Jos Crisis and the Challenge of Managing Cultural Differences

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Abstract
This paper is an analysis of how the Nigerian government manages cultural differences, especially the type that is causing the crisis in Jos, Nigeria. I sampled textual exemplars from Nigerian newspapers. The newspaper texts served as part of the data used for the analysis. The sampled texts are displayed on a titled text box and interpreted. Comments given by two interviewees representing opposing sides in the Jos crisis are also displayed. Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis are used to interpret and discuss the newspaper texts and the comments given by the interviewees. The discussion reveals that flaws in the implementation of multicultural policy are the cause of the recurrent crisis in Jos. Discussion on multiculturalism found flaws in how Canada and other Western countries handle liberal multiculturalism. Discussion also reveals that even when a new policy is devised to solve the Jos crisis, the Nigerian government would be reluctant to accept the policy if the acceptance gets suspected of having a potential to undermine its Federal Character policy. The paper also found that government's reluctance has not deterred other Nigerians from pushing for possible innovative ways of managing the ever-increasing cultural problems besetting Nigeria.
Keywords: Jos crisis, cultural differences, settlers, indigenes, non-indigenes, multiculturalism

1. Introduction

Individuals or groups of individuals usually move from one geographical location to another (Berland, 2008). There are many reasons why people move. People move to seek economic welfare. They also move to flee from oppression or war (Cleveland, 1997). When people move, two or more cultures meet. Upon the arrival of newcomers, a host community feels that its culture could become a composite of many cultures. The toleration of people of other cultures in a host community/country depends on how the host country embraces the values that the concept of multiculturalism promotes.

Multiculturalism refers to "the dilemmas and difficulties of politics of difference" (Ang, 2008, p. 227; Sauceda, 1997, pp.418-419). The relevance of multiculturalism as a policy of managing the politics of difference depends on the perspective from which the policy is implemented. As a social policy, multiculturalism could be handled from either a "liberal" or from the "critical" perspective (Ang, 2008, p. 227). Liberal multiculturalism promotes the idea of "community of communities" (Ang, 2008, p. 226; Sauceda, 1997, p. 420). Liberal multiculturalism seeks to "overturn dominant and monocultural conceptions of history and society" (Ang, 2008, p. 227). Liberal multiculturalism abhors the melting pot idea of culture. The melting pot idea promotes monoculturalism. It does so by advocating for the assimilation of other cultures by another (Sauceda, 1997).

The critical multicultural school of thought hinges its criticism of liberal multiculturalism on the over-enthusiasm which is perceived as pervading and blighting the ideals that liberal multiculturalism promotes. Critical multiculturalism is a claim that liberal multiculturalism merely celebrates cultural differences instead of fighting against racism and ethnicity. Critical multicultural school of thought argues that the celebration of ethnic customs, costumes, and recipes are the only ideal pursued by liberal multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism frowns at such celebration because of the belief that such celebration deepens people's commitment to divisive cultural practices. Critical multiculturalism seeks to promote things that enhance cultural harmony (Ang, 2008). The critical multicultural school of thought believes that instead of strengthening *"from many, one"* which the Latin, *"E pluribus Unum"* expresses, liberal multiculturalism is inverting the value expressed by that Latin to make it imply *"in one, many"* (Cleveland, 1997, p. 433). Since 1965,the West, especially the Canadian government, has made multiculturalism a policy for managing cultural differences (Ang, 2008).

The Canadian government pursues its multicultural policy from the liberal perspective. This perspective encourages immigrants to flaunt their cultures. Canadian multiculturalism tolerates freedom of religion. It does not frown when immigrants flaunt their cultural costumes and cooking style. Canadian multiculturalism emphasizes that "all citizens shall keep their cultural identities and take pride in their ancestry" (Ang, 2008, p. 266). This voice guarantees to all citizens, including immigrants, equal opportunity to employment, political participation and other social amenities. Apart from Canada, majority of Western countries including the United States practice liberal multiculturalism. But insights from contemporary literature on the Western practice of liberal multiculturalism points to the fact that the ongoing global economic crunch, with its adverse impact on Western economies, is now forcing Western nations to adopt measures restrictive of liberal multiculturalism. Because of the ongoing global economic hardship and the need to avoid being perceived as subscribing to

xenophobia, Western countries have introduced immigration policies which under the pretense of 'abhorrence of adverse cultural practices,' bar prospective immigrants from entering Western countries (West, 2011; Richardson, 2007).

This change in the immigration policies of the West triggers the suspicion that the policy of liberal multiculturalism is feasible only in a prosperous economic atmosphere. If the suspicion that liberal multiculturalism as a social policy is tolerable only when the economy of a host country is booming, then it is a flawed social policy. Its flaw starts from the point where it fails to reckon with the fact that economic prosperity is neither a universal phenomenon nor is free from occasional reverses. In a similar vein, if economic hardship has forced the West to reconsider and curb the liberties which liberal multiculturalism had tolerated, such change of attitude furnishes a reason to examine the damage which liberal multiculturalism unleashes in poor communities that were lured by Western pretenses at practicing liberal multiculturalism.

Liberal Multiculturalism in a Harsh Economic Environment

Harsh economic atmosphere, especially the type that is experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa, is characterized by acute shortage of desirable things like employment opportunities, democratic liberties, education opportunities and the lack of a range of social amenities. Jos in Nigeria typifies a harsh economic atmosphere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Jos is located atop a plateau in north central Nigeria. Unlike any other city in Nigeria, the weather in Jos is pleasant. The pleasant weather coupled with arable land attracts people of other ethnic groups to the city. Some immigrants in Jos, especially those of Hausa/Fulani extraction, trace the presence of their ancestors in Jos to a period that dates back to more than 100 years. In well-conducted communities, immigrants do not need to reside in a community for up to 100 years before they and their descendants could be accorded all the privileges and rights of citizens and/or indigenes.

But in Nigeria, the mechanism that specifies the criteria for a Nigerian from one part of the country to obtain an indigene status in another part is as absurd as the policy that makes a Nigerian feel like an alien in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country made up of 36 states plus the territory of Abuja. The 36 states arrangement forces every Nigerian to be classified as an indigene of a particular state. But what heightens the indigene/citizen imbroglio in Nigeria is that the constitution of Nigeria is silent on whom an indigene of a state is. The constitution is also silent on how one can obtain a state-indigene status. This silence did not prevent the constitution from specifying sets of privileges that are enjoyed by only state indigenes. The privileges to be enjoyed only by persons classified as state indigenes are in Section 147(3) of Nigeria's 1999 constitution. A privilege specified in that section states that "the President shall appoint at least one minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such State" (Obomanu, 2010, p. 65). The conflict-potential of this constitutional absurdity in Nigeria, but more so in Jos where economic opportunities hardly exist, is grave. The gravity is heightened when explored from two standpoints. The first standpoint is how Human Rights Watch Report (HRWR) of April 2006 defined the concept of indigene. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (April 2006), an "indigene is somebody who can trace their ethnic and genealogical roots back to the community of people who originally settled there" (Obomanu, 2010, p.65). From the standpoint of Nigerian Constitution, there are three ways – by birth, naturalization and registration – of obtaining Nigerian citizenship. Let it be reiterated that the Nigerian constitution did not specify the ways of obtaining indigene status. What it did was to link one of the ways of obtaining citizenship to birth. Linking citizenship to birth is same as linking it to genealogy (Obomanu, 2010).

As defined by the Human Right Watch Report (2006), tracing ones genealogy to original settler of a place is the only way, in Nigeria, of obtaining indigene status. Since the Nigeria constitution did not state that indigene status is same as citizenship status, it means therefore that there are Nigerians who are citizens of Nigeria by virtue of registration and naturalization but cannot be indigenes of a state in Nigeria since the only criterion, genealogy, which guarantees both indigene and citizenship status cannot apply to those groups of Nigerians who are citizens only by the virtue of registration and naturalization (Obomanu, 2010). The very root of ethnic crises in Nigeria, more so the one that has been convulsing the city of Jos lies in this citizenship/indigene divide. The fact that violence has earned the city of Jos the notoriety of a theatre for human slaughter is an open knowledge. What might advance that knowledge is an analysis of what Nigerians have been saying about the recurring mayhem in Jos. The text box below and the textual exemplars in it is designed to provide a resource for such analysis.

Methodology

The Jos crisis is a challenge to the policy of multiculturalism. To understand the policy requires critical analysis. For this paper, success in such analysis is adjudged to reside in what many stakeholders have said and done to curb the crisis. Contents of major Nigerian newspapers are considered resources for accessing and analyzing what has been said and done about Jos crisis. When analysis in a paper depends on what people have said, the methodology of the paper needs to be shaped by the qualitative research method. The qualitative method of

conducting social science research "involves procedures that result in rich, descriptive, contextually-situated data based on people's spoken or written words and observable behavior" (King, 1996, p. 175)." In a similar vein, media contents are considered appropriate resource/data for analysis in this paper because of the belief in qualitative research that "anything that a researcher could observe, such as one-word quotation or a lengthy story-like description could count as data" (Keyton, 2001: 70; Myers, 2009, pp. 153-162; Lindloff & Taylor, 2002, pp. 4, 18 & 109; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.181; Jankowski &Wester, 1991, p. 61; Kings, 1996, p. 175).

The key step I used in the analysis involved a "purposive selection" of typical newspaper textual exemplars (Maxwell, 19996, pp. 71-79; Wodak & Meyer, 2006, p. 181; Creswell, 2007, p. 125; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008) from three Nigerian newspapers. The three newspapers were selected on the ground that their stories on Jos crisis are comprehensive. Dates of publication of the selected texts and the newspaper page numbers where the sampled text were taken are displayed in the text box to enhance Socratic distaste for self-deception (Wainwright, 1997; Okeke and Ume, 2004).The selected texts were re-arranged into a text box in a manner known as "context stripping" (Maxwell, 1996: 76). I adopted this strategy to enhance not only interpretation but to enhance the validation of my analysis with field data. I also got a comment from a member of the Middle Belt Dialogue (MBD), a non-governmental group representing those who claim to be the indigenes of Jos. The comment reflects his view on the crisis in Jos. I also got a comment from a Hausa-Fulani person. The commentator represents those that are referred to as settlers by Jos indigenes. I chose the two representatives in order to ascertain how comments by persons on the opposing side of the conflict agree with or be at variance with how I interpreted the selected newspaper stories on Jos crisis. A high-ranking government official also commented on the hazy policy of indigene, non-indigene and citizenship in Nigeria.

I used the analytic procedure of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the newspaper texts (Wodak& Meyer, 2008). I used it because of its appropriateness as a tool for describing, interpreting and critiquing social life as reflected in texts (Luke 1997). Critical Discourse Analysis also enabled me to "attribute a class of phenomena to segments of the analyzed texts. I made such attribution by the means of "subjective valuing" (Fielding & Lee, 1998: 41; Keyton, 2001:70; Okeke& Ume, 2004).

Text Box: Perspectives and Utterances on Jos Crisis

S/No	Newspapers' date of publication and page numbers	Textual exemplars
1	*Vanguard,* 27 December 2010, P. 3	All I can tell you is that the presidency is doing everything possible to restore order in Jos.
2	*Vanguard,* 27 December 2010, P. 6	The Middle Belt Dialogue (MBD) said that the Joint Military Taskforce in Jos was of no use .
3	*Vanguard,* 27 December 2010, P. 3	The Sultan of Sokoto said we know that the crisis in Jos has nothing to do with religion.
4	*Guardian,* 2 March 2010, P. 14	The segregation lines government drew between indigenes and settlers inform the recurrent ethno-religious crisis in the country.
5	*Guardian,* March 2, 2010, P. 14	A bill seeking to address the recurrent indigene-settler controversy in the country may not be necessary.
6	*Guardian,* March 2, 2010, P. 14	In virtually every part of the country, so-called non-indigenes are not allowed to contest for political office, acquire property; they are compelled to pay discriminatory fees in schools.
7	*Guardian,* March 21 2010, P. 65	The reality is that most Nigerians are loyal enough to their culture to want to export it wherever they go.
8	*Daily Sun,* January 17, 2011	There are stories that Hausa-Fulani youths are refused admission to the University of Jos if they claim they are indigenes by virtue of birth.

Source: *Vanguard, Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers of Nigeria

Analytic Discussion

When all stakeholders in the Jos crisis, especially the federal government of Nigeria, get ready to stop the crisis, the first sign of such readiness would reflect in the earnestness or lack of it in the style of dialogue on the crisis. When stakeholders decide to dialogue earnestly, comments like the one sin exemplars 1 and 3 of Text Box 1 will not crop up. The main entailment of exemplar 1 in that box portrays how the Nigerian government responds to the crisis. Government's response to the crisis has been reactionary. Reactionary response is designed to restore momentary order after every wave of mayhem. The entailment of exemplar 2, Text Box 1 specifies what the federal government of Nigeria does. What it does is to deploy a joint police and military task force whenever the intermittent crisis in Jos erupts. The presence of such force calms things down for a few months. While the few-months calm reigns, the task force gets deceived into believing that the calm would be permanent.   The erroneous belief compels the taskforce to withdraw from Jos. As soon as they withdraw, the grievance that underlies the crisis wells up again and throws the city back into another round of mayhem. The fresh mayhem prompts another deployment. And so goes the vicious circle!

The ineffectiveness of this vicious circle is what the Middle Belt Dialogue (MBD), as displayed in Box 1, exemplar 2, has declared as of no use. The irrelevance of the use of military taskforce as a mechanism of quelling the Jos crisis is underscored by the entailment of exemplar 4 of Text Box1. This exemplar identifies correctly, the genie behind the recurrent bloodshed in Jos. Exemplar 3 Box 1 entails the utterance of the Sultan of Sokoto. The Sultan of Sokoto is a very influential religious figure in Nigeria. The Sultan's utterance lends credence to what exemplar 4identifies as the cause of Jos crisis. But the problem of lack of earnest dialogue in Nigeria is highlighted when an influential figure like the Sultan of Sokoto correctly observed that the Jos crisis has nothing to do with religion, but failed to say what the cause of the crisis is. His silence on the cause of the crisis does not mean that he does not know and cannot say in a clear language.

Whatever made the Sultan to refrain from identifying the cause of the crisis in an earnest language is the same thing that also induces the government to often adopt the fire brigade approach of intermittent deployment of the military each time the crisis flares. The cause of the crisis is what exemplar 6 Text Box 1 expresses. What that exemplar expresses is that the absurd policy of discriminating against non-indigenes is at the heart of the crisis in Jos. The policy of discriminating against non-indigenesis not practiced only in Jos. Discriminating against non-indigenes is a social menace which torments Nigerians. The pain of discriminating against non-indigenes in Nigeria is outlined in the entailments of exemplars 6 and 8 of Text Box1. When a Nigerian is identified as anon-indigene in another part of Nigeria, such identification denies many things to the Nigerian so identified. When a Nigerian gets the label of a non-indigene, such label is invoked to deny the person the right to contest for a political office. It is invoked also to deny the person the right to acquire property. This mindless cruelty gets enforced without any consideration as to whether the victim was born and had been living in the community meting out the victimization. Exemplars 6 and 8 of Text Box1 point to the fact that even in a situation where the children of a settler are allowed to be admitted into an educational institution, such children are compelled to pay higher fees.

What robs salt into the injury of the indigene-settler imbroglio in Nigeria is the inertia to confront the monster by the government and the media. The *Guardian* newspaper prides itself as the flagship of Nigerian journalism. But it demonstrated inertia about the Jos crisis when its editorial on page 14 of March 2, 2010 issue ridiculed a move by a member of Nigerian House of Representative to present a bill against the indigene/non-indigene policy. What prompted that inglorious *Guardian* editorial might not be different from why the Nigerian constitution has implicitly connived at the absurdity of the indigene/non-indigene policy.

A fact makes Nigeria's indigene/non-indigene imbroglio look stupid. The fact is that those who claim to be indigenes of a particular place had, in distant past, migrated to their present place from another place. Charles Ellah is an elder in a Nigerian community where the indigene/settler dichotomy leads to the seizure of properties of some settlers. According to him, Nigerian oral history brims with evidence showing that at one time or the other in the past, every community in Nigeria had migrated from a location other than the place they now claim as their place of origin. According to Ellah, the oral history of his community has it that the ancestors of his own community had migrated from the ancient Benin empire.   The ruins of that empire are now located in parts of the present Edo State of Nigeria with Benin City as its capital. Mr. Ellah's community is Omoku in present Rivers State of Nigeria. Mr. Ellah gave his comments in order to voice his disagreement over the policy of indigene versus non indigene in Nigeria.

As paraphrased above, Charles Ellah's views agree with the value that "critical multiculturalism"(Ang, 2008, p. 227)promotes. The value critical multiculturalism promotes is at variance with those of "liberal multiculturalism" (Ang, 2008, p. 227). The variance aligns the value of liberal multiculturalism with the views of those who endorse liberal multiculturalism. The comment from a member of the Middle Belt Dialogue Group I interviewed brims with ideas that support liberal multiculturalism. According to the member of the Middle Belt Dialogue Group:

> **…they are always trying to usurp.   They (the Hausa-Fulani) have annoying sense of entitlement. They want their cattle to graze farmers' crops. They think your culture and your religion are inferior. They want to be the ones to install the traditional ruler. In short they want to grab everything. And that will never happen! They must go !**

Conclusion

Factors that aggravate the crisis in Jos range from the indigene/settler dichotomy to tribalism and ethnicity (Murji, 2008). These factors are offshoot of liberal multiculturalism. When the Nigerian government gets ready to solve the Jos problem, it should embrace the tenets of multiculturalism. Embracing the tenets of multiculturalism should be from the melting-pot perspective. The melting pot perspective should first convince settlers to accept the fact that whatever forced a person or a group of persons to abandon their own community to settle in another constitutes a proof, even if tacitly, that the culture left behind is inferior to that of the host community. By the time settlers are convinced that the culture they left behind is inferior to the one of their present host-community, the next task should be to encourage the host culture/community to accept the immigrants and/or settlers without any form of discrimination. Implementing the policy of multiculturalism from the suggested perspective would mean that comments that encourage discrimination, like the one in Section 147(3) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution should be replaced with laws like the one being proposed by Honorable Gozie Agbakoba of the Nigerian House of Representatives (Obomanu, 2010). The law that Honorable Agbakoba is pushing aims at abolishing the indigene non-indigene policy. When enacted, the law could solve many problems like that of Jos. The enactment of Honorable Agbakoba's legislation will guarantee both citizenship and indigene status to Nigerians living in any Nigerian state of their choice. What the spirit and the letter of the new policy might need to fine-tune would be the criteria of obtaining the status of a state indigene in Nigeria. None of such criteria should forbid a state-indigene status to a child whose parents got married, lived, and raised in a particular state. A new indigene non-indigene policy in Nigeria should also not deny indigene-status to anybody who has lived continuously in a state for more than ten years. The Hausa-Fulani person I interviewed made a comment which supports the view that persons who have lived in a place for a long time should not be denied indigene status of such a place. Below is part of the comment under reference:

> My father has a farm here (Jos). Our family house is here. They want me to go. Go where? They don't want my animals to eat grass (graze). I will not go! They will kill me here! I am an indigene; they are not!
> **Source: Interview on February 16, 2011 with a Jos settler.**

Comments like this demonstrate that contrary to how the Nigerian government wants it to be understood, the crisis in Jos exposes the inability of policy makers, so far, to put in place a relevant mechanism which would bring to bear the ideals expressed by the melting pot variant of the politics of managing differences (Ang, 2008). Comments like the one given by a high-ranking Ministry of Justice official to the effect that the so-called Federal Character policy in Nigeria makes it difficult to change the indigene non-indigene policy should not deter the effort to do things that are necessary to stop the recurrent orgy of human slaughter in Jos.

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