ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISIS AS A THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM

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ABSTRACT

Federalism is a formidable mechanism for managing plural societies. However, ethno-religious conflicts have tended to impact the effectiveness of the federalist logic in Nigeria. With different development plans by the government towards sustaining the nation, little or no results seem to be forthcoming because Nigeria is continuously weighed-down by ethno-religious burdens. This paper explores the impact of ethno-religious conflicts on Nigeria's federalism and sustainability, with greater emphasis on the increasing saga of the Boko Haram. The paper argues that ethno-religious crisis not only undermines the effectiveness of federalism to foster national unity and security, but also threatens the stability of the federation and sustainable development. This is connected with inherent contradictions in the dispositions and effort of ethnic and religious leaders of the country. To arrest degeneration, ethno-religious anomalies must be strategically managed in order to sustain peace and development in Nigeria and the country's democratic federalism.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Religion, Boko-Haram, Federalism, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The federal framework has continued to gain increasing recognition and respectability since the formal introduction of federalism to Nigeria in 1954 by the Lyttleton Constitution. This is obvious putting into consideration the civil war engagement by the state with the secessionist Biafra to keep the country together as one indivisible entity. This is possible because, federalism is generally seen as a formidable mechanism for managing plural societies (Omotola, 2006). The core challenges and putative benefits of federal governance have been identified as unity, democracy and development. And of these elements, according to Suberu (1990), Nigeria has arguably been most successful in coming to terms with the dilemmas of maintaining unity in diversity. Nigeria's struggle for democracy and good governance has so far been pursued within the federalist logic, though under a perverse practices condition of the successive military regimes with no exception to the ethno-religious and political crises. Most notable of such perversions relates to the recent Boko Haram and the recurring bomb attacks in Nigeria. Scholars and political commentators have argued that it is an attempt to impose religious ideology through terrorism (see Bagaji, et al, 2012). Religion has manifested itself as a potent force in the political development of the Nigerian state from time immemorial. More so, it is very difficult to separate the state from religion-voting behavior and many times ascension to political offices is circulated on the basis of religious affiliation (Kukah, 1994; Danjibo, 2009; Omotola, 2010d). In a religious country like Nigeria, it is expected to be at peace with itself and all those living within its

sovereign territory. Paradoxically, recent studies have revealed that the role of religion in Nigeria is in negative light than its positive contribution.

That Nigeria's federalism has over the years been confronted with a serious crisis has been an object of scholarly literature. But, in spite of these contributions and developments, very little is known as regards to the role of religion and ethnicity to the survival of federal democracy and sustainable development. It also includes the contents of the constitution especially with regards to Section 38(1-4) of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which stipulates that every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief. At the same time, the Nigerian Constitution of 1999(as amended) prohibits state religion which is tantamount to power sharing among the federating units, through an essentially open, transparent and participatory process, but unfortunately the current situations in Nigeria most especially in the northern regions devoid constitutional means of religious worship. Attempt to forcefully impose religious ideology and belief on Nigeria's secular society is not new. The leader of Maitatsine sectarian group attempted it in 1981 and eventually led to large scale uprisings (Bagaji, 2012). Nigeria has witness several religious related crisis since 1980 till date.

From the above, the impact of ethno-religious rivalry as it is evident in the increasing bombing activities of the Islamic sects (Boko Haram Movement) on sustainable development and sustainability of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. People have been so religious to the extent that they are ready to die for it by defending it at all cost (Adedayo, 2010). Base on this fact, we shall consider ethno-religious bigotries as they affect sustainable development of the country most especially, since the inception of Nigeria's fourth republic in May, 1999.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

In the course of the discourse, the debate as to the relationship between religion and ethnicity is pertinent. In what follows, this section explores these concepts, underscoring the relationships between them.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity as a concept is relatively new which can be seen as an intricate phenomenon that describes different perceptions. According to Osaghae (1992), ethnicity refers to a social formation resting upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. Ethnicity denotes a group of individuals who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to share common characteristics which differentiate them from other collectivities within a society. Distinct cultural behaviors are developed, and ethnic groups can be identifiable in terms of religion, politics, occupation, or language. Ethnicity is social in nature because it is based on cultural differences. Ethnic culture is one of the important ways people conceive of themselves, and culture and identity are closely intertwined. As a social construct, ethnicity can be regarded as the employment of ethnic identity and differences to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict and cooperation (Osaghae, 1995).

Despres (1975) defined ethnicity as largely a subjective process of status identification. Hence ethnic groups are formed to the extent that the actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for the purpose of interaction. Ethnic

groups are fluid in composition and subject to changes in definition. Ethnic groups tend to have myths of common origin, and they nearly always have ideologies, which may nevertheless be of highly varying practical importance. Ethnicity is the quality of belonging to an ethnic group. But the question of what is an ethnic group, as opposed to any other kind of group, is one which permits no simple answer. Here, someone may want to mistake ethnicity with race. Ethnic groups are not race because ethnicity can be more precisely defined or even more logically independent than race. Race is a socially constructed category that draws on observations of physical differences among different groups of individuals. Ethnic groups can include various racial categories. In similar view, ethnicity can be conceived as an interaction or relationship that exists among people of different ethnic groups who decides to base their relationship on the difference, such exist when two or more ethnic groups relate with one another, which normally brings about competition on issues like power or wealth (see Fawole and Bello, 2011).

Be that as it may, one can say ethnicity is the contextual discrimination by members of one ethnic against the others in the process of competition for national resources. Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as being culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. When cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element. Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. In this way, it has a political, organizational aspect as well as a symbolic one. The transformation of ethnic identity in the democratization process has engendered a vicious cycle of intergroup conflicts across the state (Omotola, 2008).

Religion

There are serious problems with the definition of religion. Scholars have not been able to reach a consensus definition of religion. Little wonder Egwu (2001) argued that religion is a difficult subject of inquiry including attempts at its definition and conceptualization. Be that as it may, it is the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto. According to Adeniyi (1993), religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. This implies that religion deals with norms and rules, a behavior, process or structure whose orientation is supernatural i.e. emanated from God and which must be followed by the believers. In a different perspective, Ejizu (1993) opines that religion is man's intuition of the sacred and ultimate reality and his expression of that awareness in concrete life. In a similar vein, Connelly (1946) defines religion in terms of the sacred and the spiritual. He asserts that Religion originates in an attempt to represent and order beliefs, feelings, imaginings and actions that arise in response to direct experience of the sacred and the spiritual. As this attempt expands in its formulation and elaboration, it becomes a process that creates meaning for itself on a sustaining basis, in terms of both its originating experiences and its own continuing responses.

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (see Geertz, 1996; Peter 1998; Ayinla, 2003). Religion is seen as one of the systems of faith that are based on the beliefs in the existence of a particular God or gods. The concept has also been defined as a particular interest or influence that is very important in one's life. According to Egwu (2001), it can be

understood in two ways. First, in a material sense, it refers to religions establishments (that is institutions and officials) as well as to social groups and movement whose primary interests are found within religious concerns. There is also the spiritual sense which deals with models of social and individual behavior that helps believers to organize their everyday lives. In this sense religion has to do with the idea of supreme, supernatural realities and the sacred; as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy and the ultimate conditions of existence.

From the foregoing discussion, someone will not be faulted of defining religion as a system of relation which linked man to an ultimate being or ultimate value epitomized in God. The sum total of all harvested definitions of the concept of religion contains an element of controversy, because it implies that religious, and thus perhaps deity/deities, are created by humanity and not the reverse. A less contentious meaning of religion might be the sum total of answer to problem of our relationship with the universe. Religion can be likened to the word ligament. Ligaments connect muscles and bones. So, the root word means 'to connect, to bind, to tie together. Religion literally means, continuously tying it all together. It is not therefore, an obvious deduction that that which is supposed to help us tie us together should not be used to tear us apart?

Be that as it may, with over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups, belonging to several religious affiliations, Nigeria has remained a multi-ethnic nation state since independence. It has been grappling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity on one hand and the problem of ethno-religious conflicts on the other. This is true because ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to a number of ethno-religious bigotries on a recurrence basis with high rate of implications on sustainable development. Conclusively therefore, religion can be define in a neutral way as the psychological process which continuously reconnects what we know and what we believe to our thoughts and actions. This definition does not differentiate between good and bad but it is up to us to make our religion good.

THE TREND/MANIFESTATIONS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN NIGERIA

A glimpse of some of the ethno-religious conflicts include; the Maitatsine sectarian crisis in 1981, the Kaduna and Bulunkutu (Maiduguri) in 1982, the Ilorin Muslim-Christian riot during Christian Easter procession of March 1986, Zaria and Funtua religious riots of March 1987. In October 1990, there was a clash between Christians and Muslim in Kano. The Christians invited a German Christian preacher Reinhard Bonnke to Kano but the Muslims felt cheated for the fact that Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim preacher was previously denied to preach in South Africa. As a means of retaliation, it resulted into crises left behind a casualty of over 500 lives and million-worth property (Adebayo, 2010). Another Kano civil disturbance of December 1991 and Jos crisis of April 1994 among several others cannot be overemphasized (see Adesoji, 2010; Salawu, 2010; Yusuf Bagaji, 2012). But the most worrisome account so far is the recent large scale of unimaginable bomb attacks by the Boko Haram movement which is escalating every day. Boko Haram modus operandi is related with the Maitatsine sectarian group in terms of philosophy and objectives coupled with its organizational planning and armed resistance. Despite the bill passed on anti-terrorism by the Nigerian National Assembly on February 17, 2011 cum the effort made by President Jonathan to negotiate with the Islamic sects to seize fire proved abortive and now spreading from the North-Eastern Nigeria to other regions. The taxonomy of *One Nigeria* is being questioned due to the fall-out of Boko-Haram chronicle in Nigeria. This is the revival of the spiteful call for a Sovereign National Conference by implication if care is not taking and for the motives and intention of Boko Haram, it can no longer be belittled or abandoned.

This paper is relevant at this point because of the increase rate of ethnic and religion intolerance in the contemporary Nigeria most especially at the northern region and its impact on sustainable development. Ethno-religious intolerance has become more violent with more devastating results using the ethnic militias as the executors of ethno-religious agenda. Against this background, it then means that from time immemorial, many parts of Nigeria have become theaters of war, characterized by an increase in number of ethnic and religious crises. By ethno-religious bigotry, it means a situation where there is prejudice, lack of cordiality or unwarranted suspicious in the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another in a society (see also Abdullahi and Saka, 2007). Little wonder that Nigeria's struggle for sustainable development and democracy has been so far pursued within a federalist logic because Nigeria is a society of multifarious ethnics and religions. Therefore, in a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse society like Nigeria, with some forms of contextual discrimination, relationships between people may be characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear as it is the case among the ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria. In fact, this mutual suspicion and lack of cordiality among the various ethnic components explains why ethno-religious conflicts have become a permanent feature of Nigeria as far back as 1980s to date (see Salawu, 2010). It is interesting to aver that ethnicity and religious bigotry has become a fulcrum of inadequacy to have a true federalism on the account of cultural autonomy, self-determination, local political autonomy, language and above all religious superiority which is an important confirmation in the chronicle of Boko Haram.

The increase in the wave of ethno-religious bigotry in Nigeria can be linked with the birth of fourth republic. Nigeria successfully joined the comity of democratic nations May 29, 1999 and since then ethno-religious conflicts have been on the increase due to reasons not unconnected with the freedom provided by democratic rule. For instance, during the Oro Cultists in Sagamu, Ogun State in July 1999, a Hausa woman was accused of intruding into the procession of the occultist with their gnome. It generated a lot of squabble which eventually resulted to a full-blown crisis. Many Hausa and Yoruba majorly innocent people died. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed to check the crisis. Immediately the Sagamu crisis was controlled, a reprisal killing erupted in Kano. This claimed many lives and property worth billions of Naira were destroyed. As a mark of vengeance of the massive killing of Yoruba tribe in Kano orgy, another crisis erupted in Lagos. The O'dua People Congress (OPC) moved against the Hausa traders in 'mile 12 market' and turned the place a battle and killing field for two consecutive days (see Adebayo, 2010).

The introduction of Islamic Legal Code (popularly known as Sharia law) by Ahmed Yerima a former governor of Zamfara State in October 1999, greeted the pockets of unserious protest at the initial stage but the hitherto calm fire was ignited when Governor Mohammed Makarfi tried to introduce Sharia Law in Kaduna State in February 2000 between the Muslims and the Christians because both religion are almost at par in population. According to Salawu (2010), the duo went for their swords and many were slain in cold blood. All the crises events presented above and which occurred before and since the coming of democracy in 1999, most especially the insurgence of Boko haram with its attributed devastating effects on the sustainability of Nigeria federalism remain stark reminders that the conflict 'time bombs' around the country are always steaming and ready to explode at the slightest provocation. From the examples of ethno religious conflicts cited, it can be seen that there is no sharp distinction between ethnic conflict and religious conflict. What this means is that a Conflict that begins as an ethnic conflict may end up as a religious crisis and vice-versa. This explains why ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are always devastating in their effects (Jega, 2002:36; Salawu, 2010; Omotola, 2009b).

From the above manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, it is safe to state that sustainable development and democratic sustainability will be a mirage if it continues. This is true because no remarkable development can take place in the atmosphere of crises, high level of intolerance, chaos, bombing lives and properties (majorly Christians and Churches respectively), and disturbances. Foreign investors cannot invest in a country where daily hullabaloo of ethno-religious crises destroying infrastructures is the order of the day (see Ayinla, 2003; Falola and Bello, 2011). How can a country develop where able innocent men and women that are relevant potentials in the scheme of development of the nation are wasted? Besides, development cannot takes place in a country where security of lives and properties are not guaranteed and where dusk-to-dawn curfew is imposed as a strategic way of checking conflict. The resultant effects of curfew will negatively impact the country's economy because industries, hospitals, financial institutions, markets, schools etc. are affected. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria also affect political development. Money that is supposed to be spent on developmental projects will be accrued and voted for maintaining security, rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation during and after crises. All these cannot in any form transform to a healthy sustainable development.

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY, ETHNO-RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM

The fear of Boko-Haram can be said as the beginning of wisdom in some states of the northern parts of Nigeria. The word 'Boko-Haram' is a tension to almost all Nigerians and also sends waves of fear into others psyche because the nocks and crannies of Nigeria feel the presence of the word. As ubiquitous the word 'Boko-Haram' is in Nigeria, not many has much information about it. It seems that the group – Boko Haram – might not have explicitly given the name to itself but rather the name could have come from the external view of its basic beliefs (Adesoji, 2010). It is imperative therefore, to explicate the two words i.e. Boko and Haram in understanding the ideology and philosophy of the group epitomized as a movement (see also Omotola, 2010c).

In Hausa language, the word Boko is an equivocal term which means either book, western or foreign. The word haram is an Arabic derivative meaning forbidden, ungodly or sinful (Danjibo, 2009:7; Adesoji, 2010:100; Bagaji, et al, 2012). Literally, the corollary of the two words connotes book is sinful. But from a deeper understanding of the two words we could assert that forbid everything Western and thereby, western education is sacrilegious and ungodly, hence be forbidden (Danjibo, 2009). The inference one can make from the above is that, the movement is not only characteristically opposed, but completely antithetical to Western education, Western culture and modern science. Alternatively, it embraces and advocates the propagation of and strict adherence to Islam by all and sundry regardless of anyone's personal wishes. From this objective, Boko-haram seeks to impose *Sharia* across all Nigerian states (see Bumah and Adelakan, 2009:40; National Life, 2009). Judging from the forgoing, the intent of the movement is aimed at replacing modern state formation with the traditional Islamic state, because Western values run contrary to Islamic values (Omotola, 2009a). The philosophy of the Boko Haram movement implies that the moral decadence and evil in the society is as a result of the embrace of Western education and civilization, and in order to ameliorate the evil that this moral decadence has caused, an Islamic society must be entrenched by destroying modern political institutions and infrastructures.

Little wonder, in actualizing their (Boko-Haram Movement) aim, churches, the police and armed forces formations, government establishments and properties are the target of destruction by the Islamic sects. The movement also has an

ideological belief that any member who fight and die either by suicide bombing or by other means in the process of the struggle of establishing *sharia* state by destroying the modern establishment of government would enter *Aljanna* meaning paradise or heaven (this can be supported by the report 'we're doing God's work' credited to an unidentified suicide bomber in the Punch of June 21, 2012 pg. 8). The movement enlists their members among the Qur'an trainees whose daily survival is basically on taking alms – Almajiris – and some well-connected and influential figures in the society who either an active member or sponsor. Unfortunately, the government has failed to name and bring the cabal behind the movement to book. However in Nigeria, many national leaders tend to revert to their ethnic cocoons or exhibit their political affiliations in times of national crisis, rather than helping in proffering viable solutions anchored strictly on the national interest. Specifically in the context of the current Boko Haram crisis which has cause general unrest in the country, not a few have wondered what the perceived silence of elder statesmen in the country portends for the polity. In essence, what roles are the likes of Generals Yakubu Gowon, Mohammadu Buhari, Abdulsalami Abubakar, Olusegun Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babangida, Domkat Bali, Jeremiah Useni; Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Chief Ernest Shonekan, Chief Edwin Clark, Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar, Pastor Ayo Orisejafor, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, Alhaji Maitama Sule, among others, playing in quenching the current tension in the country, particularly issues relating to the persistent Boko Haram criminality in the North?

CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT ON NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM

From the forgoing, the rationale behind the emergency of Boko-Haram movement in Nigeria has been analyzed. But the question that comes to mind is, what are the reasons attached to the high increase bigotry of the activities of Boko-Haram at this time most especially in the current administration headed by Goodluck Jonathan and the bane to the sustainability of Nigeria's Federalism? For effective discussion of the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on sustainable development in Nigeria, there is need to put into consideration the role of the leaders (ethnic, religious and even political) vis-à-vis federalism.

Federalism involves organization of the state in such a manner as to promote unity while at the same time preserving existing diversities within an over throbbing national entity. This is one of the reasons while federalism represents a unique form of governmental arrangement. Implicit in this is that federalism is a system which mediates the potential and actual conflict that often arises from the heterogeneity within a political entity. Nigeria federalism is problematic in the sense that many factors have reduced it practicability. Among are the problems of ethnicity, resource control, ethno-religious crisis, electoral crisis, legitimacy crisis and so on. In this context, the effect of ethno-religious conflict on sustainable development and Nigeria's federalism shall be fully discussed.

First and foremost, it must be noted that ethno-religious conflict does more harm to the federalism and development than good. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system. What we are witnessing through the Boko Haram insurgency could be likened to a transfer of aggression from one grievance to innocent Nigerian (see also, Omotola, 2010b). Ethnicity, religion and federalism are inter-wined. Experience has shown that they are more likely to be together than being separated. This is because federalism is the only system of government that accommodates and satisfies the desire for a national identity. Coincident with the retention of separate local identities and for a concomitant distribution

of governmental power nationally and locally. This informed the premise why Long (1991) defined federalism as an institutional arrangement aimed at addressing government problems that border on maintaining unity while at the same time preserving diversity. In a situation where ethnic and religious bigotry results into conflicts, it will engender civil stress, lack of cordiality which hinder development and impose fear of division (see Omotola, 2009b). Federalism, where it is truly practiced is believed to be capable of mediating the potential and actual conflicts arising from the heterogeneity within a nation-state (Ojo, 2006). To solidify this argument, it will be sufficient to assert that federalism is a compromise solution in a multinational state between two types of self-determination. The determination to maintain a supernatural framework of government which guarantee security for all in the nation state on one hand, and protects the self determination of components groups which seek to retain their individual identities on the other hand.

A major cause of what we now see as ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization nepotism and religious intolerance (Salawu, 2010). In every nation (including Nigeria), there is no complete and unanimous agreement on how wealth, power and status are to be shared among individuals and ethnic groups. There is no agreement also, on how to effect necessary changes and reforms. This is because, there are diverse interests associated with the different groups and individuals and in which case, some groups will have their aims met, while others will not. What this means is that conflicts (ethno religious ones inclusive) usually occur when deprived groups and individuals attempt to increase their share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant values, norms, beliefs or ideology. Thus, in Nigeria and going by the various examples of ethno-religious conflicts cited earlier in this paper, there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, ethnicity and religions, which has consequently led to the rising jingoism and militancy of various ethnic and religious movements and of paramount concern in this paper the Boko Haram Movement. It is interesting to note that the overall consequence of this is the escalation of various ethno-religious conflicts that are witnessed all over the country today which are meant to correct any perceived form of marginalization, oppression or domination.

The failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance may have hampered national integration which has led to mass poverty and unemployment. This has resulted into communal, ethnic, religious and class conflicts that have now characterized the entire Nigerian nation. Poverty and unemployment have therefore served as nursery bed for many ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria because the country now has a moral decadence to negative exposure to technology and warped societal values. This has left the hopeless poor people to be used by warmongers and belligerents as mercenary fighters. What this means theoretically is that poverty and unemployment increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed (suicide bombers) for a given course at token benefit. This explains why all the Boko Haram operations (most especially the executors of suicide bombing) that ever occurred in Nigeria have a large turnout of unemployed and illiterate people (including the under-aged) as fighters by the master minders and sponsors who are highly placed and influential.

More so, institutional decay and weak Nigeria's security agencies is another reason for the escalation of Boko Haram violence. The existence of politicization of the security is leading to most of the myriads of problems in the country majorly by hoarding of sensitive information from security agencies in the country. Even though the recently passed Freedom of Information Bill was meant to ease the difficulties and hazards of investigative reporting, it has not been effective due to the typical attitude of Nigerian politicians and those in position of authority. Despite billions of naira being expended in the name

of security votes by both the federal and some state governments in the North-East to deal with a common threat to national survival, peace and security, scores of Police and military officers are nursing various degrees of injuries mostly sustained during attacks by the radical Islamic sect. Instances where both soldiers and the Police chose to run for their lives or removing their uniforms to disguise as civilians during Boko Haram operations instead of protecting the people is no longer news, particularly to residents of the volatile affected parts (including Maiduguri, Damaturu, Alkaleri, Azare, Bauchi, Abuja, Madala, Kaduna, Zaria, Kano and Potiskum) where such attacks have recorded high casualties on the part of the security personnel. The most frightening scenario is that the morale, zeal, patriotism and the desire to sacrifice their (soldiers and police) lives in the 'war' against Boko Haram has gone with the fear of official corruption in the system. The truth is that the country's security forces do not have the type of sophisticated weapons and mind what the Boko Haram members possess (see Bumah and Adelakan, 2009; National Life 2009). We cannot blame the security agents because of the greed and corruption that has eaten deep in the system. Why will they sacrifice their lives when the so called army Generals, Inspector-General of Police, DIGs, AIGs and CPs are intimidating them with their alleged loots; the loots that supposed to cover their welfare and hazards? Since leaders have failed to address institutional rot which has become less powerful and good, most especially in the North and the country in general (see Aleyomi, 2011), there is possibility to continue in the Boko Haram terrorist acts which if not urgently addressed might cause disunity and national disintegration.

Another reason for the level of insecurity and high rate of Boko Haram insurgency is the People Democratic Party (PDP) convention that permits zoning arrangement of its offices (see Azazi, 2012). Arguments pertaining to zoning in the PDP were another key factor that hiking the flame of Boko Haram activities in the country. Many supporters of Jonathan 2011 presidential ambition in and out of PDP denied the existence of zoning in PDP Constitution. The visit to some leading traditional rulers by Southern politicians and State Governors to canvass support for Jonathan portrayed the level of betrayal on the side of the Northern traditional rulers as collaborators in what was considered as a plot to deny the North its right under the PDP zoning arrangement. Also, the various ethno-religious disturbances were critical and potent force for socio-political instability, they portrayed the gross inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the state security, security of lives and property could not be guaranteed. Be that as it may, the growing incidence of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria is sufficiently worrisome and if they are not stemmed now and completely, the operation vengeance slogan which became a catchword before the 2010 Jos crisis indicates that memories from such conflict could create future conflicts.

THE WAY FORWARD

The frequency of ethno-religious conflicts and their impacts on the socio-economic life of the Nigerian people have always challenged sustainable development and have thus, demanded for one form of management strategy or the other to put them under control. What is often common to Nigeria government in conflict management is the use of coercive and judicial strategies which have been ad-hoc and were not organized (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005; Salawu, 2010).

In view of the aforementioned facts, there is a need for iota integrated and more articulated programmes of conflict resolution and conflict prevention which should be able to effectively resolve and prevent ethno-religious conflict as the case may be. Hence, the paper avers the following conflict management suggestions that will help to resolve or prevent ethno-religious

conflicts with a significant effect of Boko Haram in Nigeria as means to sustain its federalism, maintain national integration and peace building which have greater relevance on sustainable development sustainability.

As a first step towards solving the problem of ethno-religious conflicts and the insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria, given the serious response by nations around the world to terrorism related events, the Nigerian government needs to embark on comprehensive and drastic measures that aim at addressing the remote and immediate causes of the Boko Haram attacks. Efforts must be made by the government of Nigeria to enter into international collaboration with those countries like USA, France, United Kingdom, Italy among others, that have first-hand and direct experience of terrorism and have been able to proffer credible and scientific solution of reducing the menace to a reasonable extent over the years.

Government at all levels must encourage effective and functional platforms for ethno-religious leaders, so that through them establishment of a network for conflict prevention and management would be easily possible. This proposal is necessary because in Nigeria, the various political, religious, traditional and ethnic leaders in most areas of conflict hardly sit together to discuss the causes of ethno-religious violence and how to prevent future conflicts. What this means is that, in Nigeria, with a bad history of ethno-religious conflicts, leaders hardly meet to build bridges of understanding that could lead to the establishment of mutual confidence that would sustain a multi-ethnic society. Thus, rather than being part or initiators of the solution, they (leaders) often become part of the conflicts, which they supposed to resolve. The religious scholars and leaders should be used as agents in their various Mosques and Churches, communities and organizations and be foremost in promoting equality, social justice, tolerance, brotherhood and peaceful co-existence in the northern parts and the country as a whole. In addition to this, government should establish a National Council of Traditional Rulers. This will serve as a move in the right direction, which will go a long way in building bridges among religious and ethnic divides. It is however suggested here that such body should be expanded to include ethnic leaders, opinion leaders and religious leaders, while the government should strengthen the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NlREC), which is already in existence.

Nigeria government should be pluralistic, representative, and just in their treatment of the citizens. It should discourage all forms of discrimination, neglect and marginalization in dealing with ethnic and religious issues. The government should also target to reduce poverty among Nigerians so that the reservoir of recruits for ethno-religious conflicts will be punctured. There is serious disconnect between governments and the citizens most especially the poor. There is dereliction of responsibility on the side of the leaders and the fact is that an angry-hungry man is vulnerable to all social vices. Poverty in the country should be reduced to a barest minimal through job creation, access to education and health to the people. By so doing, it will reduce the rate of people who are get recruited as member of Boko Haram because an idle hand is a tool in devil's workshop.

There is need for the presidency to appoint a coordinator for Northern affairs as a mark of enlightened leadership and courage. There is need to articulate a national response to the socio-political and economic divide between the south and the north which the PDP convention that permits zoning arrangement of its offices has greatly cost the entire country. Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any one class is made to feel that society is in an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe (Nigeria Tribune 2012). Appointing a coordinator for the northern affairs is a response to a collective conscience and to the facts on the ground

because, significant inequality anywhere and regional inequality in particular is socially corrosive. In seeking for solutions, there is a need to be open to new ideas no matter how uncomfortable they may seem.

Nigeria needs to embark on grassroots education that target youth that easily become willing tools in the hand of Boko Haram patrons. Youth and grassroots education is by no means a gradual process, properly packaged and delivered. This will disabuse the mind of Nigerians from scheming that Nigeria is a secular nation and downplay morality. Hence, Nigerians can afford to go to bed with their two eyes closed and recover from its negative headlines to that of *one nation, good people*. Besides, Nigeria government should strengthen the existing institution of Public Complaint Bureau in each state of the federation through appropriate legislations, so that the parties in dispute will be able to showcase their grievances for on-ward transmission to appropriate government agencies for necessary action. In particular, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Political Parties, National Youth Council, Nigeria Council of Women Society (NCWS) among others should be strengthened in the various assignments as bridge builders that will discourage the spirit of division among Nigerians and foster oneness which is necessary for nation building and sustainability of federalism and development as contained in the Nigerian Constitution.

Above all, government should not embark on any form of dialogue and/or negotiation because the act (dialogue and negotiation) is morally wrong and politically suicidal. Government exists to protect, provide and secure lives and properties of her citizen. To dialogue or negotiate with terrorists (Boko Haram), who has turned murderers and subverted the authority of Government by killing, maiming and destroying the lives and properties of others in the name of fighting against modern/western education, fighting for Allah (God) and a systematic way to Islamize Nigeria is out of the way. Good governance requires that government should discharge all their functions to the citizens wherever they reside to do legitimate business not to negotiate or dialogue with those who kill and destroy properties. Announcing and extending a hand of fellowship by attempting to dialogue with faceless terrors will amount to government pampering and promoting lawlessness in the country. It will be erroneous to say that Federal Government should dialogue with the Boko Haram movement as it did with Niger Delta Militants. Niger Delta Militants' agitation was logical and needful because it was based on genuine reasons, although, they made use of illegal means at some point cannot by any standard equate to Boko Haram. Niger Delta Militants agitated for the control and management of resources in their territory. It was not an agitation to subvert governance or to kill innocent people.

More importantly, the leaders and the led should depoliticize the security challenge and people should not hoard any sensitive information from security agencies in the country. If people had been giving information to security agencies in the past, the current wave of terrorism in the northern part of the country would not have festered because it would have been nipped in the bud

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has examined ethno-religious conflict as a bane to sustainability of Nigeria's federalism with a critical look at the Boko Haram insurgency/movement and its rationale. It examines the dynamics of terrorism in the context of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria which remains insufficiently explored. The paper narrowed the knowledge gap of Boko Haram movement by reviewing their philosophy and objectives, spectrum of strategies, dimensions and networking in Nigeria. It argues that the

fugitive roles of ethno-religious leaders if urgent attentions are not imbibed to correct it would lead the country to a dreadful end. It also reviews briefly the manifestations of ethno-religious bigotry in Nigeria and argues that the causes of ethno-religious conflicts are multi-dimensional. Some of the causes mentioned and discussed in this paper are among other things: institutional decay; the failure of Nigerian leaders to establish good governance; the zoning arrangement of offices in PDP; poverty and corruption; and the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and religious intolerance.

While the described problems are largely internal to the country, they are also a reflection of the broader problem of nation building and sustainability of Nigeria's federalism and sustainable development. The paper argues that climate of insecurity that Boko Haram insurgency has created might discourage investors to invest in the country. It is a truism that an insecure, crisis –and – violence - ridden polity can never attract foreign investment. No investor knowing fully well that the environment is a security-risk would venture his capital there. And where the polity is scaring away foreign investment, where lives and potentials are wasted every day, where government spends excessively on keeping and making peace, reconstruction of destroyed institutions and infrastructures, the economy and sustainable development become stagnant and democracy dividends equally become an illusion. On that note, the paper proffers the management of ethno-religious bigotry in Nigeria and avers that these management strategies among others must be put into consideration if not the sustainability of Nigeria federalism and sustainable development resulting from ethno-religious bigotry will be a mirage.

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