

The Impact of Crises on the Economy of Jos Plateau, 2001–2010.



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Abstract

The research investigated the impact of crises on the economy of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically examined geographical description of Jos, Jos before the 2001 crisis, trade and commerce, transport and communication, destruction of lives and properties, transport, security, settlement pattern, and distrust among ethno-religious groups. The study adopts both primary and secondary sources, with more emphasis on oral sources, within the period under consideration. The findings of the study revealed that the impact of the crisis on the Jos Plateau from 2001 – 2010 had an adverse effect on the economy of the state and Nigeria as a whole. Recommendations were made, amongst others, that since the questions of the crisis relate to the issues of indigenous claims and land contestations, historical facts need to be used by the government to settle these quarrels by both state and federal governments.

Key words: *Impact, Crises, Economy, Jos, Plateau State.*

Introduction

Nigeria is a country that is sharply divided along ethnic and religious lines, which often leads to arms conflict. On September 7th, 2001, Jos, the capital of Plateau State, experienced one of the worst forms of crises that pitted the two dominant religious groups against each other, that is, Christians and Muslims. The crisis that started in Jos city quickly assumed a religious dimension and spread across the state, with greater intensity in the Northern Senatorial District.¹ The crisis has become a recurring decimal on the plateau, which has lost its pride as a Home of Peace and Tourism. Security agencies were blamed for the escalation of the crisis as they either aided the problem or failed to intervene on time until the situation got out of hand.² In 2008, Jos City witnessed another crisis involving Christians and Muslims over the results of the Jos North Local Government Council Election in November. By January 17th, 2010, the city witnessed another ethno-religious crisis, which started as an isolated disagreement in the city capital, which later turned into killings and mayhem that led to the destruction of lives and properties.³

During these entire crises Plateau State was not only destroyed in terms of political and economic structures, but also the social fabric of the city, as Christians and Muslims now have different settlement patterns. Similarly, there was a large number of people displaced and movement of people, both within and outside the state. The competition and conflict spring from who is an indigene and who is a settler and the privileges derivable from it.⁴ Several people were displaced, and houses, shops, churches, and mosques were all destroyed. The most painful one was the burning down of the Jos Ultra-Modern market, the largest in West Africa. As a result of this, many businesses were ruined, and traders had to flee to other parts of the country. The economic impact of the crisis was not limited to Jos, but the entire country.⁵ This sad reality informs the focus of this paper.

Geographical Description of Jos

Plateau State is located in the middle belt of Nigeria. It is located between latitude 8° 24' North and longitude 8° 32' and 10° 38' East. The state has a picturesque landscape with bare rocks. The state is remarkably higher than the surrounding plains. This topographic feature is a source of the state name.⁶ It also gives it a unique climatic feature compared to

¹ Kefas Gumar Manji, Felicity Fonkat Denan, and Monday Poten Watser, "A Critical Analysis of the Jos Crisis: 28th November, 2008 in Focus," *Kwararafa Security Review* 1, no. 2 (December 2024): 89–90.

² Adaji Ezra Akoyi, "Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on the Economy: A Study of Plateau, 2001–2010" (B.A. long essay, Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, 2012), 21.

³ Kefas Gumar Manji, "Migrations and the Development of Towns in North Central Nigeria, 1967–1996: A Study of Jos City" (M.A. thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, 2015), 84.

⁴ S. Goodings et al., *The Dynamics of Peace and Violence in Plateau State* (Port Harcourt: Foan, 2005), 7.

⁵ P. S. Dung, *The Politicization of Settler-Native Identities and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Central Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2005), 38.

⁶ Dung, "The politicization of settler", 39.

the surrounding areas. In Nigeria, there are two plateaus: the Mambila Plateau in Adamawa State and the Jos Plateau.

Geographically, Jos lies in the higher part of the high plateau of the North Central Area and is located on a latitude of around 4,000ft above sea level. Jos plateau is probably the most striking morphological features in Nigeria and it is also an erosion relic, which covers an area of about 3,000 square miles at an average elevation of about 4,200ft above sea level and its surrounded by high planes with latitude ranging from 2000-3000ft above sea level from the southern margin with gentle slopes. The highest surface of the plateau occurs in the sororundings of Niger and Benue, from where the headquarters of rivers flowing into lake chad, the Niger, the Bunue and the Gongolaradiate approximately North–West South and East respectively.⁷ This presents a rather interesting aspect in that there are no striking relief features like high ridges or rocky mountains that feature as water divide, rather the picture presented is one of an undulating swampy plain diversified by a few broken ridges and low granitic inselbergs. This headwater has, however, carved out narrow rocky valleys on the Jos plateau surface, and their descent to the surrounding plains is marked by picturesque waterfalls and narrows gorges which are fast cutting back into the plateau itself.

Jos Before the 2001 Crisis

The main economic activities of the Jos plateau people before the Jos crises was agriculture. The soil and climatic conditions of the state favor the production of exotic crops like Irish, potatoes, apples, grapes, wheat, barley, and vegetables such as cabbages, onions, tomatoes, carrots, green beans, etc. These crops are grown throughout the year. Rain waters them during the rainy season and is irrigated during the dry season.⁸ These crops are traded within other cities of Nigeria and even exported to other countries outside Nigeria. Popular food markets in the plains of the southern part of the plateau state constitute a major food-producing region. They produce crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, and yam. All these are produced in abundance in Wase, Bassa, Pankshin, Shendam, Langtang Local Government Council, and Bokokos produce Irish, potatoes, and maize. Jos and Bukuru are known for fruits and vegetables.⁹

Trade and Commerce

The location of plateau state in the Kano, Kaduna, Jos Industrial triangle, and its strategic communication network makes Jos a commercial nerve center for the North Central. These commercial activities expanded, and Jos became a commercial center serving as a market for areas like Bauchi, Gombe, and Yola in the North Eastern part of the country, Makurdi and

⁷ Bulu I. et al., Plateau State the Heritage and Hope, (Jos Government Printer, 2000), 72.

⁸ Interview with Hassan Umar, 45 years old, businessman, Terminus, Jos, March 3, 2025.

⁹ Interview with Pamtok, 58 years old, teacher, Tudun Wada, Jos, March 8, 2025.

Otukpo in the South.¹⁰ The creation of markets in various parts of Jos Plateau accompanied the expansion of the economic activities of commercial and industrial firms in the city. Those developments in the commercial and industrial sector had significantly influenced the expansion in the size of the population of Jos plateau, partly because more people migrated to the area to participate as industrial workers or workers in the formal sector. Jos city became inhabited by people of diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds from all parts of Nigeria and neighboring countries.¹¹

Transport and Communication

As already stated, Jos is strategically located at the heart of Nigeria, it is linked to other parts of Nigeria through railways, air, and road networks. These have facilitated the free movement of people and goods between Jos and Other parts of Nigeria. The busy roads that link other parts of Nigeria include Jos-Bauchi, Maiduguri, and Makurdi-Abuja.¹² Goods that came from the Eastern part of Nigeria include fruits, palm oil, and clothes, while from Western Nigeria are products such as native dresses, plastic containers.

Impact of the Jos Crisis on the Economy

The impact of crises on the economy of the Jos Plateau can never be overemphasised. The analysis centered on the following: Destruction of lives and properties, commerce and trade, transportation, security, settlement patterns, and distrust among ethno-religious groups.

i. Destruction of Lives and Properties

The 2001 – 2010 Jos crises destroyed both lives and livelihoods of millions of people, which left behind many widows and orphans who are living in abject poverty. People were killed and burnt to ashes. The dependents of those who died in the carnage are finding life difficult to survive.¹³ The 2001 crisis recorded that one thousand (1000) people were said to have been killed.¹⁴ A large number of cattle herdsman with their cattle fled out of the state to the neighbouring state of Bauchi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) That also created an increase in the cost of meat which before the crisis was sold within the range of four hundred (400) immediately rose to the range of Seven to Eight Hundred Naira (N700-800). Basically, because of the impact of the crisis.¹⁵

¹⁰ S. G. Best, *Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2007), 35.

¹¹ Interview with Jabir Abubakar, 50 years old, teacher, Bauchi Road, Jos, March 4, 2025.

¹² Interview with Ifeanyi Mbamalu, 60 years old, businessman, Zarmaganda, Jos, February 26, 2025.

¹³ A. M. Sokoto, *The Impact of Conflict on the Economy: The Case Study of Plateau State, Nigeria—Security, Social Services and Sustainable Development* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: University of Port Harcourt Press, 2005), 29–30.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, accessed March 8, 2025, <http://www.unher.org>.

¹⁵ Interview with Mallam Kabir, 60 years old, butcher, Abattoir, Jos, March 11, 2025.

Similarly, one of the major casualties of the Jos crisis, apart from human lives and livestock, has been residential areas. The large-scale destruction of worship centers and shops forced a large number of people to relocate, even outside the state, particularly the city capital of Jos, for safety. The impact of the destruction of these houses is that it rendered many homeless, and the government has never resettled such displaced victims throughout the crisis from 2001 – 2010. A great number of people had to abandon their houses, shops, and properties, while others sold what was left. Those in the estate business who invested in luxury houses for holidays in Jos and the environs are gradually putting them for sale.¹⁶ The crisis that lasted from 2001 – 2010 (Ten years) had a serious negative impact on agricultural production and food security of the state. With the outbreak of the crisis, agricultural activities were abandoned, crops were destroyed, and communities that were making substantial income from the sale of agricultural produce like Bachit in Riyom Local Government Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), Religious Bodies, and some spirited individuals.¹⁷

The crisis also affected the labor force of the state. Markets were destroyed, examples were the Bashar market in Wase Local Government, the yam market was negatively affected, and thousands of heaps of yam were unceremoniously burnt. Many were roasted, some burnt, and the rest smoked.¹⁸ At Bachit in Riyom Local Government, farmers could not go to the farm during the crisis period. In Rim village, the Fulani destroyed several maize farms that were yet to be harvested; some crops measuring about six hectares were completely wrecked with machetes. The story was the same in Wase, Shendam, Langtang South, and Barkin Ladi Local Governments, which were all leading food-producing areas of the state.¹⁹ In all these areas, farm produce cultivated by rival groups before the crisis was stolen, and some was vandalized. Most settlers, after being displaced from their host communities, could not go back to harvest their crops. For fear of being killed.

ii. Commercial and Trade

The strategic location of Jos and its communication network, as well as its agricultural products, have made the state into a commercial center of North Central Nigeria. But with the outbreak of the Jos crisis of 2001 – 2010, agricultural activities were abandoned, crops were destroyed, and communities that were the largest producers of most of the agricultural produce now depend only on relief materials just to survive. One of the important symbols of the commercial importance of Jos city was the central market which was commonly called Jos main market, this monumental

¹⁶ Interview with Akin Ojo, 45 years old, contractor, Zaria Road, Jos, February 23, 2025.

¹⁷ Sokoto, *The Impact of Conflict on the Economy*, 14.

¹⁸ *Daily Trust*, May 14, 2004, 13.

¹⁹ Interview with Dung Pam, 50 years old, farmer, Kuru, Jos, January 18, 2025.

edifices were built at the sum of twenty million N20,000,000.00 with a capacity of 4,290 stalls of various sizes, a parking space that can accommodate comfortably over 300 cars, 60 trailers, and over 200 buses at a time.

This ultra-modern market was burnt down by fire on the 12th, 2001 major ethno-religious crisis in the state. Billions of Naira worth of goods were destroyed in the inferno. To date, no report on the fire incident has been published, nor has the market been rebuilt, nor have the displaced traders been rehabilitated. Instead, the market has normally been relocated to all the major roads of the commercial areas of the city.²⁰ Other markets that were affected include Nsher Yam market, Yelwa grain market, Katako market, Kadarko market, etc. All these, among others, have brought down commerce and trading activities. In places, many traders have been forced to flee from Plateau State and that alone has crippled the economy of the state thereby affecting the revenue of the state.

iii. **Transportation**

The impact of the crisis has affected the transport sector negatively. A large number of goods and passenger vehicles were destroyed during these periods in the state. The prevalence of crises in some parts of the state sometimes makes certain roads dangerous to follow. The cost of transportation of goods and services escalate in such circumstances road blocks were usually erected along the main roads with stones and logs of wood examples of some of these road blocks were: between Langtang and Wase towns, Barkin Ladi and Mangu towns apart from the ones that are scared every corner of the Jos city. Passengers businessmen and women had to take longer routes to reach the main road to reach the main road of Jos City.²¹ The Yelwa Shendam road was blocked for incoming and outgoing vehicles for weeks. People had to trek for days, for hours, and some days just to reach their destination. Shendam Road was blocked for incoming and outgoing vehicles for weeks. People had to trek for days, for hours, some days just to reach their destination of Shendam, Wase, Kanam, Langtang North and South, Qua'anpan Local Governments.²²

An impact assessment of the crises in the state on the transport sector in Jos revealed the loss of cars that were burnt during the period, for example, A car dealer known as Pama Motors located along the Zaria bye-pass was a victim where the whole of his car stand were all set ablaze by the rioters. Many individuals also lost their vehicles, especially those who parked them in houses, churches, schools, and mosques, all were burnt by the rioters. Accurate statistics of the number of cars that were burnt

²⁰ A.M Sokoto, "The Impact of Conflict", 7.

²¹ Interview with Garba Habu, 48 years old, driver, Mangu, February 11, 2024.

²² J. G. Gobak, *The Role of Traditional Rulers/Community Leaders in Managing Conflicts in Plateau State* (paper presented at a workshop organized for traditional rulers in Northern Plateau State, February 2–3, 2011), 19–20.

down during the period under review will be difficult because of the lack of accurate data.²³

iv. Security

The history of policing and soldiering is among the oldest security institutions globally tied to the evolution of kingdoms. Armies were established to fight wars and secure any political territory from external enemies, while police were to maintain internal law and bring criminals under control, or to ensure the safety of lives and property. Today, the structures of political entities have changed there has been a shift to human security. This is premised on the individual citizen being the most important unit of analysis rather than the state and the governing elite. Peace in Jos, Plateau State, today has become the most scarce tropical commodity.²⁴ The persistence of crises in the state and its toll on lives and property has brought peace and security to the front burner. The method that the government has tried in the past cuts across all known strategies of peace-building law and order to invite the army, but the crises have persisted. Judicial commissions, administrative commissions, inter-religious councils, training and problem-solving workshops, peace conferences, state of emergency, and the like have not made Jos, Plateau State any better in terms of peace restorations. The people have tried their methods of ethnic cleansing, mass killings of the "enemy," denying access to roads, separation of markets and social gatherings, etc. In all these, peace is still elusive.²⁵

v. Settlement Pattern

The impact of the ethno-religious crises of 2001 – 2010 in the Plateau has displaced many people who became refugees in their homeland. Since the occurrences of the crises, there has been a change in the pattern of settlement along ethnic and religious lines. The crisis created a stratification among the people into two levels: First, vertically, with Muslims and Christians on one hand. Secondly, horizontally, each ethnic group forms an ethnic hegemony for security advantage.²⁶

Another impact of the crisis is the increasing segregation of residential areas along religious lines as people continued to relocate from neighborhoods considered to be unsafe to those areas with a great number of people of the same religious affinity. Thus, Unguwan Rogo, which once quartered the bulk of the off-campus students and staff of the University of Jos, has now become a danger zone for Christians since the September 2001 crisis. Other areas like Masallacin Juma'a and certain parts of

²³ Interview with Athaji Sani, 60 years old, car dealer, Bukuru, Jos, October 25, 2024.

²⁴ *Report of the Plateau Peace Conference*, 2004, 9.

²⁵ Ezra, "Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on the Economy", 48.

²⁶ Interview with Philip Pozo, 50 years old, civil servant, Tina Junction, Jos, February 20, 2025.

Nasarawa have also witnessed desertion by Christians, while the reverse has been the case for Muslim residents in Janta Adamu, Hwolshe, and parts of Tudun Wada. Residents may have adjusted in various ways just to conform to their ethnic and religious affinities.²⁷ This crisis-motivated adjustment, together with government intervention, may have helped in ensuring peace among the warring factions, but there is more to it than “change of settlement pattern”.

The question is what effect has the change of settlement pattern brought on the economy of the plateau state? Whichever way, the implication of losing specific customers on specific goods as well as total relocation of business could amount to either a low rate of turnover as the case may be, or a drastic fall in sales as the case may be for loss of customers, both situations have. Negative results on demand and supply control the flow of cash in an economy.²⁸ Once the cash flow in an economy is unstable, it opens up the economy to various forms of vices. Such was the impact of the 2001 – 2010 ethno-religious crises on the economy of Jos, Plateau State, as it relates to settlement patterns.

vi. Distrust Among Ethno-Religious Groups

“Distrust” is to see somebody as not trustworthy. Despite the fragile trust that had characterized the relationship between various ethnic groups in the Plateau state, particularly between the Hausa/Fulani and the indigenous ethnic groups. The occurrences of the crises stepped in as a catalyst to further enhance the division between these ethnic groups, distrust also created deep xenophobia among the ethnic groups. The indigenes of Jos, particularly the Berom, Anaguta, and the Afizere, have the basic fear of being outnumbered by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups and the possibility of becoming a minority ethnic group in the region under discourse. There is also another fear among the Plateau State indigenes of the possibility of losing the state to the settlers against the backdrop of the unfolding Hausa/Fulani agitation.²⁹ To the Hausa/Fulani, there is the fear that they might be rendered irrelevant in the traditional, economic, and political systems and will thus lose their prestige. Some of them have lived in Jos Plateau for many generations and may not even be able to trace their origin; should they be asked to, they have the fear of losing their identity. All these are borne out of the struggle for political and economic influence.

Apart from the fragile relationship among the plateau policies that was turned worse as a result of the crises, another point to note is that suspicion and distrust have also

²⁷ Interview with Chrierty Dachuwang, 55 years old, housewife, Dadin Kowa, Jos, January 18, 2025.

²⁸ Ezra, “Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on the Economy”, 50.

²⁹ Interview with Uche Christopher, 50 years old, teacher, Angwan Rukuba, Jos, November 12, 2024.

lulled commercial relationships among the policies to the detriment of the plateau economy at large and is also important to know that distrust among ethno-religious and political groups will have on the economy.³⁰ An informant also lamented that ever since the 2001 September crisis, businesses have never been the same again. He further stated that:

You really would not know who to blame for all the calamities in our businesses. We have witnessed serious capital decay, before the crisis, at least you could entrust a huge sum of money or goods worth millions of naira to those people, but immediately after the crisis everybody became a devil, nobody knows you or even remembers you delivering goods to them...this whole thing affected Our businesses.³¹

In a similar vein, another informant agreed that everybody is to be blamed for the troubles that befell the state and the lingering post-economic crisis. He also narrates: The atmosphere has not been friendly since the crisis occurred. One cannot trust somebody who has suddenly turned to a devil. Imagine the Jos Main Market, which was the backbone of the Plateau economy in terms of internally generated revenue, was suddenly gutted by fire. The Hausa/Fulani have blamed the Plateau indigenes. The indigenes, on the other hand, blame the Hausa/Fulani, thereby blaming them.³² The struggle over ownership of Jos, Wase, Yelwa, etc. Township which has been identified as one of the reasons for the occurrence of the Jos Plateau crises, Christopher one of the informants argued that for any meaningful development and economic stability to be achieved there must be peace, because people cannot do any business in an atmosphere of chaos for peace to be achieved in every society, the actors in such a society should be able to fine-tune their relationship through consensus particularly when a commercial interest is at stake.³³ Still on economic stability through consensus, if there must be economic progress, actors in an economy must avoid policies likely to lead to unacceptable drastic revisions in the economy's course.

Furthermore, specific interest groups feeling their interest are being threatened by specific instruments may be more vocal against these policies of proportion in relation to their contribution to the economy. This may truncate the developmental process to social tension; there is no possibility of resolving the crises, and the outcome of such crises is unknown.³⁴

³⁰ Interview with Mohamed Sani, 58 years old, trader, Congo Russia, Jos, November 12, 2024.

³¹ Interview with Sani Abu, 56 years old, trader, Congo Russia, Jos, November 12, 2024.

³² Interview with Adamu Bulus, 61 years old, driver, Yelwan Shendam, July 8, 2024.

³³ Interview with Christopher Caleb, 66 years old, trader, Wase, June 15, 2024.

³⁴ Interview with Chucks Obi, 63 years old, trader, Farin Gada, Jos, November 10, 2024.

Conclusion

The research explored the extent to which the 2001 – 2010 crisis affected the economy of the state and the country as a whole. Findings of the study demonstrated the geographical description of Jos, Jos, before the 2001 crisis, trade and commerce, transport, and communication. The study discussed the impact of the Jos crisis on the economy under the following. Destruction of lives and properties, commerce and trade, transportation, security, settlement pattern, and distrust among ethno-religious groups with its negative impact on the plateau state economy. It therefore concludes with the following suggestions as a recommendation to the Jos crisis.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study recommended that:

- a) Since the questions of the crisis relate to the issues of indigenous claims and land contestations, historical facts need to be used by the government to settle these quarrels between the state and federal governments.
- b) It should be ensured that those responsible for the circle of crises in Plateau State are identified and brought to justice using fair international trial standards.
- c) A need for confidence-building measures to incorporate stakeholders, and wide consultations with groups, is constantly being made by governments to help heal the wounds of the past.
- d) There should be a refrain by the community and, most especially, religious leaders from statements that are capable of inciting violence and hostilities amongst ethnic and religious groups in the state.
- e) There should be a constitutional provision for direct deductions from statutory allocations of local and state governments, highly prone to conflicts, for compensation of victims.
- f) There should be respect by “settler” groups for the norms, traditions, and culture of their host communities.

Bibliography

List of Informants

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	Akin Ojo	45	Contarctor	Zaria Road Jos
2	Adamu Bulus	61	Driver	Yelwan Shendam
3	Alhaji Sani	60	Car dealer	Bukuru Jos
4	Christy	55	House wife	Dadin Kowa Jos

	Dachuwang			
5	Christopher Caleb	66	Trader	Farin Gada Jos
6	Chuks Obi	63	Trader	Farin Gada Jos
7	Dung Pam	50	Farmer	Kuru
8	Garba Habu	48	Driver	Mangu
9	Hassan Umar	55	Business man	Terminus Jos
10	Ifenyi Mbamalu	60	Business man	Zarmaganda Jos
11	Jabir Abubakar	50	Teacher	Bauchi Road Jos
12	Mallam Kabir	60	Butcher	Abbatoire Jos
13	Muhammed Sani	58	Trader	Congo Russia Jos
14	Pam Tok	58	Teacher	Tudun Wada Jos
15	Philip Pozo	50	Civil Servant	Tina Jos
16	Sani Abu	56	Trader	Congo Russia Jos
17	Uche Christopher	50	Teacher	Anguwan Rukuba Jos
18	Akin Ojo	45	Contarctor	Zaria Road Jos
19	Adamu Bulus	61	Driver	Yelwan Shendam
20	Alhaji Sani	60	Car dealer	Bukuru Jos
21	Christy Dachuwang	55	House wife	Dadin Kowa Jos
22	Christopher Caleb	66	Trader	Farin Gada Jos
23	Chuks Obi	63	Trader	Farin Gada Jos
24	Dung Pam	50	Farmer	Kuru
25	Garba Habu	48	Driver	Mangu
26	Hassan Umar	55	Business man	Terminus Jos
27	Ifenyi Mbamalu	60	Business man	Zarmaganda Jos

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