilba and associated groups won their independence from Yola after refusal of northern Cameroon in the plebiscite to join Nigeria. Protest and political hostilities also characterized demands for separation from the Fulani and Islamic leadership in the district heads among the Kataf and other related non-Islamic groups such as the Karekare and Lafia districts (Alemik and Okoye 2006).

The politically significant aspects of this local campaign which demanded for Fulani and Islamic separation in Adamawa, Southern Bauchi, Zaria and parts of the Plateau before the organization of the middle belt movement in 1949, was British administration in the North which was obliged to introduce some forms of elected representation into the mother authority councils more fully and much more rapidly than in other areas of the Middle-belt like the main Plateau areas, Jukun, Idoma, and Tiv. However these demands also suggest that separatist demands existed among some of the non-Islamic groups in the middle belt area before an overall political movement of separation from the Islamic groups emerged as a Middle belt movement.

The earliest, of these ideas and conceptions of a "middle-belt region" were those of the German Christian Missionary with the British Sudan united mission (SUM) Dr. Karl Kumm in 1907, in which he suggested a Benue region to both Christian and the British administration in Nigeria. A more serious political conception of an administrative unit in the British protectorate of Nigeria, as a Region for non-Islamic groups and cultural minorities in the north which received the attention of the government of British administration before the developed a full-blown political organization that articulated demands for the creation of a Middle-Belt region, came from E.D Mirel, He was an Influential journalist in London and editor in one of the British African mail. Mirel made his proposal for the creation, of a central Region for non-Muslim and cultural minorities (which he called pagans) in the north in 1911 in the specific political context of the anticipated emulation of Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in to one administration (Timothy and Oga 2006). In 1919, there were more suggestions from British political officers in the services of the government of the British Administration in Nigeria for the subdivision of the protectorate into more units. These particularly focused on the north, as a solution to the problem of Mal-incorporation of the non-Islamic groups.

In the period between 1920 and 1939 for example, British officers who had served in the non-Islamic areas in the north made several proposals for the subdivision of the North and Nigeria in general into a dozen or more political units, largely developed from the idea of Mirel and Temple. However, when these developments were gaining the attention of public policy makers, there was a sudden outburst of tribal nationalism among the Middle-Belt group and for the decade after 1940; interest in political separation from the Islamic society was temporarily submerged. (Yoroms 2002).

The mal -integration of the Middle-Belt groups by forceful political measure (i.e. conquest) and their subordination to the Islamic society and leadership (i.e. in certain phases of the application of indirect rule policy), explain the subsequent resurgence of tribal movements within the very political boundaries of the north. The tribal movements were mainly concentrated in the tribal areas, which among other factors created the foundations and origin in the growth and development of the Middle-Belt movement.

The tribal movements of the 1940's were also to produce political support for the Middle-Belt movement when it demanded the creation of the Middle-Belt region in the North in 1950. One of the most important contributing forces in the development of tribal movements was the attainment of Christian consciousness among the Middle-Belt groups. Factual evidence on the growth and development of the Middle-Belt movement in the period between 1949 and 1965, derive from the interview discussions with politicians in Adamawa, Southern Bauchi, Benue, Plateau and Zaria who participated in the different phases of the organization. (Logams 2004).

The personalities and politicians involved in the Middle-Belt period between November 1980 and February 1981 included Moses Nyam Rwang (Biom Jos Division of the plateau) Pastor David V. lot (Sura-Pankshin Division on the plateau. Jonah Asadugu (BacharnaNuman Division in Adamawa province), Azi Nyako (Jarawa-S. Bauchi in Bauchi Division) Isaac Kpum, Isaac Sha'ahu (Tiv-Benue Province) Gayus Gilama (Bachama-Numan Division in Adamawa Province), Patrick Dokotri (Biom —Jos Division on the Plateau and secretary to the UMBC party). An interview was also held with J.S. Tarka in London in March 1980. (Alemik and Okoye, 2006).

Therefore, The political movements for the agitation of the Middle-region cannot be over-emphasized in view of the domination, subjection and control by the Hausa/Fulani in the North in ensuring that the conception of the Middle- Belt do not come to reality. The idea of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) formed and headed by J.S, Tarka in the late 1940's was the culmination of such rethinking and the search for political space, protection of interest and relevance in national issues and politics. Logams (2004).The other founding fathers of the UMBC such as the late Rwang Pam, Jonah Asadugu, Bello Jacob Ijumu, Pastor David Lot, among many others invested enormous amount of their time and resources to see to the realization of the interest of the area. Logams (2004)

According to Jonah Asadugu in an interview he granted to a magazine called "Northern Nigeria in perspective" (NNIP), in February 1992, the party won 35 out of the 45 seats allocated to the area during the 1945 federal and regional elections. It was however not so lucky with other goals, such that the demand for Middle-Belt region as the Willink commission of inquiry in 1958 set up by the British colonialists. The commission was mandated to among other things, investigate the fear of minorities and to suggest ways of alleviating them including the creation of states. The commission did not in the end recommended the creation of states which was the basic quest of the people of the Middle Belt and others interest groups in the country.. A school of thought holds that, part of the history of the Middle Belt is the history and domination by its big neighbour. Some were able to resist domination, while some did not, thus choosing their independence and the ability to chart a different cause of existence. The voting pattern here is therefore usually informed by how the political parties relate to such history. This may explain why the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) was able to sweep the polls in a large part of the area in the pre-and post — independent periods. It may likely also be why the South-based parties like the NCNC and the Action Group were able to establish or form good working alliance with the UMBC.

On the other hand, the failure of the defunct Northern People's Congress (NPC) to make significant impact here may be due to the fact that the people here may have perceived it as the political organ used to dominate and marginalize them. In 1955, there was an increase tension caused by political growth and development of the middle- Belt movements and the articulation of the demands for the creation of a middle-Belt region with the increasing involvement of the Action Group (AG) in Kabba and Illorin.

In 1956, R.S Hudson of the colonial office in London was assigned to draw up detailed proposal for provincialization in the north, the submission subsequently become known as the Hudson Report. The Hudson report could not favor the agitation for provincialisation and the report and its recommendations were strongly rejected by the Middle Belt politicians in the UMBC and the AG parties and subsequently the findings and recommendations of the commission on minorities eclipsed its political objectives (Logams 2004).

The second Republic displayed a mixed grill of the voting patterns reinforcing the issue of the diversity of the area. Old Plateau state, perhaps the strongest and most steadfast defender of the middle Belt identity went to Ziks led Nigerian people party (NPP). It was a clear vote against the more conservative far north led National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Former Gongola State, now made up of Adamawa, Taraba State, were swept by the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) a party that has roots in the old Borno Youth Movement (BYM) an ally of the united Middle Belt Congress, Benue, Kwara and Niger States however to the surprise of many, laid out the welcoming mats for the conservative N.P.N. In the second term in 1983 Chief Solomon Lar of Plateau and Nasarawa held its ground against the mighty onslaught of the Northern People's Congress (NPC). During the short lived third Republic, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), swept Plateau, Benue, Kwara and Taraba, as a formidable challenge against the conservative National Republican Convention (NRC), while NRC took Niger, Kogi and Adamawa State. During the presidential election, the SDP presidential candidate, Chief MKO Abiola got the second highest block votes in the whole country from the area (Timothy and Oga, 2006).

### **Political, Ethnic and Religious Dimension of Conflicts in the Middle Belt Region**

During the past two decades, Nigeria has witnessed different forms of dysfunctional conflicts. These conflicts have occurred along ethnic, religious and cultural fault lines, buttressing the significance of the identity in the Conflicts. The conflicts are also sometimes caused by certain factors like mainly resources, psychological needs and values.

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria has had a sizeable share of Nigerians communal and identity based conflicts. Other regions occupied by ethnic minorities such as Niger Delta, Aguleri Umauleri conflict in 1960 territory of south eastern Nigeria, caused by contest over "who owns the land" (Ekeh 1999)the Ife Modakeke conflict in the Yoruba areas of western Nigeria caused by disputes over the ownership of the Area and accompanying political rights (Albert, 1999). In 1988, some three hundred inter-communal conflicts were recorded in six states alone (Ekeh 1999).

As indicated, the Middle Belt region in general, and the Benue valley in particular, have had a large share of these conflicts. Part of this paper attempted to look at conflicts in the middle Belt and Benue valley but pays specific attention to the political dimensions, that the political dimensions do not explain the totality of

occurrences in these conflicts but rather complement other dimensions. For instance, there is a link between land, citizenship and accompanying political rights and conflicts in the region. Some selected conflicts in the Middle Belt between 1975 to 2002.

Katsina ala, 1975 and 1976 Ikurav, Tiv and KUsuv in Buruku LGA. Over land, Katsina Ala, 1993. Tongove vrs Kusr Buruk LGA over land. Awe, Nasarawa state 1993, 1995, 1996, Alago, Hausa and Tiv over land and chieftaincy. Kumo Gombe 1997, Cattle Herdsmen and farmers over grazing land use. Wukari, Taraba state 1995 between Jukun and Tiv over land ethnicity and local government polls. Yoroms J. S (2002); "Dynamics of ethnic and religious conflicts in the Middle Belt" Alemika E.E.O and Okoye F. eds (2006) Ethno religious conflicts and democracy in Nigeria.

Other ethnic conflicts that have taken place from 2000 to 2005 and even the recent Jos crisis are enumerated below. Toto, Nasarawa state, May 6, 2003 between Egbura, Gagy Bassa over politics. Wase, Plateau state, 2002-2004, Taroh, Jukun, Hausa/Fulani over land, politics and religions. Yelwa Sendam, Plateau state 2002-2004 Jarawa, Hausa and Gamai over land, politics and religion. Numan, Adamawa state 2004, Bachama, Hausa/Fulani over land ownership and religion. These crises are areas that the north conservatives are using as strategy to deter the reality of the Middle Belt creation aimed at destabilizing every arrangement with respect to unity among the ethnic groups in the middle Belt region

The conflicts in Jos Plateau state is the quest for land ownership and indigenship especially in the last two decades which generated series of conflict and crisis in the region where the Hausa/Fulani people argued that they are the first settlers in that land especially during the Tin mining which started during the colonial period and after independence.(Suleiman:2012)

On the other hand, the Birom people argued that, inspite of the fact that though he Hausa/Fulani in people claim to have been the first settlers in Jos does not automatically guarantee them the possession of the land which is believed to be the domain of the Birom people. The opposing forces are always in constant disagreement with each other especially when it comes to land ownership and the occupation of political power in the area. These manifestations can be seen in the recent crisis in 2004, 2005 during Joshua Dariyes administration and currently the one in March 2010 between the Biroms and the Hausa Fulani in some villages namely Turu Karama, Dogon Nawa, Anguwan doki, Barkin Ladi, etc. These conflicts have over the years resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and properties.

### **Causes for the Agitation Of Middle – Belt Region From Pre-Independence to Date**

It is understood by some people that part of the history of the middle Belt is the history of control and domination by the Hausa –Fulani which are predominantly Muslims in the North.Izah (2010).However, the factual evidence collated for this study suggest that one of the major cause for the organization of the initial parent organization of the Middle-Belt movement, the NML in 1949 took shape from accepted premise by political hardship in the "tribal" unions among the middle-Belt groups and societies was that "Christians" were deprived of political representation relative to Moslem in the institutions of government in the north previous to 1949, tribal unions among the middle Belt groups and societies were concerned that there existed neglect of their socio-economic problems by governments in the north and that there was domination of political roles and decision making in the local affairs by Hausa-Fulani and non indigenes of their territories. In 1949 therefore, the "theory" propounded for liberation by the Christian leadership in the "tribal unions that are predominantly Christians, they might assert political power and influence to serve their interest in the North, only to the extent that "tribes" among the Middle-Belt groups and societies achieve and strengthen Christian solidarity as a political identity.

Another factor also is believed by its people to be one of the marginalized regions in Nigeria.

The larger part of the population of the area is made up of economically and politically disempowered rural-based peasant farming population. Its people have little or no access to benefits of democracy. The matrix of causal variable in the analysis of the Middle-Belt government and the causes of the demands for the creation of a Middle Belt movement therefore centres on: Uneven development of some sections of the north, mainly the Middle Belt areas, which conditioned the activation and mobilization of the Christian religious identity as political identity among the European educated persons, indigenous to the Middle Belt areas. The political problems in the politics of the demands for the creation of a Middle Belt region as a unit of the Nigeria federation, among some of the causes, was Nigerian political development with federation itself, while unit of the north contained a system of dominance and exploitation

### **Myth and Reality of Middle Belt Region in Nigeria**

In an attempt to establish the myth or reality of Middle Belt region in Nigeria, Egwemi (2014) argues that: The reality of the Middle Belt can thus be summarized under two school of thought viz; it is a geographical entity- The people of the 'Middle Belt' share a geographically contiguous space; the lower part of the old Northern region of the old Southern region of Nigeria. The people have common minority status vis-a vis the dominant

Hausa/Fulani group of the oil Northern region in particular and the Yoruba and Igbo of Nigeria in general. He further argued that it is important to highlight the fact that while some people in the region are dissatisfied with the scheme of things a number of people seemed satisfied with things as they are.

The myth about the Middle Belt is something that arises as a result of an illusion of 'oneness'. This is indeed a great illusion. Identity is usually constructed along ethnic and religious lines in Nigeria. Hence, where is the oneness? In the aspect of religion, while the story of the Middle Belt being the non-Muslim group of the northern region has been told consistently that it appears to be getting acceptance and recognition, while the fact still remains that each of the ethnic groups in the area has a good number of Muslims and traditional religion adherents. Egwemi (2014) suggest that it may be that the Christians constitute the majority in the area but this does not in any way do away with Muslims and others. Thus, there is also only a spurious if not dubious religions 'oneness' in the area.

To this effect, this paper is of the view that a Middle Belt identity is still a mirage. The one north philosophy and ideology is still active and well recognized. The existence of umbrella such as; The Northern Governors Forum, Northern Senators Forum, Arewa consultative Forum, Northern Elders Forum, Northern Elders council are clear indications that Middle Belt identity is just the interest group of ethnic and religious league in the North central mostly Benue, Plateau, and Southern Kaduna. It is against this background that the idea of Dalong (2003) was recognized thus;

The Middle Belt agitation is a mere handbag association without any known office and even registered members. There is no secretariat or even employees despite the huge clamor about it. There is no single project for the benefit of the people today the group cannot boast of achieving. The people of the Middle Belt languish in abject poverty, hunger and perennial instability. This high profile group has never attracted any intervention of either the federal government or international agencies despite the sophisticated network of the leaders. The Middle Belt leadership has never contributed relief materials to the crisis victims in the region, except to visit government houses on such occasions for their welfare package.

From the foregoing discussions, we will deduce the reality or myth of its existence. However, do those who deny the existence of Middle –Belt have a point? Yes, they do to the extent that while there was an agitation for region, the effort was never successful. So legally speaking, there was never a middle Belt region as argued by Suleiman,(2012) that, administratively, Nigeria is constitutionally divided into six geo-political zones; North East, North West, North Central, South West, South East and South - South., if the argument is about what was in existence rather than what the people wanted but failed to get. The anti-Middle Belt group many have another point if those promoting the cause of a separate identity of area give the impression that the issue is more about religion than geographical, historical circumstances and genuine minorities fears. Nothing give those who do not like the idea of middle Belt better ammunition than the impression that is about religion exclusivity for one religious group. Christianity, cannot be promoted as the binding factor since to do so would exclude Muslims who however happen to form a significant percentage of the population. Christians may be in the majority, but a quest for this identity has to have the ability of carrying along every one, irrespective of faith or ethnic background.

### **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

From the foregoing discussions, it shows that most of the conflicts, crisis in the middle Belt is not basically on ethnicity, indigenship and religious alone. Yes, one cannot completely deny the fact that these factors cannot be advance, but the main source is Economic, political and lack of national integration. Conservatives who are the neocolonial set of people that are not in support of the middle Belt region want to continue with the idea of control and domination which will not allow the middle beltters to have equal share and representation in the national issues, and resource distribution.

This paper therefore concludes that the crisis in the middle belt are not basically ethnic, religious oriented, but have its root in the fight against the creation of middle Belt created by the colonial masters and sustained by neocolonial elites (northern conservatives) for their selfish political and economic interest. The allusion to speed economic conflicts as ethnic conflict is a subtle way of diverting attention away from societal inadequacies existing in the country due to administration and greed which encourage perpetual dominance of the ruling class.

The consequent negative effects of these crisis are reflected in destruction of lives and property, existence of mutual distrust and suspicion leading to lack of national integration; the paper therefore suggest that if the government and stakeholders can only arrest the situation by allowing and legally put into paper the reality of middle-region, it can help in addressing the issue of crises in this area. The neocolonial elites (northern conservatives) should avoid inciting people in generating conflict and consequent crisis which engulf the region for a long period of time. The socio-economic effect of this reprising in the region cannot be over emphasized. However, the Middle Belt leaders must come to a realization that the people are different in terms of ethnic and

religion. It is necessary fact that they reconcile themselves and agree on the realization of the Middle Belt would only amount to waste of time and resources.

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