National Integration and the Challenge of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors DDA and GAA designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors ROC and DED managed the literature searches. Authors FEE, UGP and VGU reviewed the final draft. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has witnessed crises which have threatened its peace and security since independence. In the last few decades, especially from the usurpation of administrative powers by the military, Nigerian societies have been undergoing difficult times vis-à-vis ethnoreligious conflagrations that impact on the nation's integration. This is as a result of the nature of interactions among the various amalgamated ethnoreligious and regional groups who pursue their objectives through different means to ensure they achieve their ends. These groups who have applied militant approach in carrying out their primary objectives include the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as well as the current Boko Haram sect (our focus), the Fulani Herdsmen crisis, the Niger Delta Avengers, and the Indigenous People of Biafra. The study, hence, examines the challenge of the Boko Haram

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insurgency to national integration in Nigeria. To analyze this heinous phenomenon, the study made use of secondary data which include the review of published textbooks, journals, reports, etc., and the social-structural conflict approach was adopted as the tools of analysis for the study. The paper shows that Boko Haram insurgency has posed a great threat to the integration of the Nigerian state, just as it has undermined Nigeria's development by causing the loss of human lives and economic resources, dislocation of people, and increased poverty rate. The paper, therefore, recommends the need for a context-specific and multi-layer conflict resolution, management and prevention initiative(s) encapsulating a broad-based local, regional and international collaboration between all concerned stakeholders; reforms in the nation's educational and infrastructural sectors; and the governments' need to place as their basic attention the welfare of the citizens through well guided policies so as to increase citizens' living standards and support human capital development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has witnessed crises which have threatened its peace and security since independence. This is as a result of the nature of interactions among the various amalgamated ethnoreligious and regional groups who pursue their objectives through different means to ensure they achieve their ends. These groups who have applied militant approach in carrying out their primary objectives include the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as well as the current Boko Haram sect, the Fulani Herdsmen crisis, and the Indigenous People of Biafra, to mention a few.

The emergence of Boko Haram has posed serious danger to the North-East region and Nigeria by causing massive death rates, injuries, national disintegration, and economic destabilization. Likewise, this has given the nation a negative global image. Boko Haram's attacks on churches and mosques are disturbing because they are intended to inflame religious tensions and upset the nation's social cohesion [1]. The sect has applied the use of various tactics among which are targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, hostage taking, shootings etc., in carrying out its attacks, particularly in the Northeast of Nigeria. Thereby, adopting the tactics and strategies of other international terrorist groups such as the Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). The failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance has hampered its national integration and led to mass poverty and unemployment. Again, this has resulted to communal, ethnoreligious and class conflicts that have now characterized the entire nation [2].

According to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) in [3], on a global scale, in 2017, Nigeria ranks as the 3rd most terrorized country in terms of terrorist attacks and terrorism based deaths. Boko Haram insurgency has caused an inestimable damage in every facet of life in Nigeria. In 2013, survey and interviews conducted by some groups in Nigeria indicate that poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and weak family structures contributed to making the youths vulnerable to radicalization [4].

This study, therefore, succinctly examines the insurgency of the Boko Haram sect which has resulted to violence, insecurity as well as its challenge to national integration. It discusses the origin of the sect. Also, the study examines the nature of national integration in Nigeria as well as the disparate ways the activities of Boko Haram impacts on the national unity and integration of the Nigerian state.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigeria as a multi-religious state has faced the problem of integration. Albeit various policies were implemented to resolve the issue of disintegration in the nation, the incessant religious and ethnic conflicts that occur have posed a threat to the nation's unity. The activities of the Boko Haram sect have done more harm to the Nigeria society and led to ethnic chauvinism, religious crisis, and the killings of innocent Nigerians in Nigeria's North-Eastern region since 2009. The challenges posed by the Boko Haram sect on the security of lives and properties in Nigeria, and the implication on the corporate existence of Nigeria is a serious issue which

motivates the study. Thus, the main essence of this study is to investigate the activities of the sect and its immediate effects on the country's integration. Therefore, since any study is aimed at providing solutions to problems, this research shall proffer solutions to the lingering insecurity issue in Nigeria.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nigeria is a plural society with different ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical groups. Prior to the coming of European traders, these groups existed as independent entities. They were engaged in trans-border relations in matters of trade, commerce, production, security and socio-cultural relations. But with the dawn of British colonial rule in Nigeria, these nationalities were forcefully unified. It is worthy to note that this unification was for British colonial socioeconomic and political advantages. This in turn engendered dimensions of pluralism, complexities, and corporatism [5].

With the diverse nature of Nigeria, [6] argued that the acrimonious existence among the diverse groups in Nigeria has become perennial and endemic in the nation political landscape. This has led to mutual distrust, inter-community conflicts, and has militated against the political stability of the country since independence. The integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifested in the minority question, religious fundamentalism, ethnic politics, dialectic resource control, youth restiveness, militancy, and the clamor for a (sovereign) national conference about the terms of the nation's continued unification [7]. On this note, for [7], scholars have acknowledged the fact that Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. Socially, ethnic politics and social conflicts in Nigeria have weakened the smooth integration, oneness, and togetherness among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. [8] argued that "in most African nations and indeed Nigeria, the absence of national identity and integration is caused by ethnic and cultural differences."

Though Nigeria has faced a series of ethnic conflicts, the activities of the Islamist group, Boko Haram, remain quite unique in all ramifications. [2] argued that the outbreak of the Boko Haram group since July of 2009 marked another phase in the recurring pattern of violent ethnoreligious uprisings in Nigeria. The sect claims responsibility for several bombings and other disastrous attacks in the North-Eastern part of

Nigeria, thereby placing the nation at the threshold of disintegration. The impact of ethnoreligious rivalry on the sustainable development and sustainability of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized [9].

[10] purported that the over 300 ethnic groups that had enjoyed relative cordiality in the past, even after a few years of civil war, have suddenly become "strange bedfellows" due to the insurgence of the Boko Haram in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. [10] further posited that the danger posed by this insurgent group to the corporate existence of Nigeria is aptly captured by Robert Kaplan in his 1994 article titled "The Coming Anarchy" in which he states that:

> …the country is becoming increasingly ungovernable…ethnic and regional splits are deepening, a situation made worse by an increase in the number of states from 19-30 and a doubling in the number of local governing authorities. Religious divisions are more serious. Muslim fundamentalism and evangelical Christian militancy are on the rise. The will to keep Nigeria together is now very weak [10].

Corroborating the above, [11] noted that "the philosophy of religious bigotry which motorizes the Boko Haram insurgency is undoubtedly at variance with the notion of peaceful co-existence, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state like Nigeria."

National integration is a relationship of community among people within the same political entity; a state of mind or a disposition to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual programs [12]. This is farfetched in Nigeria owing to the ideology of the Boko Haram sect and its intention to Islamize Nigeria against the will of the majority of Nigeria citizens. On this note, [13] asserted that the sect lacks popular support from the population and Muslim leaders. Boko Haram members are fully convinced that moral and social decadence has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. Hence, are resolved to rid the society of corruption and moral bankruptcy by establishing an ideal Islamic society with strict adherence to the Shari'a [14,15]. Boko Haram's ideology is premised on an extreme Islamic teaching that rejects most of Western ideas and institutions as un-Islamic which earns the group its popular name: Boko Haram literally meaning "Western education is Forbidden" [4,16]. The group's

destruction and the bombing of schools and also the abduction of school girls (the Chibok girls) is a clear evidence of its condemnation of education.

From being an obscure movement confined to North-Eastern Nigeria, the sect has emerged as the most palpable threat to the polity's continued peace and development [1]. [17] observed in this regard that while Nigerian national security is under threat, violence and transformation are having unprecedented implication for the stability and integration of the country. For [18], the sect has moved progressively towards militant extremism since 2009, regularly attacking foreigners, Christians and Muslims, Northerners and even residents of the capital, troops, and civilians, in an effort to destabilize the state. The fear caused by the Boko Haram bombing in particular, [14] wrote, has made residents in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria to migrate to other parts of the country leaving behind their homes, properties, and businesses.

According to [19], media reports showed that suspected Boko Haram attacks between July and December 2010 killed at least 85 people in 35 separate attacks in 4 states in Northern and central Nigeria, as well as in Abuja, the nation's capital. Furthermore, in 2011, at least 550 people died in 115 separate incidents. And in the first nine months of 2012, more than 815 people died in 275 separate attacks in 12 Northern and central states, and Abuja. Human Right Watch also asserted that since the group reemerged in 2010, armed gunmen have bombed or opened fire on worshippers in at least 18 churches across eight Northern and central states, killing more than 127 Christians and injuring others [19].

The study employs the Social-structural conflict theory. This theory explores the grievances that propel the emergence of the Boko Haram sect. The main theme of the social-structural conflict theory is that albeit certain fundamental psychological processes seem to determine an inherent human readiness or propensity for conflict, these processes do not operate in an automatic and inevitable fashion. Hence, the approach explains that individuals are born into group structures within the society where conflict may be socially widespread as a result of the struggles for scarce resources. These groups may be defined by race (apartheid South Africa), ethnicity (Nigeria, DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.), religion (Central African Republic, Egypt),

and so on. In this vein, the structural theory emphasizes the sense of group position and of group competitive threat or interests as prime motivators of conflict. Here, it is generally maintained that group conflict emerges from competing interests–of domination and exploitation; intergroup status differentials, convergent group boundaries, differential treatment of groups, and intergroup differential in social roles [20]–and that dominant groups develop and propagate ideologies that maintains and even legitimizes their higher social status, e.g., the institution of the Sharia in Nigeria's northern states, the Central African Republic (CAR) crises, the apartheid policies in South Africa, the US "Jim Crow", and so on. Consequently, ethno-linguistic, religious, and racial related conflicts emerge from (the threat of) competition and struggle over real or symbolic resources and privileges, rather than an irrational psychological disposition amenable to curing through proper socialization [21]. Also, the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient enough to invoke intergroup conflictual responses.

The racial regulations in apartheid South Africa explains this via the "color bar" where the overwhelming majority of white workers identified with policies of white domination and used their power as voters to press for discrimination in employment, racial reservation of many skilled categories of work, segregation in living areas and the inability to promote blacks to high ranking positions, underpayment and other forms of oppression. Thus, going by [22] argument, when these structural situations and conditions transcended the black racial group's ability to accommodate what is being done to them, they resorted to physical violence.

Furthermore, the social-structural approach takes into account the level or extent of acceptability and loyalty to group values, and these structures the way groups' value-systems are formed and acculturated, and these value-systems vis-à-vis group dynamics shape the way a group view other ethnic, religious, or racial groups. Little wonder the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) and the Rwandan genocide in 1994 where over 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutus, occurred. It is alleged that the Igbos and Hutus have undergone a period of conditioning, which made them view the Nigerian state as repressive and partial (thus, their desire to secede) and the Hutus to view the Tutsis, members of the minority ethnic group but which wielded state

power, as "cockroaches". This, according to [23], goes a long way to affirm the Babylonia Talmudic words adopted by Anaïs Nin in her 1961 work "Seduction of the Minotaur" that "we don't see things as they are; we see them as we are."

Some of the structural theorists include the renowned German scholars, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Ralf Dahrendorf, and the Norwegian peace philosopher, Johan Galtung. They opined that conflicts are generally characterized by weak political systems that do not allow for a diversity of voices; and weak socioeconomic structures that sanction the unequal distribution of power and resources. Other elements include inequality, high rate of human capital flight, hunger, religious tensions, etc. [24]. Karl Marx for instance, saw rigidly structured economies as divided along the bourgeois and proletarian classes within which the former had to be overthrown forcefully by the later for the sake of the fairer, yet differently structured societies–the Communist state. [25] believed structures caused conflagrations, but discerned substructures within society that could exert influence, or be influenced in ways that might vary from reactions of society as a whole. Some cases in point are the repressive regimes of particularly the Middle East and North African (MENA) region like the Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Idi Amin of Uganda, Siad Barre of Somalia, just to mention a few. In these countries, their leaders were accused of being patrimonial and were removed (some were even killed) leading to military takeover and tumultuous conflagrations engulfing them. This situation further resulted into problems of unstable political transitions like in Egypt and Libya; civil wars like in Democratic Republic Congo (DRC), Somalia and Uganda; ethnic cleansings like in Burundi and Rwanda; ethnoreligious tensions like in Central Africa Republic (CAR), Sudan, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Niger.

Different scholars like Edward Azar, John Burton, and Johan Galtung, it must be noted, have tried to describe and analyze in line with several other concepts, how political, social, and organizational structures act as sources of conflict. Amongst others, the structural victimization, social deprivation, and structural violence come to mind [24].

4. NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country.

This implies that though we belong to different castes, religions, and regions, and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. The essence of national integration is for enhancing nation-building. The major challenges facing Nigeria today are the threats to national unity as resource control, ethnic-based hostilities, and religious cleavages have enveloped national consciousness. Since the colonial era, efforts have being made to ensure a cohesive Nigeria by the introduction of different constitutions and policies. The basic rationale behind the promotion of national integration is to unify and regulate all political, economic and social activities in the state so as to eradicate any feeling of inferiority complex and ensure equitable distribution of the nation's income. By so doing, a society free from oppression, subjugation, suppression, dehumanization, war and other forms of political and socio-economic vices will be properly enhanced and controlled [26].

For the purpose of this study, the effort to integrate Nigeria would be succinctly examined in three phases: colonial era; military era; and civilian era.

5. COLONIAL ERA

The journey to establish the Nigeria began in 1807 when Britain abolished the Atlantic Slave Trade due to global clamor for its inhuman or racial derogatory characteristics, technological advancements, and subsequent industrial revolution in the eighteenth century across Europe [27]. By 1893, according to [5], "pre-colonial independent states such as Ijebu kingdom, Benin kingdom were integrated to form the Niger coast protectorate in 1893 and renamed the protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1900 to signify the imposition of colonial rule." The British brought together the various Nigerian people whose languages and cultures were different and began the long process of amalgamation that brought all the people under one political unit–Nigeria. For [5],

> …while the protectorate of Northern Nigeria suffered serious financial deficit because it had only one source of revenue, which is the age-long tradition of the imposition of taxes… the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria experienced budgetary surplus due to its multiple channels of revenue that were associated with trades in many commodities.

Consequently, under the British overlord stationed to oversee affairs in West Africa, Lord Friedrich Lugard, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated in 1914. This amalgamation was to bring about a level playing field for the simultaneous administration of the political and economic affairs of the Northern and Southern protectorates. This marked the beginning of the political unit called Nigeria.

Another effort to promote national integration is the 1946 Richard Constitution. The introduction of the Richard's Constitution factionalized the emerging spirit of nationalism through the creation of the three regions: Eastern, Western, and Northern [28]. The idea of the constitution was to integrate the hitherto isolated Northern Province into the political mainstream and to establish regional councils for regional deliberation.

The constitution had the following as its objectives:

1. To promote Nigeria's unity;
2. To promote the unity of the diverse elements which make up the country; and
3. To secure the greater participation of Africans in the discussion of their affairs [29].

Furthermore, the establishment of federalism in Nigeria has also been an imperative means of fostering national integration in Nigeria. The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 introduced federalism in Nigeria as an integrative mechanism [7]. Nigeria began with a formal federal constitution in 1954, which was decentralized to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups, each of the constitute federating unit, known then as regions operating its own regional constitution, police, civil service and judiciary [12]. It may not be out of place to note here as [7] described that "the colonialists must have being swayed by the opinion that such a system of government was necessary to preserve both integration and stability in a deeply divided country like Nigeria."

6. MILITARY ERA

Subsequent military governments in Nigeria since 1966 have employed state creation policy and National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program as mechanisms to ensure a cohesive Nigeria. State creation as a strategy for national integration began under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon in 1967 when he divided Nigeria into twelve (12) states. The rationale behind the creation of the twelve states can be seen from two major dimensions. The first rationale was the attempt to ameliorate minority fear and integrate minorities as unique components of a federating society. The second was that state creation attempted to balkanize the hegemony of dominant ethnic groups, in order to ensure the unity of a federating society. The creation of the states was appropriate because it succeeded in weakening secessionist tendencies that almost disintegrated the country under Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. The twelve states created were the "North Eastern State, North Western State, Kano, Kaduna, Kwara, Benue-Plateau, Lagos, Western State, Bendel, East Central State, Cross River, and Rivers" [30]. Furthermore, under the administration of Murtala/Obasanjo, the old twelve states structure was split into nineteen states in February 1976 with a new federal capital territory at Abuja. The creation of the nineteen states was meant to reduce minority problems, give room for even development and provide for a strong federal structure.

The Babangida administration was not an exception in the creation of additional states to ensure a cohesive Nigeria. To this end, he established the political bureau in 1986 which was to provide a political blueprint for Nigeria. The Bureau was given the latitude to discuss the various socioeconomic and political problems confronting the nation. Also, it found it imperative to discuss the creation of more states. The creation of a few additional states was important for the removal of a major source of political and social tension which bred inconsistency and frustrated the country's march towards national greatness. The additional states created were Akwa Ibom and Katsina states from Cross River and Kaduna states respectively [30]. [30] further added that,

> In creating the two States, General Babangida announced that the demand for new States will no longer be tolerated. However, in August 1991, the regime back-paddled and created nine new States which brought the number of States to thirty (30). The nine States were Abia, Enugu, Delta, Jigawa, Kebbi, Osun, Kogi, Taraba, and Yobe.

In addition to the created thirty states, General Sani Abacha in October 1996, further created six states, making a total of thirty-six states in Nigeria. These six states were Ebonyi, Bayelsa, Nasarawa, Zamfara, Gombe, and Ekiti.

A second policy implemented by the military regime to foster national integration in Nigeria was the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in the administration of General Yakubu Gowon established under Decree No. 24 of May 22, 1973. One of the expectation of the program was the posting of corps members to cities or states far from their homes or state of origin. Corps members were expected to blend with and learn from people of other tribal, religious and regional backgrounds. This would enable them better understand the cultures, perhaps language and the general lifestyle of their host communities [7].

7. CIVILIAN ERA

The effort at national integration in the civilian era has been clearly stated in the 1979 Republican constitution of Nigeria. This constitution spelt out the Federal Character Principle which has been adopted by the subsequent constitutions. The Federal Character Principle was first popularized in the late General Murtala Muhammed regime in his address to the opening session of the Constitution Drafting Committee in October 1975 [6]. The Federal Character Principle was adopted in the 1979 Nigeria constitution as a directive principle of state policy. This is clearly stipulated in section 14(3) of the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that:

> The composition of the government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.

In this light, as a strategy for national integration, the Federal Character Principle has been adopted to ensure the fair appointment of persons to high ranking government establishments and parastatals without any form of discrimination. In practice, this implies that in the appointment, promotion and postings of the Federal public servants, every state, ethnic group, religious or any other sectional group should be represented [31]. Little wonder [6] believed that the introduction of the Federal Character Principle in Nigerian state was to foster unity, peace, equal access to state resources and promote the integration of the fewer advantage states for better improvement and good condition of living in the country. It also fosters loyalty and gives every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging in the nation [5].

The 1999 constitution also encouraged national integration in Nigeria. This is provided in Chapter 2, Paragraph 15(2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The section of the constitution states that: "Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, while discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic, association or ties shall be prohibited."

8. THE CHALLENGE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: THE ORIGIN OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

The Islamic sect, Boko Haram, is commonly known as an anti-Western group which sees Western education or civilization ('Boko') as forbidden knowledge; as in, a curse ('Haram'). Its official name in Arabic is Jama'atu Ahlissunna Lidda' a Watiwal Jihad, which means "people committed to the propagation of prophet's teaching and Jihad" [14,15]. The origin of the Boko Haram sect, [15] stated, has been traced to a Shabaab Muslim Youth Organization in 1995 with its founder as Lawan Abubakar. As [15] further noted according to this origin, the leader, having traveled to the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia for studies, was succeeded by one of his disciples, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. After taking over control of the sect, he transformed the sect's doctrines and abandoned the cleric's visions, and came up with the revivalist, Salafist Boko Haram doctrine. Yusuf contended that Western education, culture or modern Western science had conveyed nothing but poverty and anguish to the North-Eastern region and was therefore forbidden knowledge in Islam.

In this light and in view of the activities of other Islamic fundamentalist groups in the world, the sect saw as its major concern the creation of an Islamic Caliphate across the North-Eastern

region, and later expansionist quests across Nigeria. This desired Caliphate system, one that existed before the Peace of Westphalia, will be organized under strict adherence to the Sharia laws in its purest and undiluted form. This will bring its own form of development and as the sect believes, the establishment of Islamic government would address the misfortunes of society including corruption and bad governance. On this note, Yusuf subsequently became increasingly critical of the government and official corruption.

Just as [15] wrote, between 25th and 30th of July, 2009, widespread pandemonium engulfed at least four States of the Federation–Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe–in what was called the 'Boko Haram uprising'. There were protracted riots and heavy exchange of fire-power between the insurgents and the Nigerian military. With the efforts of the Nigeria armed forces, the said leader of the sect was captured and transferred to the Police's custody in Maiduguri where he died along with some of the members of the sect. Police officials, however, claimed that he was shot while trying to escape or died of the wound he sustained during a gun battle with the military [19]. After Yusuf's death, his followers went underground for close to a year before surfacing with attacks on police stations and military barracks to avenge the killing of their leader and other members of the sect in July 2009. The group also plotted and executed jailbreaks to free members. Again, it demanded the prosecution of Yusuf's killers, the release of its detained colleagues, restoration of its devastated mosques, and compensation for members killed by the Nigerian troops [15].

Sequel to the demise of Mohammed Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau (aka Darul Tawheed) emerged the supreme leader of the sect in July 2010. He served as deputy leader to Yusuf. He did not deviate from the radical and extremist orientations of the sect. As matter of fact, Boko Haram grew enormously cold-blooded, violent, and destructive against anyone who did not subscribe to the group's harsh doctrine. It was, also, less open to dialogue. In 2015, under Shekau the group adopted the name "Wilayat Ghard Afriqiya", translated as, 'Islamic State West African Province', to show its allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) [14]. Hence, heralding it as an African regional branch of IS and giving it an international outlook. This outlook was evident in its pursuance of an aggressive scheme to institute the Sharia and destabilize the Western-

oriented systems of government in Nigeria's North-Eastern region. It attacks did not just distress Nigeria but some of her neighbors like Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and other countries that make up the Lake Chad Basin Commission. This prompted these nations to set up the Joint Task Force to collaboratively tackle the Boko Haram menace in the region. More so, [15] maintained that

> … the group's act of kidnapping 276 school-children from their school in April 2014 brought the group, the little town of Chibok in Borno State, and particularly, the nature and extent of terrorism in Nigeria to the limelight. The incident was trending on the social media platforms. A trend was even created on Twitter, #BringBackOurGirls. This was followed by mass protests on an international scale by individuals, and groups to condemn the action and to call for a global effort to search for, rescue, and reunite the schoolchildren with their families. Also, a non-profit organization was created owing to this called the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign, and it championed many protests in Nigeria.

Shekau was reported to have been killed multiple times in different raids by the Nigerian Armed Forces–in 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 [32,33,34,35], but every time the Nigerian authorities announced his demise he released a video or an audio to broadcast his existence and firm control over Boko Haram affairs. Thus, making a mockery of the government's position on his death and perpetuating the myth that Shekau was unbeatable.

But if Shekau has truly not gone quietly into the night and untouchable in the fight against the Nigerian military, he certainly proved to be very vulnerable to threats from within his organization. To address this issue, [36] purported that

> Less than 18 months after he led Boko Haram into high-profile partnership with the Islamic State, the Iraq- and Syria-based caliphate shunted him aside in favor of a new representative in Nigeria. In an interview published in the Islamic State's propaganda magazine in August, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the son of the late Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf, was named the new leader of Boko Haram.

Shekau rejected this ouster and insisted that he was still in charge. Hence, this led to a tough leadership rift with the group. At the core of this crack were disagreements over ideology, tactics, attacks, and the group's relationship with the Islamic State. Shekau was too erratic and violent. He even attacked fellow Muslims and mosques. This provoked dissent within the ranks of Boko Haram [36]. With Shekau's stronghold onto the reins of power and Barnawi's hereditary claims to the group's leadership, there seemed to be a stage set for a protracted intra-jihadi power tussle. Little wonder there were reports of different factions of the Boko Haram group (some that were responsible to the Islamic State and other that were answerable to themselves), and clashes between these rival Boko Haram factions [37].

9. IMPLICATIONS OF BOKO HARAM ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The effect of Boko Haram violence has led to a constant threat to Nigeria's fragile unity and peace with the fault lines of disintegration emanating and growing daily along religious, tribal and ethnic lines [38]. The sect's condemnation of Western education and its intention to establish an Islamic state across Nigeria has made Nigeria to be divided into two poles which hindered national integration. To this end, the absence of national identity weakens government structures and institutions, thereby creating a national crisis and political instability [8].

The activities of the sect have caused the loss of a vast wealth of human lives and the massive migration of people especially non-indigenes from the Northeast where the sect attacks. According to [23], "the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria has led to the displacement of over 1.3 million citizens in the northeastern region." The destructiveness of the conflict is epitomized in the death of Nigerians in gargantuan proportions. For instance, according to Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno state, the Boko Haram sect accounts for almost 100,000 deaths [39].

The activities of the sect have also negatively affected the socio-economic structure of Nigeria as it has slowed down the national economic growth and development since no investors would prefer to invest in a crisis-ridden nation [14]. In this light, according to [14]:

When insecurity and terrorism is the case like in Nigeria, investors, who are to facilitate industrial growth and employment generation, would avoid such unfavorable crisis-ridden business environment, thereby, impoverishing the economy… according to the 2011 World Investment Report (WIR) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Nigerian economy lost a whopping N1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) owing to Boko Haram's activities. FDI flows to Nigeria have been depleting over the years. According to the CBN statistics… FDI flows fell to 4693.83 million USD in 2014 from 5608.45 million USD in 2013, and further fell to 3064.17 million USD in 2015. These statistics are quite similar to the World Bank's where FDI flows fell from 8841.11 million USD in 2011 to 7069.93 million USD in 2012, 5562.87million USD in 2013, and to $4655.85 million USD in 2014… Thus, a downward slope in the FDI flows is the only available reality.

The attacks of the sect have also led to the closing and abandoning of shops by some traders who reside in the affected states. [14] wrote that:

Former Minister of Information, Mr. Labaran Maku, purported that Boko Haram's attack on Kano State especially is so significant because it affected the multi-billion naira, Kano Textile Market, otherwise called the Kanti-Kwari Market, regarded to be the oldest and biggest textile markets in sub-Saharan Africa, and as such it affected the foundation of economic and social well-being of the northern region.

Also, [40] noted that there has been the reduction of people's patronage of product from the Northern region because of rumors that members of the Boko Haram were planning to send poisonous product from their region to other parts of Nigeria. This according to him has affected 97% of business in the region [40].

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme which was introduced as a mechanism for national integration has faced setback particularly in the Nigeria's Northeastern region owing to Boko Haram insurgency. This is clearly seen in corps members' refusal to serve in the North when they are posted there. Those who

were posted to the Northeastern region have on several occasions sought for redeployment. According to [41], reports have it that those posted to Kano requested to be posted to a state outside the North. Some of them specially asked the authorities to stop further posting of corps members to Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, and Niger until the insecurity in the region is over [41].

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

Nigeria is a pluralist society with a wealth of ethnic nationalities and religious groups amalgamated over a hundred years ago. These disparate groups have since lived together, though there has been a secessionist attempt by the South-Eastern region in the late 1960s owing to poor governance and political marginalization. However, in recent times, the sense of unity and cohesion among the different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has been threatened, to a large extent, by the emergence of Boko Haram. The ideology and activities of the sect has led to a disintegrated Nigeria. The nation is a torn across a number of ethnic and religious poles where ethnic chauvinism and religious-based crises occur which have led to the killings of innocent Nigerians. The sect is both a serious challenge and manifestation of more profound threats to Nigeria's security and has destabilized Nigeria's North-Eastern region. Christians are suspicious of Muslims, Muslims are disdainful of Christians, and people are scared of going to markets, Mosque or Church because they know not when the next bomb will go off. Even the internally displaced people's (IDP) camps are not spared from the Boko Haram rampage. Consequently, as Duke et al (2017) purported, with the upsurge of Boko Haram terrorism and the inability of the military to curb the activities of the sect, the Nigerian state may decline to what Thomas Hobbes called "the State of Nature"; a state of untamable insecurity, lawlessness, brutal killings, and economic downturn.

Unless the Nigerian government effectively tackles with concrete remedial actions the factors which have bred aggression of the sect, national integration in Nigeria would not gain fruitful result. The sect will continue to destabilize the North-Eastern part of Nigeria and its attacks would eventually spread to other parts of the country. The government should, therefore, address the issues of corruption, poverty, encourage investment in the north, promote government transparency and civic dialogue as this would bring about a sustainable solution to the violence and insurgency against the Nigerian state and citizens and would to a large extent foster national integration in Nigeria.

More so, for a clear understanding of the Boko Haram sect, it must be realized that further studies need to be carried out in coming to terms with the trends of the different factions of Boko Haram. It is believed that some of these factions are loyal to IS while some are not. This affects any plan the government may have to conduct negotiations or peace talks with the sect because while it may be dialoguing with the supposed Boko Haram group, another so-called Boko Haram group may be causing havoc somewhere else. Also, the relevance of the Boko Haram crises on the political, socioeconomic, ethnoreligious, and cultural frame of the nation begs for more studies on visual analysis of not just the Boko Haram sect but on other conflict trends in the country like the Fulani herdsmen-farmers clashes in the Middle-Belt region. This trend of conflict may even be linked to the Boko Haram crisis, in that, one of the Boko Haram factions may choose to adopt a different strategy and tactic to propagate and actualize its ideal; station ground soldiers while simultaneously ravaging villages and communities (remember some of the major reasons for the leadership rift in the first place are the extremely violent ideas, tactics, and attacks even on fellow Muslims by Shekau). Additionally, the Boko Haram has posed to be a thorn in the flesh of the Nigerian military with insurgent having access to sophisticated weaponry. Thus, scholars and the military must clearly unravel the sources of small and light weapons proliferation to understand so as to cut the sect's supply.

From the review of various kinds of literature on the issue of Boko Haram, it is pertinent to say that the activities of the sect have posed a threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria. Therefore, to effectively curb the activities of the sect, the Federal Government should apply a pragmatic approach. The following recommendations will help to curb the activities of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria as means to sustain its federalism and maintain its national integration:

1. The government should address the issue of poverty and unemployment in the Northern part of Nigeria. This can be done by introducing socio-economic

empowerment programs which would create jobs for the jobless youths who are used as tools by the sect's leaders to carry out attacks.

2. There is the need for a context-specific and multi-layer conflict resolution, management and prevention initiative(s) encapsulating a broad-based local, regional and international collaboration between all concerned stakeholders

3. There should be developmental reform in the aspect of education and infrastructures in the Northern part of Nigeria. The building of schools and making them free will pave way for the poor Almajirai to be educated.

4. The Nigeria security agencies should be modernized by training their personnel on how to go about in search of members of the sect in order to avoid extra-judicial killings and other forms of human right abuses of the members of the sect and other innocent Nigeria citizens. Those suspected to be members of the sect should face prosecution and if found guilty, should be given capital punishment.

5. The Federal government should find those responsible for sponsoring the movement of the sect and make them face prosecution as cutting the sect's source of income would make it almost impossible for them to purchase sophisticated weapons to carry out further attacks.

6. The Nigerian government should provide funds to upgrade its intelligence gathering gadgets. The fund should be spent on sophisticated weapons and technical equipment which can be used to trace the location of the sect, detecting and denotation of bombs effectively.

7. In order to eliminate or reduce the rate of corruption which is part of what caused the aggression of the sect, the Federal government should strengthen the already established institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) which have been set up to fight against corruption in Nigeria.

8. Nigerian government should continue to collaborate with external states such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom which have succeeded in Fighting against terrorism as information sharing, intelligence and lessons learned from the past would be of help.

9. More personnel should be recruited into the military to boost the military morale to suppress the Boko Haram sect. Also, the government should take cognizance of the welfare of the troops. They should be well remunerated and scholarships should be awarded to the children of the fallen heroes. These would boost their morale in fighting the insurgents.

10. The Federal government should encourage national conference which would consist of representatives of different ethnic groups and create a platform for inter-religious dialogue for harmonious co-existence among the groups.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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