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Ethno-Religious violence in Nigeria: The Impact of Boko Haram on Religious Crisis

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Dedication: To my late Mother – Ogunkuade Olusola Theresa – who slept in the Lord on
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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
CHAPTER ONE.....	5
Introduction: The Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Nigeria.....	5
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
Literature Review on Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria	8
Conflicts in Nigeria: overview	8
Conceptual Perspective: Ethnicity, Religion and Conflict.....	9
Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria.....	10
The Root Causes of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria	13
The Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria.....	16
Conclusion	17
CHAPTER THREE	18
Objective Triggers of Ethno-Religious Conflicts and the Emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria.....	18
Historical Overview of Radical Islamic Groups before Boko Haram.....	19
Examining the Different Arguments for and Against the Emergence of Boko Haram.....	20
The Boko Haram Deadliest Years (2009-2019).....	24
Presuppositions and Assumptions of the Work.....	24
Boko Haram's Affiliate Terror Groups	25
CHAPTER FOUR	28
Analysis of the Multifaceted Impacts of Boko Haram on the Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria.....	28
Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria Being a Secular State	28
Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Fragile Federalism	29
Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Developmental Agenda.....	29
Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Social and Religious Cohesion	30
Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Food Security	30
The Copycat Effect of Boko Haram from Other Deadly groups	31
Conclusion	31
CHAPTER FIVE	32
Conclusion and Recommendations	32
Reflection.....	32
General Conclusion.....	33
Recommendations.....	34
Opportunity for Further Research	36
Bibliography	38

Abstract

Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation made up of diverse ethnic and religious practices. Although on the surface, it appears that Nigeria is ethnically and religiously cohesive, but deep down, it is a nation grossly divided along ethnic and religious lines. One major problem Nigeria has faced, both in the past and in present times, is embedded in how to adequately abridge the agitations of all her ethnic groups and maintain a religiously harmonized society. Nigeria's history has been laden with a number of ethno-religious conflicts.

The most recorded ethno-religious conflicts have taken place in the North, from the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s, to the need to entrench Sharia in the North which is one of the fundamental ideological elements of the current Boko Haram sect. Boko Haram was believed to have rode on the matters of religion (Islamic fundamentalism), the issue of marginalization, poverty, illiteracy and other vices known to have been the trigger for ethno-religious conflicts. This work therefore examines Ethno-Religious violence in Nigeria and the impact of Boko Haram on Religious Crisis in the country. The assumption and presuppositions were that Boko Haram's activities were triggered by a lingering or an unresolved ethno-religious conflict from the past.

However, evidence from different literature reviewed and the ideology of the group suggests otherwise. From 2010 till date, Boko Haram has committed itself to asymmetric warfare that imitate and adopt the procedure and strategies of global Salafists movements such as Al-Qaeda. The general notion therefore is that Boko Haram is an Islamist group, just like every other terror organization in the world that have their allegiance to Islam. Though many within the Muslim community across the globe have spoken against the sect, the idea that Boko Haram has religious dimension to its creation and also, precedence in other similar groups across the globe, cannot be denied.

Therefore, for Nigeria to totally eradicate issues relating to ethno-religious and other conflicts in Nigeria, and towards ensuring a lasting and sustainable peace and development, I concluded and recommended that it is expedient that the government, alongside religious leaders, address the matters of Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria. If there are parts of the Holy Book (Quran) breeding Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic leaders – with support from the government – have the right to educate people by putting the texts in the right context.

Also, government must address social, economic and political challenges facing the entire country. Resolving these matters will require that government focuses on improving its capacity at all levels by ensuring that there is rule of law, a functioning justice system, inter-faith dialogue, unemployment reduction, engaging the youths in positive ventures, provision of infrastructure such as good roads, potable water, electricity; and social services such as good healthcare system, quality schools at all levels, et cetera.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Nigeria

Nigeria today, stands as the most populous nation in Africa and the most populous black nation in the world. With a population of about 200 million people, and a population forecast of 401.30 million people by the end of 2050, Nigeria is set to become the third most populated country in the world, after India and China¹. Apart from these population figures, Nigeria is also a multi-cultural nation made up of diverse ethnic groups and religious practices. Although on the surface, it appears that Nigeria is ethnically and religiously cohesive, but deep down, it is a nation that is grossly divided along ethnic and religious lines, due to several reasons, some of which will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

There are no accurate data to adequately validate the number of ethnic groups that makes up Nigeria. The figures there today at best, from certain research efforts pegged the numbers at over 250 ethnic groups. However, there is a common knowledge that these ethnic groups are broadly spread among the Hausa-Fulani of the North, the Yoruba speaking people of the Southwest, and the Igbo of the Southeast². The generic name for these major ethnic groups, is coded in the term *wazobia*³. The minor ethnic groups on the other hand, are people of different ethnic backgrounds found in the northern and southern parts of Nigeria⁴. One major problem Nigeria has faced, both in the past and presently, is embedded in how to adequately abridge the agitations of all her ethnic groups and make sure each group is adequately represented in the system of things. At the bottom of the nation's challenges is the problem of national integration. National integration is defined as "the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country."⁵ The bane of Nigeria's progress and development today no doubt, can be linked to lack of cooperation and oneness among its numerous ethnic groups. What seems to pervade the Nigeria space is the problem of marginalization; ethnic rivalries, practice of nepotism, et cetera.

The political leadership in Nigeria has failed over and over again at incorporating the diverse nature of Nigeria's ethnic groups into national consciousness, and this has had some negative effect

¹ United Nations 2019 Projections

² Mustapha, 2006

³ WaZoBia – This code means – to come – in each of the three major ethnic. Wa is come in Yoruba, Zo means come in Hausa while Bia is come in Igbo. This term is geared towards the unification of the three groups and finding something common.

⁴ Galadima, 2010

⁵ Akah (2018, p. 12)

on the socio-cultural wellbeing of the people. This is why minority groups in Nigeria have been struggling for equality, fairness and full participation in the baking and sharing of the ‘national cake’⁶. Being ethnically conscious in itself is not bad. The fact that there are many ethnic groups in a society or a nation, does not by design mean that there must be conflict between them due to the issues of differences⁷.

However, at the root cause of every conflict among multi-ethnic/cultural societies, especially for a nation like Nigeria, is leadership. The amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern protectorates by Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard in 1914 brought about the involuntary unification of culturally and historically diverse ethnic groups, some of which had been rivals and overlapping imperialists in the pre-colonial times.⁸ Apart from this obvious oversight on the part of the colonial masters, various military and democratic leadership dispensation have failed to properly manage Nigeria's ethnic diversity.

The other leg of this discourse focuses on Nigeria's religious diversity. There are different angles to which religion have been viewed. Many protagonists of religion today hold the view that religion is what connects humanity to its creator. The protagonists further argued that religion is man's believe and relationship with God⁹. It is opined that religion remains one subject area difficult to argue, including attempts at its definition and conceptualization¹⁰, whilst some are of the opinion that the reason for not having a unified definition or meaning of religion may be adduced to the fact that the object of the study is not subject to observation and empirical proof hence varied speculations by different disciplines¹¹.

Most religious adherents in Nigeria are divided among the two major religions in the world namely, Christianity and Islam. The Christian side of the Nigerian religious group is seen in five main groups: Roman Catholic, Mainstream Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and syncretistic groups that blend Christianity with indigenous religions. The Muslim side is evidenced in the Sufi brotherhoods, comprising the Tijaniyya and the Qadiriyya¹². Nigeria's traditional religion, which

⁶ Rindap and Mari (2014, p. 90); National Cake is a Nigerian parlance for national treasure (revenue)

⁷ Tanko (2007); Earlier study by Saghae and Suberu (2005) had earlier given credence to the same view as Tanko's.

⁸ Ajayi and Alagoa (1980)

⁹ (Akah, 2018)

¹⁰ Egwu (2001)

¹¹ Uzoigwe and Kanayo (2016)

¹² Paden, 2015

had been in existence long before the advent of Islam and Christianity, forms the third leg of the major religious tripod in the country. It has however taken a back seat since colonization and aggressive westernization of the country.

A cursory look at the historical inroad of religion into Nigeria can be traced back to the exposure of the core northern communities to Islam through the trans-Saharan trade, and the success of Christian missionary enterprise in many of its southern part¹³. Although at independence, Nigeria officially became a secular state, however, this does not negate the fact that Nigeria's north is predominantly comprising of Muslims, while Nigeria's south and east are predominantly Christians.

Nigeria's religious diversity can also be seen along the line of region and ethnicity. For example, the Hausa ethnic group in the North have predominantly more Muslims than Christians. The West on the other hand which comprises of the various Yoruba tribes can be said to be divided between Islam and Christianity. This region of the country has been deemed as the most religious tolerant among the six geo-political zones of the country. There have been isolated spates of religious intolerance and discrimination in South-West, however, in the recent times both the adherents of Islam and Christianity have been said to live together and have one way or the other, put their religious differences behind them which has fostered a great deal of social cohesion among the various tribes. Another insight on the religious diversity in the Southeast and the North-Central zone of the country is that the Igbos in the South-East and the Ijaws in the South are 98% Christians, mostly Catholic, and 2% African traditional religions¹⁴. The traditional religion forms the minority group in Nigeria

As seen from the foregoing, the effects of the religious and ethnic diversity in Nigeria on the everyday life of an average Nigerian cannot be overemphasized. Amongst some of these are marginalization, inequality, discrimination and nepotism. The latest of these problems is the emergence and continued thriving of Boko Haram and its operations, and the question is whether the creation of the deadly terror group, has any ethno-religious undertone. This exactly, is what this body of work seeks to examine.

¹³ Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji, 2009

¹⁴ Bamidele, 2018

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review on Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Conflicts in Nigeria: overview

Nigeria's history is laden with several conflicts; but chief amongst them is the Nigerian Civil War, which took place from 1967 to 1970. The war was between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the then Eastern region – a region of the country that had earlier declared self-government and secession from Nigeria, and chose for itself a new name: "Biafra Republic."¹⁵ There are a number of factors that have been adjudged as the reasons behind many conflicts in Nigeria. Herbert and Husaini identified socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, political factors and environmental factors as prominent.¹⁶ Subsumed in these factors are various reasons why conflicts have remained unabated today in Nigeria.

Subsumed under socio-economic factors are: unemployment, inequality, corruption, poverty, lack of access to basic needs of life; et cetera. Under the socio-cultural factors is Nigeria's large and heterogeneous population that cuts across two major religion (Islam and Christianity) and traditional beliefs¹⁷; ethnicity (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) and other sub-ethnic communities that forms the minority group, et cetera. The political factor is witnessed via the political elites who wield their political might to divide Nigerians along religion, ethnic and regional lines. These elites do this to garner support from Nigerians during and after elections.¹⁸ Lastly, the environmental factor is seen over increasingly scarce land for grazing and water, particularly in the north-east and north-central zones of the country especially during dry seasons. Many Farmers-herders conflict being recorded in Nigeria are usually attributed to this environmental factor.

¹⁵ History documented that the root-cause of the Nigerian civil war was borne out of the maltreatment that the Igbos were subjected to by the Hausas living in the North. Although earlier events like the 1966 coup could also be traced to it, however, the ill-treatment of the Igbos in the North began the animosity that would later trigger the Nigerian Civil war. Even though there were several attempts to broker peace, everything fell on deaf ears.

¹⁶ Herbert, S. & Husaini, S. (2018). *Conflict, instability and resilience in Nigeria*.

¹⁷ The coming of Christianity and Islam have greatly reduced the adherents of the traditional religion system in Nigeria. Many of its adherents have either been converted to Islam or Christianity. However, the remnants thereof still remain in the trado-cultural beliefs of its adherents.

¹⁸ Most elections held in Nigeria followed the ethno-religious undertones. Politicians use their religion to canvass for votes and appeal to certain region of the country where they believe more votes could come from.

Aside from this general overview, there are also conflicts that are associated with individual tribes or ethnic groups. For example, the Warri city oil-ethnic conflicts, the Ife-Modakeke, the Aguleri-Umuleri, Igbide-Emede, the Tiv-Jukun, the Kano Maitasaine conflicts, the youth restiveness and militancy in the Niger Delta, terror upsurge from Boko Haram, and many others, are all associated with certain parts of the country¹⁹. Hence, bearing in mind that conflicts at times cannot be dissociated from heterogeneous settings like the Nigerian state, its nature, dimension, consequences and management, differ from country to country. One of the major problems Nigeria is still contending with is how to adequately manage her conflicts.

Conceptual Perspective: Ethnicity, Religion and Conflict

Ethnicity

It will be pertinent to briefly examine the conceptual context of the three most important subject areas in this study which are: Ethnicity, Religion and Conflict. According to Nnoli, ethnicity is described as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups²⁰. Uzoigwe and Nwadior viewed ethnicity as the recognition and pledge of importance to acclaimed kinship among a particular group of people and considerable differences among others²¹. It has also been argued that ethnicity can be a building block, as it can also be a great hindrance to nation building. In the case of Nigeria, the latter has been the case. Ethnic plurality or diversity has been adjudged as a cog in the wheel of progress of the nation.²²

Religion

It is hard to conceptualize religion. There are as many views on what religion entails as there are religious adherents. However, Linda argued that the most popular conceptions of religion today – if one takes as evidence not only academic work but also discourse of politicians, legal professionals, journalists, and other walks of life – is of religion as belief²³. She stated further that being religious has to do with believing certain things; for example, belief in the existence of supernatural beings or forces. Lindberg in his study highlighted Jonathan Smith's position that

¹⁹ Ikeke, M.O. (2014). *The National World and Violent Conflict in Nigeria: An Appraisal*

²⁰ Nnoli (1978) *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu

²¹ Uzoigwe and Nwadior (2013).

²² Ugboaga (2015)

²³ Linda (2011). 'Five concepts of religion'

conceptualizing religion is at best created in the minds of scholars²⁴. Smith argued that conceptualizing religion is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization²⁵. He wrote further that religion has no independent existence apart from the academy. Smith's belief is that the concept of religion, and its study, is an academic construction emanating from a modern European context.

Conflict

Conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people²⁶. Under natural circumstances, it is almost impossible for a group of people to dwell together harmoniously without conflict ensuing among at some point. Conflict is as old as the existence of man itself²⁷, and this made Morgenthau to posit that when there are no arms to fight, men will fight even with their bare fists. Managing Nigeria's numerous conflicts has been a subject of discussion for many years now. Before the arrival of the colonial masters, the conflicts were mainly tribal and geo-political, which often manifested in the quest for relevance among the diverse tribal groups that comprised the geographical area called Nigeria²⁸. However, the coming in of the colonial master and the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, heightened the incidences of conflicts in Nigeria.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Uzoigwe and Nwadior have argued that most of the conflicts in Nigeria have ethno-religious undertone²⁹. Mbogu had earlier in his study posited the same line of thought when he stated that religion and ethnicity as they are currently composed in Nigeria, have become important factors in ethno-religious conflicts³⁰. In placing ethno-religious conflict in proper context through a definition, Salawu described it as a situation in which the relationship that exist between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural religious society like Nigeria, is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and which usually tends to lead to violent confrontation³¹.

²⁴ Lindberg (2009). The Concept of Religion in Current Studies of Scandinavian Pre-Christian Religion.

²⁵ Smith (1982). Imagining Religion

²⁶ Nicholson (1992)

²⁷ Morgenthau (1948). *Power and Ideology in International Politics*

²⁸ Osisioma (2016). Conflict Management And Peace Building In Nigeria

²⁹ Uzoigwe and Nwadior (2013). Towards Bridging Ethnic and Religious Divides in Nigeria

³⁰ Mbogu (2014). Overcoming ethnic-religious and political violence

³¹ Salawu (2010). Ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria: causal analysis.

The concept of trust which is the basis of social cohesion and which brings about peaceful coexistence, especially, in the Northern part of Nigeria is literally non-existent any more. From 1976 to 2009 alone, over 100,000 people were reported to have lost their lives and property worth billions of Naira³² in more than fifty recorded ethno-religious conflicts in the Northern part of Nigeria.³³ The most recorded ethno-religious conflicts have taken place in the North. The mere idea that the Northern Nigeria is predominantly Islam and the need to entrench Sharia in the North is one of the fundamental ideological elements of the current Boko Haram sect.

Bamidele highlighted some of the notable ethno-religious insurgency since Nigeria's independence in 1960, especially in the Northern region of Nigeria³⁴. At the forefront of the list is the Maitatsine riots of 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1985. It was reported that the 1980 Maitatsine Kano metropolis riot alone claimed 4,177 lives³⁵. Imam, cited in Onah et al, also wrote about the Maitatsine uprising of Bullum-Kuttu in Borno State October 1982 that claimed around four hundred lives and properties worth over three million naira destroyed³⁶. The author further wrote on the Jimeta Maitatsine crisis of early 1984 that took one thousand and four lives, and many families displaced. The Gombe Maitatsine conflict of April 1985 took about one hundred lives as well.

Alonge, cited in Onah et al, also gave the summary of what took place in the Kafanchan tumult of March 1987. The conflict, which started in College of Education over an evangelical crusade being organized by Christian students would later spread to Funtua, Kaduna metropolis, Zaria and environs. The Kafanchan riot introduced a dangerous dimension to the rift between Christians and Muslims in the Northern part of the country³⁷. The riots were reported to have shaken the foundation of inter-religious peace in Kaduna state and some other northern parts of the country. In this crisis 25 people lost their lives, 61 injured, and property valued at Seventy-five million naira damaged. In all, about 47 churches, 3 mosques, 46 private houses, 19 vehicles and 30 hotels were reported to have been destroyed.

³² That's approximately 2.3million Euros with the current exchange rate of 1 Euro to about 430 Naira.

³³ (Eliagwu, 2004).

³⁴ Bamidele (2018).

³⁵ Adebayo (2010).

³⁶ Onah, Diara and Uroko (2017).

³⁷ Dogara (2011). *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*

Just three years after this conflict, in 1990, the Muslims opposed the invitation of Reinhard Bonnke, a German Christian preacher to Kano. The reason for this was that the invitation of a Muslim preacher from South Africa was earlier disallowed. As a result of this, crises erupted and over 500 lives were lost and properties worth hundreds of millions of naira destroyed³⁸. Other ethno-religious conflicts are well captured in literature. Some of which are: the Gombe (1985,1991) conflict, the Jalingo (1992, 2009) conflict, the Shagamu (1999) conflict; the Tafawa Balewa (1991, 1995, 2001) conflict, the Zangon-Kataf conflict of (1992), the Potiskum (1994, 2009) conflict, the Kaduna (Rigasa, 1982, 1992, 2000). Others include: the Moon-Eclipse conflict in Borno (1996); the Tiv conflict and others in Nassarawa (2001); the Jos (1994, 2000, 2001-2003, 2008, 2009, 2010) ethno-religious conflict; the Ikulu-Bajju (2001) conflict; the Yelwa-Shandam (2002, 2004) conflict, the Mangu-Bokkos (1992-1995) conflict, the Bukuru-Gyero (1997) conflict; the Maiduguri (2006, 2009) conflict, the Iggah-Oyikwa (2002) conflict; the Kano (2004) and Numan (2004) conflicts; the Azare (2001) conflict; the Bauchi (2010) conflict and finally on this note, the Wukari (2010) conflict.

These are some of the conflicts that have taken place which were largely ethno-religious in nature. However, up till the time of putting this work together, these conflicts still persists and is being reported in many parts of the Northern region of the country. Just two weeks ago, Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State was attacked by armed Fulani-herdsmen. More than 22 people were said to have lost their lives in that attack³⁹. At almost the same time, Gonar Rogo community was also attacked by another set of Fulani-herdsmen militia. This attack is one of many that has befallen Southern Kaduna, a predominantly Christian part of Kaduna state in recent times where dozens of persons have been reportedly killed with no one being prosecuted for such crimes against humanity⁴⁰.

³⁸ Adebayo (2010). Ethno-Religious Crises and the Challenges of sustainable Development in Nigeria

³⁹ (Sahara Reporters, May 13, 2020): <http://saharareporters.com/2020/05/13/exclusive-how-fulani-herdsmen-invaded-kajuru-southern-kaduna-slaughtered-17-people-one>

⁴⁰ (The Guardian, May 13, 2020): <https://guardian.ng/news/kajuru-killings-huriwa-bemoans-incessant-attack-by-suspected-fulani-herdsmen/>

The Root Causes of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

It is important to examine the root causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Isiani and Obi-Ani; Ona, Diara and Uroko amongst many others have argued that, the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 to become Nigeria, is the foundation of many of the country's problems. However, this notion is debatable because, there are other multi-cultural entities in the world today whose experiences as a nation of multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religion, have fostered social cohesion and unity, rather than incessant conflicts. Examples are the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Nigeria's case may be argued to be peculiar, simply because the colonial imperialist did not carry along the diverse ethnic groups before the creation of the Nigerian state. In other words, Nigerians at the time were not consulted as to whether they want to live together as one entity or whether each components at the time (North and South), would love to remain separate and individual entities.

However, the selfish agenda of the colonial masters did not allow them to carry out a proper consultation before the amalgamation. It is common knowledge that the amalgamation of Nigeria was based on pure economic gain. While the Southern protectorate had a budget surplus, the Northern protectorate was draining the colonial masters of funds. The best possible solution was to harmonize the protectorates and have a single budget in which the Southern's surplus will even out the Northern's deficit. The fallout of the amalgamation to some degree, gave birth to the Nigerian civil war. According to Garba and Garba, the formation of a colonial Nigerian state occurred in three phases: the formation of three separate colonial governments; the amalgamation of the two governments in the south in 1906; and the amalgamation of the southern and northern governments in 1914⁴¹. The formation of the amalgamation had an inherent conflictual nature, which would eventually lead to the civil war that broke out in 1967^{42 43}. Like the biblical saying which goes thus: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"⁴⁴ The Nigerian civil war was inevitable because the foundation upon which the formation of the Nigerian state rests was faulty. Even though the genesis of the civil war was largely ethnical and also comprises of some economic and political undertones thereby making its avoidance largely impossible.

⁴¹ undated

⁴² Ikime (1980)

⁴³ Lawal (1998)

⁴⁴ Psalm 11:3 King James Version (KJV)

In addition to the foregoing, Bamidele also posits that the root cause of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria are much deeper and complex, and it is enshrined in the interplay of historical factors, socio-economic crises, authoritarianism, politics of exclusion and local struggles⁴⁵. The author admits further that while the aforesaid make up the broader underlying factors, entrenched within and related to them are the Siamese twins of "bad governance and corruption, human rights abuses and violations, poverty and ethnic marginalization, small arms and light weapons proliferation, which continue to serve as drivers of communal ethno-religious insurgency in Nigeria."⁴⁶

It is also widely believed that Nigeria's present ethno-religious conflicts have been shaped by the happenings in the country's recent and distant past. Sanda argued that violent conflicts have become part of the nation's fabric since its independence in October 1960⁴⁷. The author additionally states that despite Nigeria's civil war experience, the spate of conflicts cannot be said to have reduced. Rather, conflicts occur more frequently and as a result have negative effect on Nigeria's development. Fwa also believes that lack of trust among various ethnic groups, deep-rooted misconception, religious intolerance, fear of economic and political domination among many others, are the causes of ethno-religious conflicts⁴⁸.

Another channel for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is the political imbalance within the major regions of the country. Agbiboa reasoned that the consolidation of the three administrative regions of Nigeria at independence, and the enormous territorial, population, and economic power asymmetries among these regions quickly exposed the political weakness of the regions in relation to the other⁴⁹. This however gave birth to the cry of marginalization by various ethnic groups and unhealthy rivalry by each group for the control of power⁵⁰. The resultant unhealthy rivalry however gave birth to lack of trust, accusations and counter accusation of denied opportunities for affective participation in the political and economic affairs of the country.

There are as well the political undertones to some of these violent ethno-religious conflicts. On many occasions, politicians have been seen promoting their religious belief at the utmost level of

⁴⁵ Bamidele (2018). *Simultaneous Geography, Divided Communities: Paving the Way to Silencing the Ethno-Religious Insurgencies in Nigeria*

⁴⁶ (p. 183)

⁴⁷ Sanda (2003)

⁴⁸ Fwa (2003)

⁴⁹ Agbiboa (2013)

⁵⁰ (Imobighe, 2003). *Civil Society and Ethnic conflict management in Nigeria*

the country's governance.⁵¹⁵² Former President Obasanjo was the first democratically elected president of Nigeria when the nation returned to democratic rule in 1999 after a protracted period of military rule. He was president from 1999-2007. While as president, Obasanjo said "as human beings, we will always have friction when we live together, but it should not lead to violence or the urge to take life."⁵³ This position was borne out of the idea that the needless destruction of innocent lives and properties, which is deeply rooted in religion, ethnicity and nepotism; is aggravated by few people who want to protect their own interests at the expense of the entire nation.

The recent upsurge in the clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have been linked to environmental issues. The scourge of deforestation and desertification that is associated with the North over the years has pushed the Fulani herdsmen to migrate to the central and further south in search of pasture for their cattle. The failure on the part of the government to provide adequate grazing areas for the Fulani herders along the plateau, has over the years given rise to these incessant conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous farming communities along the central region.⁵⁴ At the start of 2019 alone, Benue's State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), reported that there were more than 480,000 internally displaced persons in Benue State alone. An attempt by the government to force Ruga⁵⁵ settlement initiative on locals without proper consultation with the people truncated the initiative. "You don't just come and put in place Ruga settlements without the stakeholders being involved," Emmanuel Shior, head of SEMA remarked in one of his interview.

Much has been documented in literature about the role religion plays in many of these conflicts. The politicization of one's religion is a major factor in ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria⁵⁶. This idea relates to people, groups or individuals who describe their religion or ethnic group as superior or inferior for the sake of access to resources. Based on the foregoing, ethno-religious conflict arise

⁵¹ Former Military Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida was believed to have joined the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1986 purely for political and not economic reasons.

⁵² (Akah, 2018)

⁵³ Obasanjo (2001), cited in Adetoye and Omilusi, (2015, p. 55)

⁵⁴ (Abdulkadir, 2012).

⁵⁵ Ruga which is a fulani word for 'human settlement' was a federal government initiative to put an end to herders-farmers clashes in the middle belt of Nigeria

⁵⁶ Akah (2018). Religion and Ethnicity: The Need for National Integration in Nigeria.

where ethnic identity and religious loyalty overlap. Many scholars and statesmen have argued that these two sources of identity are the main causes of Nigeria's under development and have been used by some political leaders for selfish ends.⁵⁷

The Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Ethno-religious conflicts usually leave behind a number of impacts, both on the people, the nation's developmental agenda and its economic programs. In a study by Fawole and Bello "the impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian federalism", the authors arrived at a conclusion that 'ethno-religious' conflict retards the practice of true federalism in Nigeria, contaminates social relations and undermines the economy of the state⁵⁸. Onah, Diara and Uroko also examined ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, particularly on the devastating effects it has on women⁵⁹. The authors opined that women and children are more vulnerable in many of these conflicts as it has rendered many of them fatherless and widows untimely. They also posited that the conflicts accentuate poverty among women.

The socio-economic effect of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is enormous. Gamba identified nine areas in which ethno-religious conflict affects the nation⁶⁰. First, it discourages Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Recurrent ethno-religious conflicts have both in the past and the present seriously reduced the inflow of foreign capital into the country. No individual or nation would want to invest in a nation where there is no ethno-religious tolerance.⁶¹ Even though Nigeria is widely seen as a secular state, the frequent religious conflicts prove that Nigeria as a state is only secular on paper, it does not reflect in her national life. Secondly, it disrupts local production. Most production facilities in the conflict-prone areas are either closed shops or have relocated to other locations permanently.

⁵⁷ (Uzoigwe and Nwadior, 2013, Obasanjo, 2001, cited in Adetoye and Omilusi, 2015).

⁵⁸ Fawole and Bello (2011). The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian federalism.

⁵⁹ Onah, Diara and Uroko (2017)

⁶⁰ Gamba (2019)

⁶¹ Many countries like the United States of America and United Kingdom have at some points or the other warned their citizens not to visit crisis-prone states in Nigeria. Most Northern states where insurgency have been thriving made the list of blacklisted states.

Another effect of ethno-religious conflicts is in the area of unemployment. Ethno-religious conflicts have contributed to the worsening of the unemployment situation in the country. The current statistics on unemployment figures in Nigeria is appalling. Food security has been greatly undermined by conflicts. Eyekpimi, cited in Gamba posits that in three years, Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes have recorded a loss of N814bn in three years.⁶² The reason for this loss was because farmers are not willing to risk their lives by going to farm for the fear of attacks by the herdsmen, this in essence causes a shortage in food production which triggers insecurity of foods. Other areas of the Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria are seen in: staggering economic growth, political instability, inflation, loss of human resources and increase unplanned expenditure.

Conclusion

Highlighted in this chapter is the history of and factors behind ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Factors identified include socio-economic factors – *unemployment, inequality, corruption, poverty, lack of access to basic needs of life*, socio-cultural factors – *Nigeria being a heterogeneous society and the undue amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates without proper consultation with the people as to whether they will remain a homogenous unit*, political factors – *the use of religious and ethnic divides by the political elites for political gains*, and environmental factors – *grazing land and grazing routes* – as drivers of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria.

The next chapter of this work will examine the emergence of Boko Haram, the historical overview of radical Islamic groups before Boko Haram, the different arguments for and against the emergence of Boko Haram (objective triggers) and Boko Haram's deadliest years ever.

⁶² Eyekpimi (2016)

CHAPTER THREE

Objective Triggers of Ethno-Religious Conflicts and the Emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Much has been written about what triggers ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria in this research. A number of these triggers has also been considered in the previous chapters of this work, most especially, in chapter two under literature review. At the forefront of these triggers is the undue amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 without adequate consultation of the stakeholders. The amalgamation, was an act of colonial convenience, and nothing more. The main reason for this was that the colonial masters could administer the regions for their own economic agenda, and not because they loved the people of Nigeria at the time.^{63 64} Other triggers are: lack of trust among the people, political maneuvering, feeling of superiority of one region, resource control, environmental issues, religion intolerance, et cetera.⁶⁵

The focus of this chapter is on the emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Although Boko Haram became a terrorist organization towards the end of 2009 and early 2010, the deadly terror group has been around long before that time. The movement that metamorphosed into the name "Boko Haram" – which is Hausa for "Western Education is Sacrilege/Forbidden" – is *Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunnah li-l-Da'awah wa al-Jihād*, which translates to "People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad."⁶⁶ The group was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Northeastern Nigeria. The group's initial agenda was to uproot the corruption and injustice which is pervasive in Nigeria. The Jama'at group blamed the corruption and widespread injustice in the Nigerian system on western influences. They then decided to establish and enforce Sharia⁶⁷ law in the Northern region of Nigeria.

Many have also argued that Mohammed Yusuf, the acclaimed founder of the movement that led to Boko Haram, was a creation of the political elites in the Northern region of Nigeria. In a bid to decimate the group and their activities in order to get rid of him, Mohammed Yusuf alongside

⁶³ To the colonizers, it made more sense to have one coherent British colony rather than two in order for proper administration, and also, the resources from one of the more economically buoyant region could also be used to finance the other less economically viable region at the time.

⁶⁴ Ochon: *The roots of Nigeria's religious and ethnic conflict*. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-03-10/roots-nigerias-religious-and-ethnic-conflict>

⁶⁵ Ikechukwu (2012)

⁶⁶ Boko Haram: Nigerian Islamic Group. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram>

⁶⁷ Sharia, Islamic law, or redundantly Sharia law is a religious law forming part of the Islamic tradition. It is derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the hadith.

several of his followers were captured and killed while in police custody.⁶⁸ After Mohammed Yusuf's death, the group resurfaced under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's former and loyal deputy. Shekau began a campaign of violence in 2010 that has continued till today. The message of the movement has been altered over the years. In its early years, their message was characterized by the blistering speeches of its leader Mohammed Yusuf. This period was characterized by proselytization (*dawah*), which included vocal assaults on secular authority, both traditional and modern. However, from 2010 till today, Boko Haram has committed itself to asymmetric warfare that imitate and adopt the procedure and strategies of global Salafists movements such as Al-Qaeda.⁶⁹

Historical Overview of Radical Islamic Groups before Boko Haram

The study on Boko Haram by Stephen and Knoope gives an historical overview of some earlier radical groups that had existed in the Northern part of Nigeria. The work established that Boko Haram is not the first radical Islamist organization that emerged in northern Nigeria and chronicled earlier radical groups like the Talakawas in the 1940's and 1950's, the Yan Tassine in the 1960's and 1970's, Darul Islam, and followers of the Ndimi mosque in the early 2000's, to name a few.⁷⁰ Many of these groups had their ideologies around denouncing Western education and the call for the establishment of religious societies through Sharia law practices.

It was widely believed that the movement that birthed “western education forbidden” in Northern Nigeria, which is also one of the core ideological beliefs of Boko Haram, was started by Mohammed Marwa. Marwa was believed to have been born in 1927 in Northern Nigeria and found his way to Kano at age 18 to become a preacher. His teachings were against the influence of Western culture in Nigeria. Mohammed Marwa condemned Western education as the product of infidels and considered the reading of any book other than the Koran as sinful and tantamount to paganism.⁷¹ The term 'Maitatsine' which means 'the one who curses' in Hausa, was Mohammed Marwa's nickname, and it was borne out of his repetitive use of foul and obscene languages against the Nigerian state that he believed was inherently corrupt and at the mercy of Western influence.⁷²

⁶⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica: The Rise of Boko Haram: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Rise-of-Boko-Haram#ref1177463>

⁶⁹ Kyari Mohammed: The Message and Methods of Boko Haram

⁷⁰ Buchanan-Clarke and Knoope: The Boko Haram insurgency: From Short Term Gains to Long Term Solutions

⁷¹ (Foyou, Ngwafu, Santoyo and Ortiz, 2018)

⁷² Buchanan-Clarke and Knoope (2018)

Marwa's increasing anti-government sermons and his cult-following, finally compelled the government to crack down on the activities of the sect in the late 1970s. The crackdown from the government created a number of uprisings in Kano in the 1980s which was thought to have been masterminded by Marwa's followers, culminating in the 1982 riots. The government crackdown on the riots resulted in over 4000 militants killed, including Marwa himself. His death triggered more riots against the government in Bulumkutu in 1982, where 3,300 people were killed, in the defunct Gongola State, where nearly 1,000 people perished in 1984, and in Bauchi State where hundreds more were killed in 1985.

Examining the Different Arguments for and Against the Emergence of Boko Haram

There are many barriers hindering the understanding of the essence and operation of the Boko Haram group. So little information about the organization can be verified due to the difficulties in harnessing genuine and verifiable information in Nigeria.⁷³ Several narratives have emerged as the major reason why Boko Haram became a thorn in the flesh of Nigerians and the Nigerian state. Some argued along economic reasons, others have examined political reasons and there are many more who believe that religion and ethnicity played a major role in the emergence of the deadly terror group. However, a cursory look at these arguments in relation to the recent happenings in Nigeria cannot be far from the truth as to how Boko Haram became a menace in Nigeria.

The Economic Dimension to the Emergence of Boko Haram

It has been argued that Boko Haram is an inevitable result of poverty in Northern Nigeria. In 2018, the World Poverty Clock estimated that about 90.8 million Nigerians live below the poverty level. That report earned Nigeria the title, "The Poverty Capital of the World."⁷⁴ The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently reported that 40% of the people in Nigeria live in poverty, a figure that represents 82.9 million of a population of about 200 million people.⁷⁵ Despite residing in one of Africa's biggest economies, many Nigerians still live on less than one dollar a day in Nigeria. Poverty in the northern region of the country has been increasing especially in the North-western zone. About half of all the poor are living in the north-west and the north accounts for 87 percent of all poor in the country in 2016.

⁷³ Andrew Walker: What is Boko Haram? United States Institute of Peace Special Report on Boko Haram.

⁷⁴ <https://www.tekedia.com/the-causes-of-high-poverty-rate-in-northern-nigeria/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/forty-percent-nigerians-live-poverty-line-report-200504141558636.html>

Many northerners, especially those in the rural areas live in abject poverty. Out of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, three are in the northern part of the country and they have the worst indices of poverty compared to the other zones. Invariably, the North is like a hub for joblessness, crime, illiteracy, maternal mortality, early marriage and, recently, terrorism.⁷⁶

However, the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper argues that economic deprivation alone cannot explain why violent movements grow in some places and not others; or why some movements develop particular worldviews.⁷⁷ Although they argued further that analysis of Boko Haram should not disregard demography, but neither should it make demography into destiny; demography is only one factor in a more complicated matrix of drivers of violence and dissent.

The Political Dimension to the Emergence of Boko Haram

The movement to change state and society on the basis of Sharia in Nigeria, was begun by Muslim politicians in 1999. At the end of General Abdusalami Abubakar's military regime, power shifted to the Christian South when Olusegun Obasanjo – a former military head of state himself – won the general elections. Although the campaign was mainly a matter of political intrigues, it established a paradigm that still frames political debates.⁷⁸

There are those who have also argued that Boko Haram has some political inclinations. Many have argued that the founder of the group, Muhammed Yusuf, was a creation of the political elite who would often use him and his followers for a political agenda. This argument however, has not been adequately proven. The United States Institute of Peace made a special report on Boko Haram; the institute argued that connections between the core group of Yusuf's followers and established Northern elites or politicians are unlikely.⁷⁹ The report says "it is certainly difficult to see how any Northern politician, or his or her representatives, could interact with Boko Haram at this stage. It is as likely that the group would kill them as '*yan boko*'.⁸⁰ Of course there are those individuals within the northern elite who will certainly seek to exploit the actions of Boko Haram for their

⁷⁶ Khan and Cheri (2016). An Examination of Poverty as the Foundation of Crisis in Northern Nigeria

⁷⁷ The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper

⁷⁸ Johannes Harnischfeger: *Boko Haram and its Muslim critics: Observations from Yobe State*

⁷⁹ United States Institute of Peace Special Report on Boko Haram.

⁸⁰ Yan boko means "child of the book." To be yan boko is to be corrupt, lacking in religious piety, and guilty of criminally enriching oneself rather than dedicating oneself to the Muslim *umma* (community)

own purposes, however, taking advantage of these events as they happen is not the same as directing them."⁸¹

Another angle to the political dimension relating to the emergence of Boko Haram is the argument that Boko Haram responded to perceived political marginalization of the North and particularly, the Northeast. It was believed that many Northerners were indeed offended by the 2011 electoral victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian of the minority Ijaw ethnic group who originally ascended to presidency after the death of former President Umaru Yar'Adua, a Northern Muslim.⁸² This argument, however, has been fraught on the angle that Boko Haram had been formed long before Jonathan even became deputy to Yar'Adua and eventually becoming the president when he died after some undisclosed illness.

The Religious Dimension to the Emergence of Boko Haram

There is a heated discuss going on about the degree to which religion does encourage violent groups.⁸³ On one hand, the International Crisis Group (ICG) posits that religious differences and violence often serve as a swathe for other issues such as; prejudice, the uneven allocation of resources, unequal economic power, poverty and marginalization. However, this notion by the ICG does not render religion unimportant in the scheme of things, it does give credence to the fact that ethnicity and religion appear to have been connected to socio-economic dissatisfaction and grievances about marginalization.⁸⁴

It has been argued that because Boko Haram's founder is associated with Islam, the movement therefore is an Islamic thing.⁸⁵ The group's combination of a sectarian agenda with violence is distinctive, and it is mostly associated with Islamism. This may have given credence to those who argue along this line. Other terror organizations across the globe have sworn their allegiance to the religion of Islam.⁸⁶ According to Boko Haram's rhetoric, its goal is to create God's kingdom on earth through justice for the poor achieved by the rigid application of Islamic law, or Sharia. Mohammed Yusuf, founder of the group and also a charismatic preacher, organized his community

⁸¹ United States Institute of Peace Special Report on Boko Haram, (p. 7).

⁸² The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper

⁸³ Brinkel and Ait-Hida (2012)

⁸⁴ International Crisis Group Policy Briefings: *Lessons from Nigeria's 2011 Elections*

⁸⁵ There has been no other religion anywhere in the world that have claimed any affiliation with the group, not in Nigeria or elsewhere.

⁸⁶ Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabbab, ISIS, ISWAP, et cetera.

in the city of Maiduguri around 2003. His aim was to establish Allah's kingdom on earth by isolating itself from wider society. Although at the time, Mohammed's movement was hostile to the Nigerian state and rejected Western education as non-Islamic, it remained generally non-violent until 2009.⁸⁷

Campbell posits that for Boko Haram, violence is not a perversion of Islam; it is a justifiable means to a pure end. The Boko Haram terror group has attacked both Muslims and Christians alike.⁸⁸ Several churches have been bombed and so are Mosques. Several Muslims have lost their lives because of Boko Haram, so have Christians. For example, Boko Haram assassinated Sheikh Ibrahim Ahmed, a critic of the sect at Gomari Mosque in Maiduguri.⁸⁹ In July 2012, a Boko Haram suicide bomber attempted to kill two prominent Muslims, the Shehu of Borno and the state's deputy governor; both men escaped but ten Muslims lost their lives.⁹⁰ In January of 2020, ISWAP⁹¹, an offshoot of the Boko Haram terrorist group, released a video showing the execution of a 22 year-old Christian student from Plateau State, Nigeria, by a minor.⁹² Also in the same month, journalist Ahmed Salkida broke the news that Reverend Lawan Andimi had been executed by the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram.⁹³

In all, the general notion is that Boko Haram is an Islamist group, just like every other terror organization in the world that have their allegiance to Islam. Even though many within the Muslim community across the globe have spoken against the sect, the idea that Boko Haram has religious dimension to its creation and also, precedence in other similar groups across the globe, cannot be denied.

⁸⁷ (Campbell, 2014, Buchanan-Clarke and Knoope, 2018)

⁸⁸ (Campbell, 2014, Buchanan-Clarke and Knoope, 2018)

⁸⁹ Uzodike and *Maiangwa* (2012)

⁹⁰ Idris (2012) . 'Shehu of Borno, D/Gov escape death as suicide bomber kills 10'. Daily Trust. <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/index.php/other-sections/lead-stories/171777-breaking-news-shehu-of-bornodgov-escape-death-as-suicide-bomber-kills-10>, p.1

⁹¹ Islamic State of West African Province

⁹² <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38777>

⁹³ <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2020/01/boko-haram-beheads-christian-as-violence-continues-in-nigeria/>

The Boko Haram Deadliest Years (2009-2019)

Since the coming into prominence in 2009, Nigeria has been confronted with increased terrorist activity by the deadly Boko Haram group. The group's target had been security formations and churches in several parts of the North. Other targets include university communities and at times, media houses. Initially viewed as an obscure movement confined to only a certain region of the country – North-eastern Nigeria – Boko Haram has emerged as the most palpable threat to Nigeria's continued peace and development.⁹⁴ The Washington, DC-based think tank Council on Foreign Relations estimated that from 2018 on, more than 37,000 people had been killed, including civilians, government forces, and alleged Boko Haram fighters.⁹⁵

The United Nations Children's Fund has alleged that the group has kidnapped over a 1,000 children in Northeastern Nigeria since 2013 to extend fear and demonstrate power. "Since 2013, more than 1000 children have been abducted by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, including 276 girls taken from their secondary school in the town of Chibok⁹⁶ in 2014,"⁹⁷ the report alleged. Similarly, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre believes that over two million people have been displaced in the North-East as a result of Boko Haram's terror activities.⁹⁸ Many of the farming communities have fled due to incessant attacks from the radical group. Even when the government security forces claimed to have recovered some of the communities that were under the control of Boko Haram and then urged the people to return, the majority of the people refused to go back to their various villages believing that the Boko Haram sect may suddenly resurface upon the retreat of the military troops.

Presuppositions and Assumptions of the Work

As can be seen from relevant literature reviewed, and going by the emergence of Boko Haram, the group's activities were borne out of violent religious fundamentalism and the quest of one man to Islamize an entire region of the country, not minding people of other faiths and beliefs.⁹⁹ Even

⁹⁴ Innocent and Ibietan (2012)

⁹⁵ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2019/02/26/boko-haram-northeast-Nigeria-reporter-notebook>

⁹⁶ Chibok is a Local Government Area of Borno State, Nigeria, located in the south of the state. Its headquarters are in the town of Chibok. On the night of 14–15 April 2014, 276 female students preparing to write their final secondary school examinations were kidnapped from their dormitories in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for their kidnap, and many of those girls are still yet to be recovered by the federal government of Nigeria till date.

⁹⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/13/africa/boko-haram-children-abduction-intl/index.html>

⁹⁸ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria>

⁹⁹ Religious fundamentalists are violent adherents of any religion who would explore any means possible to impose their doctrines or beliefs on others. Religious fundamentalism most times opposes cultural pluralism, religious diversity and multiparty politics. The shape and character of its ideologies most of the times causes a reactionary approach to other ideas, movements and structures and an intolerant attitude to opposing views and people of other faiths and conviction.

though there could have been traces of politics, marginalization, poverty, illiteracy and other vices as factors that may have contributed to Boko Haram's campaign of terror and arson, it was however not as a result of any lingering ethno-religious violence or activity that the government had deliberately looked away from. Hence, the assumption of this thesis that Boko Haram was triggered by ethno-religious crises not given proper attention to by the government may not entirely be correct as the pre-existing ethno-religious issues only aided the sect, it was not the main cause of its emergence.

However, the government did fail Nigerians when they mismanaged the Boko Haram crises in its early days especially the extra judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf while in police custody. While the administration of the late Musa Yar'Adua did all it could by arresting Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram and other senior members of the sect and ensuring that they were gotten rid of, the administration of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan did not do much to capitalize on these gains by ensuring that other members of the sect were immediately neutralized. These lapses gave way to the re-birth of the new Boko Haram under Abubakar Shekahu, the deputy of Mohammed Yusuf who took the sect's campaign international. By the time the Goodluck administration would be waking up to discover Boko Haram's deadly tendencies, the United Nations (UN) building in Abuja had been bombed, the Police Force Headquarters in Abuja had been bombed, and about 276 Chibok girls had been kidnapped in Borno State while the whereabouts of majority of them till now unknown.¹⁰⁰

Boko Haram's Affiliate Terror Groups

Sometimes in 2014, Boko Haram became affiliated with the now defunct ISIS¹⁰¹. The abduction of Chibok School girls carried out by Boko Haram was cited that year by ISIS as the basis for the enslavement of Yazidi women. The November 2014 issue of ISIS' "Dabiq" magazine had revealed the pledge of allegiance by Boko Haram.¹⁰² Following ISIS' recognition of its adherence, Boko Haram went ahead to declare itself the Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP). However, this new development brought some untoward destabilization in the leadership of Boko Haram. After pledging loyalty to Abubakar al-Baghdadi and joining Islamic State (IS), ISWAP's hard-line

¹⁰⁰ Out of the 276 girls that were kidnapped by Boko Haram, about 112 of them are yet to be accounted for till today. A total of 107 girls have been found or released as part of a deal between the Nigerian government and the armed group.
(<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/nigeria-chibok-school-girls-years-112-missing-190413192517739.html>)

¹⁰¹ Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

¹⁰² (Anyadike 2015).

leader, Abubakar Shekau, was ejected from the group in August 2016. IS then announced the more moderate Abu Musab al-Barnawi as ISWAP's leader.¹⁰³

In March 2019, as reported by Vanguard, Ba'Idrisa became ISWAP leader and al-Barnawi was demoted to consultative council member. This all occurred after al-Barnawi's main backer, Mamman Nur was purged in late 2018.¹⁰⁴ Nur was a deputy of al-Barnawi's father, Boko Haram co-founder Muhammed Yusuf (Sahara Reporters, 2018).¹⁰⁵ The implication of Boko Haram's affiliation could be explained on a number of fronts. In terms of status, Boko Haram could well be said to have boosted ISIS' international profile at the time, making the organization a formidable terror group that has the capacity to spread its tentacles. For instance, in November 2014, jihadists in Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt devoted their loyalty to ISIS leader, Abu'Bakr al Baghdadi in a coordinated show of support for the self-proclaimed Caliph.¹⁰⁶

For Boko Haram, falling under the ISIS banner gave them much international appeal and attention they yearned for. This also helped them in gaining more appeal and it enhanced their recruitment process, especially in Northern Nigeria where poverty, unemployment and absence of basic amenities is prevalent. Those who are motivated to join ISIS but cannot go to Syria through Turkey because of heightened security will exploit existing travel routes by travelling to northern Nigeria through Libya.¹⁰⁷ The alliance has also enabled Boko Haram to gain access to ISIS' finances and operational experiences. They coordinated suicide attacks, targeted at military formations, penetrating government institutions and stronghold for attacks was believed to have been a result of this affiliation. It was also reported that Boko Haram has sent more than 200 fighters to Libya to assist ISIS at some point.¹⁰⁸

Lastly, from ISIS' point of view, accepting Boko Haram as an ideological proxy gives it a foothold in a region where the prevailing social, political, and economic conditions are conducive for religious radicalization and recruitment.¹⁰⁹ This alone is the reason why many young Northern youths have been seen to be involved in the group's activities. The use of female bombers,

¹⁰³ Jacob Zenn: <https://jamestown.org/program/islamic-state-in-west-africa-provinces-factional-disputes-and-the-battle-with-boko-haram/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/03/boko-haram-leader-al-barnawi-replaced-in-a-bloodless-coup/>

¹⁰⁵ Sahara Reporters: Boko Haram Leader Mamman Nur 'Killed By His Closest Lieutenants' For Releasing Dapchi Girls
<http://saharareporters.com/2018/09/14/boko-haram-leader-mamman-nur-killed-his-closest-lieutenants-releasing-dapchi-girls>

¹⁰⁶ (Thomas 2015)

¹⁰⁷ International Business Times, 2015: .

¹⁰⁸ (Clarion Project 2015).

¹⁰⁹ Ogbogu (2015)

underage boys to carry out some of their activities is a proof that radicalization is within the whims of the group. Although, government's approach at countering Boko Haram has been highly militarized, however, there are plans by the government for rehabilitation and reintegration of captured terrorists back into the mainstream society.

A recent statement by the Nigerian Defense reads "*we are rehabilitating and releasing former Boko Haram fighters as a shift from the use of arms and weapons to a soft approach to the war against insurgency in North-eastern Nigerian where terrorism has plagued for over a decade. We have applied what we call "the Kinetic¹¹⁰ line of operation which is the military engagement of the terrorist group in battle and combat" now, the Federal Government is providing this window of opportunity; which is a non-kinetic and combat operation. It is a soft operation, a humanitarian approach so to speak.*"¹¹¹

In conclusion, stated in this part of the work is how Boko Haram came to being. Mohammed Yusuf, who was believed to be a charismatic preacher founded the group in 2002 in Northeastern part of Nigeria. The activities of the group came into prominence in 2009 when Yusuf, alongside with other members of the group, were summarily executed while in police custody. After his death, his deputy, Abubakar Shekahu took over the affairs of the group and began the violent war against the Nigerian state in retaliation for the death of Yusuf and other members of the group while in custody. Their major targets were: non-adherents Muslims to Shariah, military and security formations, government institutions, churches and mosques and in addition, kidnapping of (mostly) women and underage young girls. In the next chapter of this work, attempts to analyse the multifaceted impacts of Boko Haram on the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria will be made.

¹¹⁰ Kinetic as the meaning implies is an all-out approach used in military combat where the soldiers attacks with full force.

¹¹¹ International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICR): <https://www.icirnigeria.org/why-we-are-rehabilitating-releasing-ex-boko-haram-fighters-%E2%80%95-nigerian-defence/>

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the Multifaceted Impacts of Boko Haram on the Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

The focus of this chapter is to analyze the multifaceted impacts of Boko Haram insurgency on the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The country is believed to be a secular state. However, the emergence of Boko Haram has made the country assume the position of fighting some religious fundamentalists who have metamorphosed into a terrorist organization and have turned their backs against the good people of Nigeria. Agbiboa and Maiangwa posit that religious terrorists have anti-modern goals of returning society to an idealized version of the past and are therefore necessarily anti-democratic and anti-progressive.¹¹²

Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria Being a Secular State

The degree to which Boko Haram has tried to change the dynamics of the way that people live their lives, how governments operate, and the effective functioning of societies, have put into the fore whether Nigeria truly is a secular state as stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. One of the major characteristics of a secular state is in the fact that all religions are treated equally and no one religion should be preferred over the other. The threats of Boko Haram to Islamizing the whole Northern Nigeria is entirely against religious freedom that the constitution preaches. One of the basic tenets that secularism preaches is that people are not supposed to be discriminated against on the basis of their religion, irrespective of where they find themselves within the country.

The fact that we have many Christians who had lived their entire lives in the northern region of Nigeria and whose further existence has been greatly threatened by the sect's activities shows to a certain degree that Nigeria's status as a secular state is no longer feasible. Many churches today in some northern states no longer enjoy the association of worship. Some Christians, for security of their lives, would even go all the way to dress like Muslims in order to not be tagged as "infidels" by radical Islamic groups like Boko Haram. Many northern states today operate strictly on Sharia law. Christians in these states no longer have freedom of movements and association, and this has further divided Nigeria than rather unifying it. Kaduna states for example prides itself in being divided between Kaduna North and Kaduna South. Kaduna North is predominantly Muslims while

¹¹² Agbiboa and Maiangwa

Kaduna South is predominantly Christians, all within the same geographical space. Based on the foregoing, the impact of Boko Haram on the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria cannot be discussed without talking about how it has greatly affected Nigeria's religious and social fabric.

Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Fragile Federalism

It is also pertinent to state here that Boko Haram activities pose a lot of threats to the continuous existence of the Nigerian state as a federal unit. The incessant attacks threaten Nigeria's already fragile federalism and the coexistence of all its ethnic and religious stakeholders. While some states within the federal structure are seeing progress albeit slow one in areas of amenities and social welfare, the northern states are experiencing a decline due to the devastation of a lot of their towns and cities which largely remain in shambles and deserted. Funds meant for social and infrastructural development are being used to build camps for displaced persons and to fend for them. What the nation is witnessing through various Boko Haram activities could be likened to a wrong transfer of aggression to innocent Nigerians.¹¹³ It is no doubt that everything Boko Haram stood for, could dampen the true idea of unity in pluralism that Nigeria was once a reality.

Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Developmental Agenda

Nigeria is still a third-world developing nation, with absence of infrastructure such as good road networks, railway systems, modern healthcare facilities, et cetera. Many vices, such as corruption, lack of unity among the federating units and lack of political will have greatly hindered the developmental pace of Nigeria. The past decade has also witnessed the emergence of Boko Haram as a major hindrance to Nigeria's development, especially in the northern part of the country. Slow developmental pace, heavy insecurity challenges; ranging from Boko Haram's activities and banditry have hindered the progress of the North. With approximately 14.8 Million people adversely affected, about 2.3 Million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including over 177 Thousand Nigerian Refugees in neighboring countries, over 30 thousand deaths and even more people severely injured or missing,¹¹⁴ it would require a fortune to restore the region back to its former glory before the advent of Boko Haram.

Based on 2016 estimates, it was reported that the World Bank was putting aside \$800 million in support of the rebuilding of infrastructure devastated by years of Boko Haram insurgency in the

¹¹³ (Omotola, 2010)

¹¹⁴ Rebuilding the North-East: The Buhari Plan

Northeast.¹¹⁵ This figure is only an indication of the extent of devastation that has taken place in that region of the country in the space of ten years, and which may probably even cost more considering the fact that Boko Haram is still a major issue till today. Now, that money could have gone into some other developmental projects had it been Boko Haram was not a challenge bedeviling the nation. Other monies meant for the development of other regions of the country too is being budgeted towards funding various IDP camps across the nations and the supply of ammunitions for the military to combat the insurgency. As it is, the whole six-geopolitical regions of the country may have to suffer the brunt of this as long as the war persists.

Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Social and Religious Cohesion

There is also the social and religious implication of Boko Haram's continuous rampage. The suspicion and lack of shared understanding owing to Boko Haram's continued killing of Christians in the North is still much more around. Muslim and Christians in the country no longer trust one another, most especially in the North. As a result of this incessant killings and attacks on Christian communities, some cities in Nigeria today, especially in the northern parts have been split with Christians living in one part while Muslims live in the other. This is the current situation for instance in Kaduna state, and some parts of Jos city in Plateau state as well. In 2020 alone, Boko Haram executed a prominent Baptist pastor Rev Lawan Andimi on 20th January.¹¹⁶ In December of 2019, 11 Christians were said to have been executed as well.¹¹⁷ These continued killings of Christians will continue to create that social animosity between Muslim and the Christian communities in the North.

Impacts of Boko Haram on Nigeria's Food Security

The northern region used to be the food-basket of the nation, but same cannot be said about that lately. Many Northern states are predominantly agricultural states. States like Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, which are states that are mostly affected by book Haram, were major producers of rice, millet, tomatoes, cowpeas, onions, yams, corns, livestock and fish. Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram, many of these produces are channeled to other regions of the country which in turn facilitates trade and exchange of goods. However, this is no longer the case as many of the farmers involved in these farming activities have either lost their lives to Boko Haram or have been

¹¹⁵ <https://allafrica.com/stories/201604010044.html>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/12398/boko-haram-executes-prominent-nigerian-christian>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/december/isis-nigeria-executes-christians-iswap-christmas-boko-haram.html>

kidnapped while a few manage to escape to other parts of the country. Many of these farmers have had their source of livelihood taken away from them and for those who remain, it is impossible to continue farming because Boko Haram has disrupted their means of livelihoods. This has left produce either unharvested or taken over by the insurgents.

The Copycat Effect of Boko Haram from Other Deadly groups

It is no doubt that Boko Haram's rampage may have given birth to other dreaded groups within Nigeria. For example, the Fulani herdsmen are another dreaded group that has been on the news for wanton destruction of lives and farm properties. The Fulani herders now go about with sophisticated weapons like Ak47 while leaving a trail of blood wherever they find themselves. They go about with so much confidence and their activities have largely affected farming communities, especially in states like Benue, Taraba and some few states in other regions of the country. Many people have criticized the Federal Government of Nigeria for not declaring the Fulani herdsmen a terrorist group, and they are clamoring that the federal government should adopt the same method being used against Boko Haram insurgents.

Conclusion

The impacts of Boko Haram on ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria cannot be encapsulated in one thought considering the fact that dreaded group is still much more around and operational, although their influence and operations have been greatly confined to Northeast Nigeria and the border towns of Nigeria with the neighboring countries. The battle to completely nip their activities to a bud is still ongoing, especially with the collaboration between Nigeria and Chad in terms of military might and intelligence gathering. Just in April of this year, the Chadian army says it killed over 1,000 fighters during an operation against the Boko Haram armed group in the Lake Chad border region.¹¹⁸ Though the Boko Haram style of conflicts is slightly different from other forms of social conflicts, ethno-religious conflict as it were, entails different ethnic groups that belong to different religions. It is important to state here that both religious and ethnic causal agents have been responsible for the majority of social conflicts in Nigeria. Beginning from who becomes what (president, governor or a federal minister), and what goes to where in any part of Nigeria (infrastructure distribution), ethnicity and religion are most of the time factored in.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/chadian-troops-kill-1000-boko-haram-fighters-lake-chad-200409183528130.html>

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendations

Reflection

I believe the Nigerian state, the Christian bodies in Nigeria under the umbrella of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other religious stakeholders have parts to take in the war against Boko Haram if the war is to be won. The state must adopt more productive means for fighting the sects, other than the extreme measure currently in play. Boko Haram operates in the extreme, no doubt, and so is the Nigerian state which seems to me a case of exterminism – where everyone is in a race to score a higher index of devastation against the other. The Amnesty International (AI) on many occasions have accused the Nigerian Military of war crimes for the inhumane treatment of some alleged members of the group, razing down in some occasion of an entire village.¹¹⁹ These extreme measures have obviously not produced any commensurate progress in the fight against Boko Haram.

As former President Olusegun Obasanjo rightly opined in 2013, maybe it is high time the Nigerian state adopted the “carrot and stick”¹²⁰ approach. This approach may go a long way in producing results especially when one considers the fact that former president Musa Yar’Adua also granted amnesty to the then Niger-delta militants in order to pacify them. This approach may not have been the best, but at least it would buy the government enough time in finding a lasting solution to the problem of this murderous sect. The carrot approach would include negotiations and reaching out to the perceived leaders of the sect across board: ISWAP and Boko Haram.

Christianity being a pacifist¹²¹ religion has left Christians in Nigeria without much options but to trust God to put a permanent end to it through various government efforts. As can be seen from New Testament teachings of Jesus Christ, modern day Christianity is hinged on peace. Jesus

¹¹⁹ “Since early 2015, the Nigerian military has carried out intensive operations and recaptured vast swathes of territory that had come under the control of Boko Haram in the north-east of the country. However, instead of “freeing” hundreds of thousands of people who had been trapped in these areas, the military has carried out systematic patterns of violence and abuse against this population, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. Women have been affected in disproportionate and gender-specific ways, and continue to face ongoing discrimination and violence.” (Amnesty International, 2018)

¹²⁰ Former president Obasanjo believed that the carrot and stick approach may work in combating Boko Haram. The carrot means finding a way to reach out to the sect. But upon reaching out to them and the sect still refuses to be tamed, then you adopt the stick approach, which I believe it is what the government is currently doing. However, this stick approach alone has still not produced any lasting result.

¹²¹ Although Christianity in its early days was violent. This violence was in a bid to seek validation and sort of a revenge for the persecution faced from the ruling class of the time. However, over time, after many years of trial and errors, after several wars, conflicts and even schisms inside the Church, it has taken pacifist stand, largely preaching peace and forgiveness. More so, Christianity in Nigeria which is largely Pentecostal is pacifist as victims of BH would rather accept fate as written by God rather than attack while pastors and clergymen would refuse to flee from war torn zones; willing to pay the ultimate price for the gospel.

Himself was an embodiment of peace. He once said to His disciples: *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*¹²² Despite all the persecutions that Jesus faced on earth, He never retaliated nor fight back His detractors. At a point, He said to one of His disciples who drew out his sword to defend Jesus’ arrest:

*“But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”*¹²³

Although, there had been several calls in the past both from the local and international front that Christians in Northern Nigeria should also take up arms to defend themselves against Boko Haram and other groups that are a threat to their existence. However, if this call had been followed through, it would have actually complicated the ethno-religious matter beyond what the nation is currently battling with. There would have been more lives lost and the bloodbath would have been unprecedented.¹²⁴ The best we have seen on the Christian part are advocacy groups that have constantly called the attention of the government and other international bodies to what is happening in Nigeria. There have also been outright condemnation of the sect’s activities by the Christian Association of Nigeria and other associated bodies. But in all, Christians that are being affected have resorted to faith, prayers, and the consolation of the Scriptures to see them through these challenging times.

General Conclusion

This work attempted to examine the Impact of Boko Haram on Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria by examining the following causative factors: (a) Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity, (b) ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, (c) objective triggers of ethno-religious conflicts, (d) the emergence of Boko Haram, and (e) the impacts of Boko Haram activities on Nigeria. The study

¹²² John 14:27

¹²³ Matthew 26:52-54

¹²⁴ Even though on paper, the Nigerian state strives to be secular, it’s not entirely so in real life as there are several elements of religion in both official and unofficial matters. In the fight against BH however, the state could be said to have leaned more towards the Christians out of sympathy. Now the actions of the Military and state in the campaign against BH should not be confused as being an action of the Church and Christians. The Christians have been on the receiving end of the actions of both BH and the military.

identified socio-economic factors (unemployment, inequality, corruption, poverty, lack of access to basic needs of life), socio-cultural factors (Nigeria being a heterogeneous society and the undue amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates without proper consultation with the people as to whether they will remain an homogenous unit), political factors (the use of religion and ethnic divides by the political elites for political gains), and environmental factors (grazing land and grazing routes) as drivers of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria.

On the emergence of Boko Haram, the study established that Mohammed Yusuf, who was believed to be a charismatic preacher founded the group in 2002 in Northeastern part of Nigeria. But the activities of the group came into prominence in 2009 when Yusuf, alongside with other members of the group, were summarily executed while in police custody. After his death, his deputy, Abubakar Shekahu took over the affairs of the group and began the violent war against the Nigerian state in retaliation for the death of Yusuf and other members of the group while in custody. As it is today, the problems of Boko Haram still persist. As Adesoji has rightly postulated, "wishing the problem of Boko Haram away and pretending that it is not there, or that it is not as serious as it is, is akin to sitting on a time bomb."¹²⁵ It is time for the government and religious leaders to look inward and address the problem of Islamic fundamentalism in the Northern part of Nigeria. If there are parts of the Holy Book (Quran) breeding Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic leaders – with support from the government – have the right to educate people by putting the texts in the right context. By so doing, people with fundamentalist tendencies would not mislead people with their own interpretation of the Quran. Failure to do this would be akin to cutting a tree from its head, with time, it would sprout again.

Recommendations

It is no doubt that Nigeria would continue to be a religious diverse and multiethnic society. However, there are significant roles that state and civil society groups must play in order to nurture Nigeria's diversity and thereby promote a religiously harmonized society. For example, government ought to make laws or perhaps enforce¹²⁶ the existing ones that would make public institutions more religiously harmonized and tolerant. Section 42(1) of the constitution stipulates that:

¹²⁵ Adesoji (2010)

¹²⁶ It is common knowledge that Nigeria is one of the least law-abiding country in the world. This isn't due to the absence of the laws but for the absence of proper enforcement of the law. A Nigerian can beat a traffic light for example because there's no law enforcer to stop/question him, in the case that one is present, the offender can always bribe his way through.

*“A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person:- (a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject; or (b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions.”*¹²⁷¹²⁸

Either some of these laws are revisited in order to strengthen them or new ones are passed based on the current reality.

Also, policymakers should develop political institutions, devoid of politics, sentiments and nepotism that will be geared towards incentivizing moderation and the need for tolerance among different religious groups in the country. Institutions such as Advisory Council on Religions Affairs which is but a shadow of itself needs to be overhauled and backed by law to effectively execute its mandate. They can also work in tandem with other religious bodies in the country like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) in order to foster religion cohesiveness.

In addition to this, efforts should be made to discourage the idea of choosing a leader because of his ethnic group, religious and political affinities. In this regard, anyone who would serve in any leadership position, either at the federal level as president, state level as governors or local government level as chairman, should be allowed to serve if qualified; irrespective of his or her tribe or ethnic group, religion leanings and political affiliations.

Boko Haram was believed to have rode on the matters of religion, the issue of marginalization, poverty, illiteracy and other vices known to have been the trigger for ethno-religious conflicts. These issues are well visible in Nigeria, and they must be adequately addressed. The way Nigeria

¹²⁷ It is such a pity that these laws are not properly enforced as there still exist nepotism and discrimination in all levels in Nigeria and there has been no prosecution. For example, a woman was gruesomely murdered and then beheaded for preaching near a mosque in the North; her assailants are yet to be brought to book as at the time to this writing.

¹²⁸ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, Chapter 4, Section 42

is currently structured does not give room for those who are aggrieved to express their views and their dissatisfaction and therefore, they would rather resort to creating violence of all sorts. The Nigerian state as it is today is not working and this why the country needs to be restructured. The current administration of Muhammadu Buhari promised to restructure the nation, but nothing much has been done in that regard since 2015 that it was inaugurated. Even though Nigeria claims to practice a federal system of government, but the reality on ground is that Nigeria's federalism does not cater for the needs of every group especially the minor ones. The nation needs to be restructured to cater for her demography to foster unity in diversity. True Federalism must be logical enough to capture the yearnings of the majority and minority groups.

In addition to what has been said above, for Nigeria to totally eradicate issues relating to ethno-religious and other conflicts in Nigeria, and towards ensuring a lasting and sustainable peace and development, it is expedient that the government address the matters of social, economic and political challenges facing the entire country. The issues with Boko Haram are also evident in other parts of the country, albeit in other forms. There are the Niger delta militants in the Southern part of the country agitating over resource control; there is the issue of Biafra in the East over marginalization. Resolving these matters will require that government focuses on improving its capacity at all levels by ensuring that there is rule of law, a functioning justice system, inter-faith dialogue, unemployment reduction, engaging the youths in positive ventures, provision of infrastructure such as good roads, potable water, electricity; and social services such as good healthcare system, quality schools at all levels, et cetera.

Opportunity for Further Research

This work's main focus was on investigating whether Boko Haram's activities were triggered by a pending or unaddressed ethno-religious conflicts. However, much was not said about the operations of the sects and the reason it has lingered this long despite the continuous efforts of the Federal government of Nigeria and their regional collaborators in wiping out the sect's activities. Hence a further reading on the activities of the sect and about the contemporary support of the sect which are crucial to understanding Boko Haram is recommended as there are several papers on these already. The themes below however, do not have enough attention yet and I believe would be good for further research: What has been Boko Haram's major staying power? Is there

something extraordinary Boko Haram is doing that previous sects did not do? How has it managed to become Nigeria's longest sect?

Also, government's approach to the fight against Boko Haram should also be studied. Despite the billions that has been expended so far in the fight, it appears the end of the sect is still not in view. It is true that the Muhammadu Buhari administration claimed Boko Haram's capabilities has been greatly degraded, and much of their operations have been limited to the North-eastern part of the country alone.

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