BOKO HARAM ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA:
A BANE TO NATION BUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

In a bid to keep Nigeria and indeed Nigerians together in the post-independence era and to boost the spirit of "unity in diversity", efforts were made to remind Nigerians of their commitment to the building of a reliable and strong nation. But, rather than pursuing this hallowed desire, some Nigerians have resulted to taking arms against their fellow countrymen in the name of religious sensitization and purity. The act has further pushed the interest of Nigerians against one another and has continually generated high level of distrust and security consciousness. In the more recent time, the activities of some religious sects in the country have affected the interactions between individuals and indeed affected the activities of the citizens. The thrust of this paper is therefore to give meaning to nation building and examine the effects of the activities of Boko Haram on nation building and sustainable development. The paper profited from the analysis and interpretations of the primary and secondary source materials and concludes that a nation cannot develop rapidly when her citizenry live in constant fear.

Keywords: Nation Building, Bane, Insurgents, Unity, *Boko Haram,* Sustainable Development, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Rather than allow the high spirit of nationalism and the hallowed desire of the founding fathers of the nation in building a virile, strong and reliable nation, in the name of religious extremism, *Boko Haram* appears to be exploring the deep-seated poverty in the North, public distrust of the authorities and the ethnic cleavages in Nigeria to unleash terror on average citizens. Thus, its violence has escalated thereby, increasing the number of people being killed, displaced and orphaned in Nigeria. These activities which negate nation building and sustainable development are hereby examined. It also discusses the failure of security agents who appear to be more or less self-inflicted due to policy contradictions.

The Nigeria Nation

Nigeria, like the United Kingdom, the defunct Soviet, and Canada is a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingua state with over two hundred and fifty ethnic-groups, with different languages, cultures, customs and traditions (Ilo,2009). According to the 2006 census, Nigeria's population was put at over 140 million people, with the following as the largest and most politically influential ethnic groups. Hausa/Fulani 29 per cent, Yoruba 21 per cent, Igbo 18 per cent, Ijaw 10 per cent, Kanuri 4 per cent, Ibibio 3.5 per cent, Tiv 2.5 per cent while other smaller ethnic groups account for the remaining 12 per cent of the population that make up Nigeria (Ilo,2009).

However, before independence, some of these ethnic groups had been influenced by Islamic religion; and culture. Some had imbibed Christianity with Western culture and civilization while the rest took to African Traditional or Indigenous values. It should be pointed out therefore that the various values carried into the newly independent Nigeria shaped the relationship of people and ethnic groups in their actions, reactions, relationship and indeed their beliefs of other ethnic groups.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Nation Building

Nation-building referred to the efforts of newly-independent nations, notably the nations of Africa but also in the Balkans (Harris, 2012), to reshape territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or Empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries (Deutsch and Foltz, 2010). These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities (Walker, 2010). Nation-building includes the creation of national paraphernalia such as flags, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages, and national myths.

In yet another vein, Nation building is seen as the problem of winning for the political system, the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. In this sense, nation building is synonymous with National integration. National integration refers to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. In other words, the position of Ake is applicable mostly to Nigeria, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, where most individuals pursue their own interest at the detriment of the other groups.

However, Irele (1999) sees nation building as "the process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages, or petty principality to the larger central political system". For the purpose of this study, nation building can be defined as a process of bringing of diverse groups together to develop their common land.

Nation building is therefore said to become the "right way to go" where there is nation failure. Nation failure can be defined as the failure of public institutions to deliver positive political goods to citizens on a scale likely to undermine the legitimacy and the existence of the state itself (Rotberg, 2003). State failure occurs in respect to a wide range of political dividends, of which the most important ones are the provision of security, an effective legal system to adjudicate disputes, provision of economic and communication infrastructures, the supply of some form of welfare policies, and increasingly opportunities for participation in the political process (Rotberg, 2003).

The position here has been defeated by Nigeria and Nigerians, it is not out of place to say that Nigeria has failed in a number of ways and therefore needs to build or in another case, re-build the Nation. For instance, a number of indicators of state weakness potentially leading to state failure have been identified: disharmony between communities, in-ability to control borders and the entirety of the territory, growth of criminal violence, corrupt institutions, and decaying infrastructure (Rotberg, 2010). Causes of state failure are therefore identified as economic underdevelopment, failures made by the former colonial powers in general, lack of democracy, bad-governance, widespread poverty, heavy dependence on foreign aid, strangulating/stringent measures by international institutions such as the IMF or the IBRD are of particular importance (Crocker, 2003).

In the process of building a nation, therefore, there are five elements that must be fulfilled. One of the aspects is that, the country must have gained political independence. Next, the society should have solidarity, which could motivate its people into governing the country. Third, there should be an organized political system, which provides space for the government to carry out its responsibilities. The fourth element is that, the country must have autonomy, where the government has the authority to endorse, grant concessions, demand royalty and support to make the country's administration more systematic. Fifth, the government-of-the-day must have the people's mandate. The people must be loyal and support the government, at least to work towards achieving political unity (Friedrich, 1963).

The main objective of nation-building, whether in a single-race or multi-racial nation, is in forming unity which can be channeled towards developing a country. Hence, each citizen must be prepared to embrace a one-nation concept which involves the restructuring of socio-politics, socio-economy, and socio-culture of the present society, to be adapted with the newly-founded nation and the needs of the government to improve unity and development of the country (Riberio, 1971).

Nation-building is also seen as a process involving "the psycho social" reconstruction of individuals, as a process of infusing the people of the new independent territories who differ widely in language, religion and values with a new sense of common belonging and shared identity (Ilo, 2009). Further, Nation-building is viewed as efforts at inter-grating the various ethnic groups in a country (Elaigwu, 2004).

It is also said that "the process of nation-building could be seen as an architectural design or a mechanical model that could be built based on authority, needs, and plan of the designer" (Deutsch, 1963). To achieve unity, it is further established that "at this stage, nation-building involves the citizens' loyalty towards their country of residence, and reduces their prioritizing towards their own ethnic" (Emerson, 1963). Further, Nation-building is the process through which people transfer their commitment and loyalty from ethnic groups, religion, etc. to and accepts the central government object of national unity (National Teachers Institute, 2001).

The various definitions given above point to certain factors, which among other things include the (a) acceptance of the will of the state and cooperation with the constituted authority(ies) to create an enabling environment, (b) that nation

building takes working together of various institutions both private and public to achieve a set goal for the state or nation as the case may imply, (c) that it will project a foundation upon which every other profitable and reliable state institutions can rely and be built on (d) it therefore involves the displacement of primordial and ethnic sentiments, which are now transferred to national symbols.

Sustainable Development and Sustainability

Having clarified what nation building presupposes, it is pertinent to interrogate what sustainable development implies, and by extension, sustainability. Sustainable development is a very complex concept as it encapsulates all the efforts and activities needed to make life bearable, glamorous, enjoyable and meaningful to humanity. The Bruntland Commission defined sustainable development as human activities that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987 in Itasanmi and Ogunyemi, 2017). This connotation of sustainable development takes into cognizance the role that man has to play in order to make life meaningful and pleasant for the current / present generation and the future ones. In essence, the leadership and followership of any country must embark on effective policy design and implementation that covers all facets of life for the present generation without jeopardizing the betterment of unborn generations.

Sustainable development entails certain basic elements or components including ecological sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-cultural sustainability (Houtsonen 2004, in Itasanmi and Ogunyemi 2017). In his own contributions, Maurice (2008 in Itasanmi and Ogunyemi, 2017) identifies additional two elements, namely, political suitability and resources sustainability. Maurice emphasizes the centrality of political sustainability as being essential to overall sustainability. In order to achieve sustainable development, the people or citizens must be in control and conflict must be avoided, and that there is the need for people-centred democracy and political system to be established.

Sustainability on the other hand is conceptualized as "sustainable use of the resources that are available on the Planet Earth. These include energy, air, soil, mineral, water and the living organic material" (Maurice in Itasanmi and Ogunyemi).

Given the above explanations, it means man has to explore all strategies towards ensuring that all the resources are efficiently harnessed. In this onerous task the human element cannot be ignored as it is the citizens who have to devise the mechanisms toward the realization of sustainable development and its sustainability. Consequently, sound education, democratic principles; transparency, accountability and public probity; population control, employment generation, effective security network, environmental protection, functional and durable infrastructures, application of science and technology, among other things, are necessary ingredients, and it is the well developed manpower that has to handle and utilize them.

In fact, the burning issue of sustainable development has taken the centre stage of global politics but it got a boost in 1992 when it was put on the front burner during the global conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In spite of the hot debate, there has not been no global unanimity of opinion as to how serious the problem is and what abatement measures were required to improve the situation. As Osuntokun (2004) avers:

> Right from 1992 and up to the recent conference in Johannesburg in South Africa, the
> United States has continued to challenge the scientificity of the data, particularly those
> on global warming as being due to excessive consumption of fossil fuels among other
> man-made reasons. The rest of the world is however convinced that the survival of

man on this terrestrial habitat would depend on how rapidly he changes his activities
in relation to nature.

The above reality portends a serious danger to humanity as the environment serves as the theatre on which every human endeavour takes place. This means sound policies should be formulated towards combating degradation of the environment if socio-cultural, political and economic activities are to be developed and sustained.

Boko Haram

Having known what nation-building connotes, it is imperative to know what *Boko Haram* implies. *Boko Haram* is believed to consist of 300 initial fighters with a network of supporters (Pothuraju, 2012). The group's (*Boko Haram*) official name is "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" whose Arabic translation is *Jama'atuAhlisSunnaLidda'awatiwal-Jihad*. In the town of Maiduguri, where the group was formed in 2002, the residents dubbed it *Boko Haram*. Loosely translated from the local Hausa language, which means Western Education is sinful. The group earned this name due to its strong opposition to Western education, which it sees as corrupting Muslims (Pothuraju,2012).

There are many versions as regards the origin of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria. At different times, it was suggested and argued over time that the sect was imported into the country while other sources said it was home grown. Whatever it is, either imported or home grown, the people in the country also have the tendencies of joining the group and that was why it was somewhat easy for them to join the group and terrorize their own "fatherland". In the light of the above therefore, this aspect of the paper looks into the origin of the sect from two perspectives and therefore established its origin from the array of sources available.

According to the special report of the United States Institute for Peace, *Boko Haram's* origins lie in a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped at the Alhaji MuhammaduNdimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago. In 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as *Boko Haram* declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. The group declared it was embarking on *hijra* (a withdrawal along the lines of the Prophet Muhammad's withdrawal from Mecca to Medina) (United States Institute of Peace,2019).

It moved from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe state, near the border with Niger, to set up a separatist community run on hard-line Islamic principles. Its leader, Mohammed Ali, espoused anti state ideology and called on other Muslims to join the group and return to a life under "true" Islamic law, with the aim of making a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment. In December 2003, following a community dispute regarding fishing rights in a local pond, the group got into a conflict with the police. Group members overpowered a squad of officers and took their weapons. This confrontation led to a siege of its mosque by the army which lasted into the New Year (2004). The siege ended in a shootout in which most of the group's seventy members were killed, including Mohammed Ali, the leader of the sect (US Institute of Peace,2013).

The sect resurfaced after a while, and the increased sophistication in *the* sect's attacks can be linked to growing foreign support to the group. There has been speculation about *Boko Haram's* interaction with two *al-Qaeda*-affiliated groups in other African countries – *al-Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Northwest Africa and *al-Shabaab* in Somalia – for possible training of Nigerians to fight for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria. In August 2011, General Carter Ham, Commander of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), said it was likely that *Boko Haram* had established

contacts with AQIM and *al-Shabaab*." (Gambrell, 2013) In a similar vein, the Algerian Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdelkader Messahel, said he had "no doubts that coordination exists between *Boko Haram* and *al-Qaeda*", citing intelligence reports and similar operating methods (Chikhi, 2013).

From 2002–2009, *Boko Haram* engaged in low-level conflict with local police forces and non-compliant villagers. In 2009, a crack-down on *Boko Haram* members from Nigerian police forces in Borno state erupted into fighting. On July 26, 2009, the sect's members launched an attack against a police station in Bauchi State, resulting in the deaths of 39 *Boko Haram* members, two police officers, and one soldier (Sani,2011). This ignited a 5-day stand-off between *Boko Haram* and security personnel this led to violent attacks and battles which spread across four northern Nigerian states: Bauchi, Kano, and Yobe, culminating in a final battle in the city of Maiduguri, Borno State (Boko Haram, 2011).

On July 30, 2009, the battle of Maiduguri ended when Nigerian security forces captured and killed *Boko Haram's* leader, Mohammed Yusuf, in what human rights groups have tagged an extrajudicial killing. Yusuf's execution was videotaped by soldiers and later broadcast on television. In all, nearly 700 people were killed in the uprising. The death of Yusuf marked a turning point for the *Boko Haram*. It was forced to go underground and many of its leaders were reportedly fled to other parts of Nigeria, including Bauchi State, as well as neighboring countries (USAID, 2011) from where they now operate.

The Activities of *Boko Haram*: A Bane to Nation Building and sustainable development

The unrelenting activities of *Boko Haram* in the North have generated apprehension about the future of Northern Nigeria and that of the entire country. Apart from widening the gap between the North and the South economically and educationally, the insurgence may end up endangering the corporate existence of the country. For instance, food production and supply of cattle to the south have been impeded as a result of the *Boko Haram* onslaught (*Tell*, 2012).

A series of bombing attacks occurred in Kano and Bauchi States of Nigeria between January 20 and 24, 2012, in which nearly 200 people were killed. The Nigerian radical Islamist group, *Boko Haram*, claimed responsibility for these attacks, which brought to the surface several problems associated with Nigerian society and polity (Pothuraju, 2012).

One of the effects of the activities of the sect is the threat coming as Southern merchants and businessmen living in Kano, Maiduguri and some other parts of the North West are daily relocating to Abuja or to other states in the Southern part of the country.

In the solid minerals and the construction sectors where a large population of youths and able bodied men were employed, rising cases of kidnap of expatriates have led to an exodus of investors (*Tell*, 2012). This implies that there is mass exodus of people from the north, one of whose effect is unrest, as people move from troubled areas to relatively peaceful places.

Also, the small businesses in the Northern part of the country are also suffering. These small businesses were mostly operated by non-indigenes prior to the mayhem. The businesses had been shut down while their proprietors had relocated to other parts of the country. Consequently, what used to be the commercial nerves for many decades is now shrinking to a jungle-like settlement where everybody has to "look over his shoulder for safety". This act of terrorism and indeed the relocation of such businesses are having debilitating effects on not only the north, but on the entire country.

Further, Julius Berger, the construction giant announced the suspension of its operations in northern Nigeria due to security concerns; in this case, the company is trying to protect its staff from being kidnapped and unplanned security challenges. This was borne out of the fear that came from the kidnapping and eventual killing of the two expatriates killed in the botched exercise in Kano who were working at a construction site. These people were said to have been kidnapped by members of the *Boko Haram* sects.

On formal (Western) education and schooling, though from time immemorial, the gap between the north and the south is such a wide one, but with the continual activities of *Boko Haram* the gap has grown wider. In the today Nigeria, Western Education at all levels in the North and indeed the North East is in shambles as a result of the precarious prevailing security situation. Schools have come under *Boko Haram* attacks. In a video posted on *You Tube* in February 2012, the sect leaders called on its followers to destroy schools providing Western education (Tell, 2012).

A Nigerian education data survey in 2010 found that Borno State had the lowest school enrolment in the country with only 28 per cent of school age children in school. But that figure has no doubt greatly depleted as a result of the *Boko Haram* siege in the state. At least, 15 schools have been reportedly burnt in Maiduguri city alone forcing more than 7,000 children out of school (Tell, 2012). Despite this, the security situation is bound to compound the educational woes of the North and further widen the gap between it and the South.

In addition, between January and October 2013, *Boko Haram* claimed the lives of about 70 teachers and scores of pupils, while 50 have been completely destroyed in the northern part of Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2013). In a more recent time, the members of *Boko Haram* attacked the College of Agriculture in Yobe State of Nigeria killing 40 people on the spot (Amnesty International, 2013).

While private higher institutions are springing up in the south to cater for and complement the over stretching public institutions, only a handful number of them have been established in the North. The National Universities Commission, NUC, has said "50 private universities have been licensed to operate in the country till date" (Tell, 2012). Out of this figure, less than 15 are established in northern Nigeria.

Another dimension to this discourse is that sustainable development has become elusive in the country. This is because the *Boko Haram* insurgency has diverted the attention of the Federal Government and the federating units in the North Eastern geo-political bloc. The monies and other resources that should have been utilized in developing capacity building of the nation's manpower, provision of infrastructural facilities, job creation, habitable housing schemes, adequate funding for sound and qualitative education, are being expended on fighting the killer squad. In addition, retirees are suffering for not being paid their gratuities and monthly stipends while hundreds of thousands of workers have no access to regular payment of their salaries and other fringe benefits. Worse still is the fact that the youth who are the engine for future development of the country are being mercilessly butchered while the parents and other relations of the slain and fatally wounded undergo psychological and emotional trauma.

The Consequences of *Boko Haram* on Nation-Building

The consequence of *Boko Haram* on nation building in Nigeria cannot be underestimated, as it has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation; including her education, relations with other countries and indeed her economy, which is the basis of every state development and the hub of nation-building.

Due to the activities of *Boko Haram*, Nigeria has now been branded a full-fledged terrorist state, a classification that brings untold odium on us all. Every Nigerian, no matter how respectable, is now a potential terrorist (BBC News, 2013). The acts of this sect have portrayed Nigeria to other countries as a country where terrorism is on the high, therefore, no individual or organization or group of people will invest its monies where there is no effective security network. The foreign investors that have seen Nigeria as a business hub may not also want to come to the country to invest their resources because of their fear of bombing and kidnapping of their staff which have continually besieged them.

It has been stated in this paper that many schools were destroyed by the sects in a bid to put an end to Western education; it should therefore come to mind that by doing so, the Northern part of the country where the schools were burnt will need to rebuild such schools. The implication is that while that is going on the north, the Southerners would have got close to their "destination" as far as education is concerned. Also, as no people is "an Island of Knowledge", the continual security threat caused by this sect will make other interested non-northern teachers either draw back from coming to share their wealth of experience, or withdraw their services from schools in the north, because of the fear of *Boko-Haram*.

It is but a truism, that the educational gap between the Northern and the Southern Nigeria will continue and the move towards building a formidable nation will be truncated as the nation will grow academically at different pace, which hinders nation building.

The destruction of schools, movement and relocation of small and medium businesses and the absence of investors in the country and indeed the northern western part of the country where the *Boko Haram* sect is more resident are pointer to the fact that the people may remain jobless and as such there level of contribution to the "building of a formidable nation" may be on the lowest ebb and their social and economic situations may likely not improve, this will also affect their communication level as such, they get cut-off from events around the country and get disadvantaged.

The *Boko Haram* sect has in their activities succeeded to an extent in infiltrating the ranks of the Nigeria Police, by this, they have been able to get vital information that affect the activities of the Police force. They have also penetrated the Nigerian Prison Service, through which they have been able to break through certain prison houses thereby freeing their members, the same is the case with the armed forces and the National Assembly where they were draw sympathy, support and vital information, as recent events have shown, by this, it means the terror group has expand it operation and enjoy invincibility. It there behooves on the Nigeria state that there is no nation-building in sight until it becomes clear that we can accept and tolerate each other and find a lasting solution to the many various problems and the agitations of each and different groups in the country.

The insurgents, as pointed out above, have negatively affected plans and policies aimed at creating sustainable development. This is because development can only take place and thrive wherever and whenever peace and security, equity, unity and harmony exist. Since this is the case, there appears to be no development that has to be sustained.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined the concept of nation building, evolution and consequences of *Boko Haram* activities to Nation building. It is therefore suggested that we must redefine our value, recover priorities and pursue African economy based on our culture and traditional heritage. To build a nation we must restructure this nation through a national conference devolve power to the federating units as enshrined in the true spirit of federalism.

Mutual and religious tolerance is indeed needed in Nigeria, education and continual enlightenment on both electronic and print media should also be embarked upon. Government officials and elected politicians should also attend to issues the way they appear and also use public funds for this purpose, misappropriation and mismanagement of public fund should be "nipped in the bud" since there are complaints and instances of misappropriation of funds, which is one reason put forward by the sect for it actions.

Since the *Boko Haram* has essentially turned itself to a *cankerworm* that eats deep into the marrow of this country, then it should be treated as a security issue, Nigeria should find effective ways of addressing the root causes for its emergence; these lie in socio-economic and political developments in the country.

Also, the level of destruction caused by the sect to both human and resources is not quantifiable. The destruction caused has dragged both the country, the Northern region in particular and some individuals back and has caused fear in the heart of some people, especially those living and doing legitimate business in the north. The psychological, economic, and socio-political effects caused cannot be erased in the heart of the people in a short time.

Further, the numerous activities of the sect have portrayed the country as a security threat to both foreign and local investors. Some of such investors have already moved out of the Northern region, while others are already shelving their plans to come for business transactions in Nigeria and especially in the northern region.

The failure of security agencies to respond appropriately to the conventional security expectations of the people is not a sign of weakness but the failure of Nigeria as a nation. Moreover, to build a virile Nation devoid of any terror agenda the entire national security apparatus must be positively overloaded to serve as a Nigerian security back bone that would be accountable only to the people of Nigeria, their real employers.

On the whole, if the nation is to experience the dividends of true nation building and sustainable development, the leadership particularly the political class must eschew greed and insensitivity and handle the affairs of the nation with all the seriousness required. Nation building and sustainable development cannot be achieved in a situation where those in the helm of the nation's affairs are corrupt, self-centered, insensitive to the plight of the masses, trivialization of crucial national matters and utter neglect of the various sectors of the economy. If there is any positive change of attitude on the part of the leaders, remarkable improvement will be recorded. This will help to douse the tension and ensure the accessibility of the governed to the goods/dividends of good governance. In addition, *Boko Haram* and all other uprisings must be dealt with, with political will and determination without any further delay.

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