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REVISITING IDENTITY BASED POLITICS AND BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIAUNDER GOODLUCK JONATHAN, 2010-2015

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ABSTRACT: The administration of Goodluck Jonathan was seriously marred by the activities and increasing security threats in the North Eastern part of the country, due largely to the activities of the BokoHaram fundamentalist. This seriously sought the establishment of an Islamic caliphate which saw the country at the brink of collapse. The role played by the politics of identity on the part of Boko Hram cannot be overemphasized as they really saw nothing in common with the rest of people in Nigeria, hence doing everything within their power to promote, protect and foster their interest. The study was qualitative in nature as data was gotten from the secondary sources, while the group theory was judiciously utilized as the analytic framework. The study revealed that, though Boko Haram insurgency could be traced back to 2002, identity politics in no small measure heightened it under Goodluck Jonathan administration by informing the creation of an Islamic Caliphate as pursed by the sect. This is truism because, not long after declaring Goodluck Jonathan the winner of 2011 presidential election than the insurgents began bombing and rioting in the bid to frustrate the government. More so, the fact that the death of Musa YarAdua gave the power back to the South was another cause for such crisis. The study recommends that, Nigerians must come to the realization that using violence to resolve whatever grievances they may have against the state and other persons or groups will only make us worse off as lives that are wasted cannot be recovered and properties destroyed will take a long time to rebuild.
Keywords: Identity Politics, Boko Haram, Insurgency, Violence, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria today is faced with the challenges of being a united country and this has been attributed to various factors playing out in the country. Building a united Nigeria has continued to be a problem owing to the fact that the term nation cannot even withstand the very happenstances and structure of Nigeria (Onwunyi&Ezeifegbu, 2019). Normally, a nation is characterized with a common language, culture as well as religion. It is rather an indisputable fact that ethnicity has marred politics in Nigeria, this has become possible through the continuous struggle by various ethnic as well as religious make up of Nigeria towards the advancement of their group interest to the detriment of national unity and cohesion. Identity always comes first in the mind of most Nigerians in considering national issues and such persons are bent on doing anything possible for the advancement of their group interests thereby undermining the state. The baneful effect of politics by identity or identity politics on national unity as well as the development of Nigeria has remained unabated even after years of political independence. This situation besides going unabated has in recent years assumed a more precarious and dangerous dimension. Identity politics is apparently experienced in every facet of the national life of Nigeria and has also been blamed for the many woes that have befallen Nigeria in the bid for a united Nigeria. Such problems as electoral malpractices and inability to practice democratic governance have their basis, to a large extent, in identity politics. Recall that military incursion into politics is seen in some cases to be motivated by the issue of identity politics either in terms of religion or ethnicity.

Accordingly, Nnabuihe, Aghemalo and Okebugwu (2014) cited in Onwunyi and Ezeifegbu (2019), argued that the issue of census in Nigeria, which has never been successfully conducted without reports of widespread malpractices and protests from various parts of the country has equally been linked to the role of identity politics. These acts are largely perpetuated in the name of group interests, just as the phenomenon of identity cannot be said to be peculiar to our country. Rather it is widespread and every group in Nigeria is guilty of it in various ways and in varying degrees. Identity politics has earned Nigeria unforgettable and bitter experiences such as bloodbath of the thirty dark months of the civil war and other civil unrests, which have had a heavy toll on human lives

Obviously, the challenges of ethnicity, religious fanaticism, corruption and politics by identity have created destructive security challenges and social instability bedeviling Nigeria's fledgling democracy. The struggle for political power, control and distribution of the country's resources amidst other agitations, has continued to heighten insecurity and promote divisive tendencies. It is in search of solution for the things that have fallen apart in Nigeria that such concepts like; Federal Character, Quota system, Zoning Formula, Oil producing and Non-oil producing states dichotomy, among many others were introduced. Despite all efforts at ensuring a peaceful Nigeria, security challenges and social instability have persisted, and have even assumed violent terrorist dimension in recent times. These situations have become increasingly worrisome, leaving Nigerians at home and in Diaspora disillusioned.

More than five decades after Nigeria's bloody civil war ended, identity politics have assumed the direction of ethnic agitations in Nigeria like the Niger Delta Militancy, Indigenous People of Biafra, Arewa groups, Oduduwaetc which have become. One would have thought that the long period of civil war in Nigeria would have laid to rest the challenges of identity politics in term of ethnic inclination and most times religious sentiments, but it never came to be it even heightened during the Goodluck Jonathan's administration. As aptly captured by Alubo (2006:6), "one striking figure of the post-military era in 1999 is the frequent civil strives and crisis along and among ethnic and religious groups, identity politics and attendant violence that have to assume unprecedented dimensions". The fact is that the increasing political relevance of identity-based politics that have continued to rare its ugly head in the Nigerian states are by-product of the divisive mechanism of manipulative and unscrupulous political elites in Nigeria. In fact, despite successive government effort at quelling the agitations and finding the lasting solutions for Biafra quest for a separate entity, the Biafra identity agitation have continually defeated all odds ascribed to it. Mustapha (2004), argued that the politics of identity are central to the Nigerian democratization process and as such, a threat to the unity of Nigeria. This is because the process and strategy of moulding and developing a nation-state is as intriguing as it is challenging when the components parts of the intended states are perhaps socio-politically diverse (Franc Ter, 2016).

Scholars like Nnabuihe, Aghemalo and Okebugwu (2014), Mbalisi (2016), Osimen, Akinyemi&Adenegan (2013), Nwanegbo, Odigbo&Ngara (2014), Nnorom&Odigbo (2015), Ayuba&Danjuma (2018), averred that the identity politics has been manifest in ethnic as well religion dimensions which has a devastating effect on national unity and cohesion of the country. They argued that in as much as they may include other areas of these identity politics which has negative effect on nation building like culture and language, but ethnicity and religion stands out as the most outstanding. Other scholars like Wonah (2016), Almas (2007), Oche (2011), Okechukwu and Nkwachukwu (2017),Okechukwu&Onyishi (2014),Ahmed-Gamgum (2014), are of the opinion that in as much as religion and ethnicity stands out as the most divesting problem to nation building in Nigeria, other factors like religious affiliations, racial and gender cleavages, colonialism generates tensions which affects nation building strategies in Nigeria.

Extant literature where able to articulate the effects of ethnicity, religion, culture, colonialism, gender and racial cleavages as varied identities on nation building but none was able to study the effect of identity politics on ethnic based voting behaviour, political violence, Boko Haram insurgency and equally hate speeches. Equally, extant literature was not able to study the Buhari administration; hence this is the lacuna which this study seeks to fill.

II. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity politics is derivable of two words, "identity" and "politics". Accordingly, identity presumes the situation or eminence of being identical, or the same. It follows that a group of persons may have certain traits, features, cultural realities, economic status etc. that bind them together (Wonah, 2016 cited in Onwunyi&Ezeifegbu). Accordingly, Wonah (2016), in an attempt to explain politics, sees it as the allocation of resources through institutionalized means for the synchronization and fortification of varied welfare in a social formation. By implication, all the groups are in steady struggle for the acquisition of the limited resources in order to protect its interests and assert its identity. The social formation is characterized by competition among the various groups which, when not properly and fairly regulated, can destabilize the political system and threaten the corporate existence of the various interest groups. From the above explanation, one can assert that identity politics has to do with the struggle by the various groups (ethnic or religious) which make up state in a bid to lay hold as well as consolidated the scare resources at the disposal of the country. While buttressing this fact Wonah (2016), argued that identity politics is nothing but the conscious efforts made by a group to protect its interest and assert its identity. To him, it equally means that political arguments that focus upon the self-interest and the perspectives of social minorities or self-identified social interest groups and the way in which people's politics are shaped by certain aspects of their identity such as race, class, religion, sexual orientation, or traditional dominance. It appears to be more glaring that a group tends to assert its identity when in most cases there is an oppressive mechanism usually in the form of a political structure designed to oppress, subjugate, exploit, and relegate it to the background. This view was succinctly captured by (Young 1990), when he said

that identity politics, as a mode of organizing, is intimately connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed.

Consequently, it can be seen as the politics of group based movement claiming to request the interests and identity of a particular group, rather than policy issues relating to all members of the community. Collaboratively, Mbasili (2017:32), posits identity politics to "involving political wiles that focus upon the self interest and perspectives of self-identified social interest group and way in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identify through race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ideology, nation, sexual orientations, profession, hobby or any other loosely correlated yet simple to intuit social organization".

More so, Ambe-Uva (2010), argues that identity politics is a political activity of various ethnic, religious and cultural groupings in demand for greater economic, social and political rights or self-determination. To him identity politics claim to represent and seek the advancement of the interest of particular groups in the society, the members of which often share and unite around common experience of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the wider society of which they form part and exist in. This shows that, the identity of the marginalized group gives rise to political crisis around which they may unite and begin to assert themselves in the society. Ambe-Uva (2010), further argues that identity politics means more than the sole recognition of ethnic, religious or cultural identity. He further stressed that identity politics seeks to advance these identities onward, beyond mere self-identification, to a political framework based upon that identity. For example, Modern Jewish Zionism was originally secular (and marginal) within the Jewish community, but became driven by its own form of identity politics upon the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. Likewise identity politics played a major role in the creation of Central Asian states in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union (Osaretin, 2013). Accordingly Nwanegbo (2015), argues, that

"when we have political wiles that focus upon the self-interest and perspectives of self-identified social interest groups and ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through race, class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ideology, nation, sexual orientation, culture, currency, information preference, history, musical and/or literary genre, medical conditions, profession, hobby, or any other loosely correlated yet simple to intuit social organisations (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2011), we regard that as Identity politics" (Cressida, 2012).

Identity politics as a political concept refers to the political activity of various ethnic, religious and cultural groupings in demanding greater economic, social and political rights or self-determination. Identity politics claim to represent and seek to advance the interests of particular groups in society, the members of which often share and unite around common experiences of actual or perceived social and economic injustice, relative to the wider society of which they form part and exist in. In this way, the identity of the oppressed group gives rise to a political basis around which they may unite and begin to assert themselves in society (Zweiri&Zahid, 2007).

This paper adopts the group theory as the basis of the analysis. The group theory primarily deals with groups rather than individuals as the major component of the political system. It emphasizes the fact that the society is made up of different groups which are not just a collection of individuals but a web of interactions. Different groups, according to David Truman, are based on the notion of interest (Truman cited in Ray 2003: 19). The shared attitudes constitute the interest. Every group is basically an interest group.

Therefore, it becomes evident that the taproot of every group is the interest of the members it protects. In the course of protecting their interest, the groups assert their identities and strategize on how best to have access to state resources. Oftentimes, these interests clash and if there is no adequate institutional arrangement hoisted on democratic values, it can degenerate to conflict. Identity politics is seen as the conscious efforts made by a group in relation with other groups to protect its interest and assert its identity. Thus, within the purview of group dynamics, the reality of politics is hidden below the surface of the properly constituted and recognized organs through which decisions are articulated. It is hidden in the continuous struggle for power and influence upon which groups are constantly engaged (Ray 2003:19). Consequently, the struggle for power, influence, and the protection of different groups' interests makes the political system volatile and more susceptible to conflict.

The relevance of the group theory to this study can be seen from the fact that Nigeria is a plural society that is made up of different ethnic, religious as well as cultural groups that are constantly struggling for power, influence, and the protection of their group interests. This struggle became more devastating given the divisive tendencies inherent in the colonial policies of indirect rule and isolation. The sudden amalgamation of the different ethnic groups in 1914 became a 'marriage of inconvenience', which heightened the fear of domination and suppression among the groups. Identity politics thereby became a real source of resource conflict as well as power struggle which has continued to invalidate the very idea of creating a country with common features.

In the light of this fear, the different groups shrank into their various groups in a bid to protect their interest and assert their identities. This was further demonstrated by the ethnic formation of political parties. Thus, rather than playing the traditional role of interest aggregation nation building, political parties by virtue of their formation and intents, became agents of disunity. From another perspective, the State and its apparatuses in

Nigeria are seen as means of protecting selfish and sectional interests. The political elites formulate policies and make laws that deny people a sense of belonging.

Moreover, the domination of Oil Companies in Nigeria, Federal Institutions, and some agencies especially at the management level, by some ethnic groups explains a part of the structural imbalances that characterize the Nigerian State and hence the need for other groups in the country to vehemently assert their identities and make their presence felt often create undue tension that have negative effect on nation building in Nigeria. The above instance have been given in order to show that the activities of a group in relation to the activity of other groups in a plural society go a long way in understanding the dynamics of a political system, especially as it concerns its efforts towards achieving national cohesion.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Identity Politics and Boko Haram Insurgency

Deeply divided states polarized along ethnic, religious as well as cultural fault lines often tend to be brittle and rickety resulting in violent clashes, for instance the Ife, and Modakeke in 2001, also the Jos crisis between the Christians indigene and the Muslim settlers (Ofonogo, 2016). This is because almost by definition, there are fewer points of meeting and accord among the constituent groups that are required to effectively mitigate or contain the centripetal forces that tear the society apart (Nnoli, 1978). In this context, the emergence of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria's northeastern region has been linked with peoples' attempts at the mobilization of ethnic and religious identity to gain an advantage in the country. In reality, according to Osaghae and Suberu (2005), religion and ethnicity are the most politically prominent identities and the main basis for conflict throughout the country. Collaboratively Best (2001), argued that religion and ethnicity, given the necessary conditions, can be and often are a source of conflict in terms of identities, religious issues and the role they play in conflicts.

In his view Ofonogo (2016) cited in Onwunyi and Ezeifegbu (2019), the very fact that a country has different ethnic, communal, religious and racial groups does not make division and conflicts inevitable, as some of the most diverse countries (for example, Switzerland, Belgium, Malaysia and Tanzania) enjoy relative peace and stability, while some of the least diverse are the most unstable or violent (for example, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, and perhaps Sri Lanka). In a collaborative view, Fearon and Laiton (2003:72), posits that "a greater degree of ethnic or religious diversity … by itself is not a major and direct cause of violent civil conflict". Rather, such conflicts are associated with circumstances that favour insurgency, including poverty, which are trappings of brittle states.

Accordingly, in the mid-1980s, religious movement in Northern Nigeria became more puritan, with stricter interpretations of religion and by upholding fundamental tenets that were previously played down. This period coincided with the Iranian Revolution and the radicalization of northern Nigerian Islam through its contact with zealous and fundamentalist Islamic sects in other parts of the world (Best, 2001: Igwara, 1995). The exponential surge in fundamentalist Islamic insurgency, particularly the Boko Haram mayhem, is explained from that very phenomenon.

The fact remains that, in Nigeria, religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic and more strongly felt than class identities as evidenced in the fact that "those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally proud of their group identities… those who see themselves as members of a social class are somewhat equivocal about their pride" (Lewis & Bratton, 2000:26). These two dominant identities have often been implicated in violent conflict in Nigeria and perhaps precipitated the Boko Haram insurgency.

Furthermore while stressing further Ofonogo (2016), opined that when demands of discontented groups agitating for one thing or the other are hijacked by the political elite and other self-serving elements in the polity, such struggles become politicized. This is very much the case in Nigeria where politics tends to determine every other sphere of social life. In this way, the struggles waged by insurgent groups are usually perceived as a smokescreen for the advancement of the interests of a select few, who usually benefit from the resulting instability.

Indeed, diversity in religion or ethnicity is not necessarily the precursor of violent insurgency (Lewis & Bratton, 2000; Osaghae&Suberu, 2005; Fearon&Laiton, 2003). Instead, it is the politicization of these identities that triggers violence. Takaya (1992:112) cited in Onwunyi and Okoli(2017), identifies some factors that gave rise to the politicization of identities in Nigeria. This includes:

- The existence of two or more ethnic groups with numerical strengths that can significantly affect the outcome and direction of democratic political process;
- The instrumentalization of ethnicity and religion as legitimizing tools of hegemony in instances when the interests of the political class are under threat;
- The existence of ascendant radical thinking within a politically significant ethnic or religious group capable of achieving hegemony;

- The presence of political, social or economic hardships that can cause alliances along ethnic and religious fault lines.

Moreover, Ukoha's (2005), submission that ethnic and religious conflicts do not just happen naturally, nor neither are they accidental but are the products of a conscious effort by social actors. This perhaps explains why some eminent politicians in Nigeria have been linked with the activities of the dreaded Boko Haram sect (Ukoha (2005) in Ofonogo (2016).The wide variety of weapons, resources and information available to them clearly suggests that they have the backing of an influential segment of society. He argued further that, the utter destruction unleashed by Boko Haram on strategic institutions and other locations with admirable precision and expertise is a clear indication that certain highly placed government functionaries are complicit in the on-going assault against the Nigerian state.

Ofonogo (2016), while further buttressing the point argued that the problem of insurgency has for several decades occupied a good part of the attention of scholars. He argued that the various perspectives on the formation and radicalization of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The focus is on the extent to which illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, weak state capability, the almajiri crisis and the mobilization of ethno-religious identity explain simmering insurgency in Nigeria. The group has experienced ferocious onslaught on their activities by the Nigerian Military. The article relies on secondary data. This has enabled the author to draw heavily from literature espousing the diverse perspectives put forth as explanations for the uprising. Fragile state theory serves as a framework for analysis. On this basis, the article demonstrates the low-cost availability of foot soldiers from the almajiri pool, resulting from the state's inability or unwillingness to provide better education, and employment opportunities, and widespread poverty has exposed youths to indoctrination, criminalization and terrorism. In order to ensure the effectiveness of counter terrorism efforts, the military option should not be solely relied on. Rather, efforts should be geared towards addressing the various underlying social, political and economic triggers of violent insurgency, especially in northern Nigeria where such triggers are pervasive.

Empirical Literature

Literature are replete of the study on identity based politics and insurgency. In the words of Egharevba&Iruonagbe (2015) cited in Onwunyi and Ezeifegbu (2019), the activities of ethnic/religious insurgent groups have permeated the Nigerian nation, bringing into question the essence of survival of the Nigeria project. This ranges from the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the indigene/settler crisis in many states, and the Boko Haram saga in the North-East region. Several factors ranging from economic, political and cultural marginalization, widening social inequalities, lack of basic infrastructure and exclusion have been cited as reasons for these insurgencies in order to attract attention from the national government and the international world. It is the contention in this study that employing tactics of violence and killings against innocent individuals, communities and armed conflict within the state creates long-term devastating consequences than the short–term goal of attracting attention to whatever genuine demands any group may hold. The paper further argues that insurgency results from leadership failure, lack of accountability, political exclusion and marginalization which create conditions where the most vulnerable, particularly women and children, are more at the risk of hunger, malnutrition, susceptibility to illnesses and death. Furthermore, countries in conflict suffer disruptions in livelihoods, infrastructure, schools, markets, assets, nutrition, health and loss of resources required for food production and distribution, including national development. The end result is that instead of the country advancing in building sustainable development, the perpetration of conflict and violence causes the country to suffer long-lasting losses, including losses to food production and societal advancement. The study concludes with the recommendation that employing constructive non-violent dialogue and demanding accountability from leadership in all spheres of life and authority will go a long way in addressing socioeconomic challenges faced in the country. It will also galvanize our collective drive, energies and resources in generating more secure livelihoods for the population currently mired in poverty, hunger and insecurity.

Collaboratively, Nnorom&Odigbo (2015), in a related study on Identity politics and the Challenge of Peace-Building in Wukari-Nigeria observed that in the past few years, the intensity of crisis in Wukari has astonishingly created one of the worse security challenges in Taraba State. This paper examined Identity politics with the view to determining the extent this has exacerbated the crisis in Wukari. The study observed that understanding the role of identity in Wukari's multifarious conflicts is a crucial step in establishing the linkages of several other dynamics that underlie its causes and persistency. It argued that identity dichotomy among the Jukuns has deepened grievances leading to seven disastrous conflicts in the last two years. The complex web of dynamics that often provokes these conflicts has also stalled peace-building processes. The paper adopted qualitative descriptive method of analysis while relying on the political economy approach as its theoretical guide. This approach appeared adequate for the study because it emphasized identification of themes in texts and documents that focused on the major propositions under test. It recommended all inclusive peace initiative

that will involve government and stakeholders from various segments of the community towards ensuring sustainable peace in Wukari.

Again,Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2014), argued that an identity is a distinguishing label that objectively exists, is subjectively felt, and enables its bearers to experience individually and collectively a sense of solidarity. Identities are socially constructed, dynamic and multifaceted. Subjectively, identification with a category is simultaneously a definition of self, so that groups come to identify themselves as ethnic, religious, occupational, national and other terms. Objectively, individuals do not identify in general, but do so in relation to others' definitions of themselves and the boundaries implied in such definitions (Kuna cited in Alubo, 2009: 2).

Furthermore, Mbalisi (2016), while examining the Challenge of Ethnicity, Politics by Identity and Prebendalism to Security and Social Stability in Nigeria, 1999 to 2015, argued that Nigeria is plagued by avalanche of challenges. Prominent among them are issues of ethnicity, politics by identity, security, religious cleavages, corruption and nepotism, and prebendalism to mention in a few. These factors have continued to generate tensions that sap the country of its vitality. They have created unhealthy competition among different Nigerian elites mainly, those from the three largest ethnic groups centered on national economic control and political leadership. The continued dominance of the country's national life by the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo and Yoruba, and the ensuing conflict among political elites of the diverse groups, distort and threaten socio-economic development, national security and disturb peaceful co-existence among Nigerians.Ethnic and religious cleavages have assumed terrorist dimension that interrupt economic and social stability. Hence, government ineptitude, manipulations and growing Islamic and Christian assertion seem to heighten violence between adherents of the two religions in the country. It argues that amongst the numerous challenges to security and social stability in Nigeria, ethnicity, politics by identity and prebendal politics are directly responsible. The persistence of these grim issues makes the country trade the tumbled pathway to disintegration heightened state of insecurity and social instability.

Similarly, AyubaandIsmaila (2018), in a study on Identity conflicts as challenge to political stability in West Africa argues further by establishing the nexus between identity conflict and its impacts on socio-economic and political relations in the West African context. The effort is motivated by the observable incidences of incessant violent conflicts and wars; all fought on the basis of ethnic and religious fault lines that threaten the stability and cohesion of the sub region in its evolution towards becoming developed regional economic community. Because of the broad nature of the study area, the study carefully selected Nigeria and Cote d' Ivoire as case studies. The choice is informed by the realization that these countries share a lot of similarities especially in the area of their diversities and poor management of this otherwise important agent of social mobilization and national development. The study has argued that while identity is a major cause of violent conflicts and civil wars often leading to state failure, the same identity, if properly managed-through equitable distribution of welfare resources through the institution of democratic practices, states within the region can overcome their economic and political challenges as they advance in the 21st Century and beyond. The data used in the study were collected from diverse sources, including documentary sources (desk review) and government reports. Data collection from documentary sources involved the evaluation of relevant literature on themes bordering on West African political and socio-cultural systems (identity question) - ethnicity, regionalism and religion. In addition, secession literature was also relied on to furnish the study with relevant details on the subject which is a major theme of our discourse.

IV. IDENTITY POLITICS AND BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA UNDER GOODLUCK, 2010-2015

Antecedent traces Boko Haram insurgency to 2002, though the nefarious activities associated with Boko Haram can be said to have began in 2009, when the jihadist group Boko Haram initiated an armed upheaval against the government of Nigeria. According to Ambe-Uva(2010), the conflict situation can be located within the milieu of long-standing issues of religious violence between Nigeria's Muslim and Christian communities, and the insurgents' major intention is the establishment of an Islamic state in the region. Boko Haram's initial uprising failed and its leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed by the Nigerian government. The movement consequently splintered into independent groups, though rebel commander AbubakarShekau managed to achieve a kind of primacy among the insurgents (Wonah, 2016, cited in Onwunyi&Ezeifegbu, 2019). Though challenged by internal rivals, such as Abu Usmatul al-Ansari's Salafist conservative faction and the Ansaru faction, Shekau became the insurgency's *de facto* leader and mostly kept the different Boko Haram factions from fighting each other, instead focusing on overthrowing the Nigerian government. Supported by other Jihadist organizations such as al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, Shekau's tactics were marked by extreme brutality and explicit targeting of civilians.

Boko Haram insurgency in the North could be said to be religiously aggravated. Normally, Boko Haram means hatred for Western education and one could query the ethnic inclination of the sect. Identity

politics began extensively to show up after the 29 May 2011, when Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as Nigerian president, several bombings purportedly by Boko Haram insurgents which recorded the death of 15 as well as several degrees of injuries to 55 persons (Oyalode, 2015). Accordingly, the Boko Haram sect on 16 June, 2011 claimed to be responsible for the Abuja police headquarters bombing, seen as the very first known suicide attack in Nigeria. Soon after this, there was the first Boko Haram attack on an international organization which was the United Nations building in Abuja. Furthermore, another attack was carried out in December in Damaturu with a recorded casualty of over a hundred with a subsequent clash with security forces in December which resulted to 68 deaths. On Christmas Day, Boko Haram claimed responsibilities of several attacks on Christian churches with severe bomb blasts and scary shootings. From all indications therefore, the Boko Haram insurgency was a result of the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan, a Southerner, as well as a Christian.

According to Osaretin (2013), it has become a ritual for the Northerners as well as Muslims to remain presidents of Nigeria, hence this particular emergence of an infidel (non-Muslim) gave rise to insurgency in Boko Haram as well as the need for the creation of an Islamic Caliphate that will make sure Northern Muslims continuously remain at the helm of affairs or seceded from Nigeria. The view of Osaretin (2013), on the idea of secession from Nigeria cannot be said to be ideal and hence will be disputed, this is because according to Kukah (2014), the goal of Boko Haram insurgency has been to make everything humanly possible to enthrone Islamic religion in Nigeria, hence the "Islamization agenda". Collaboratively, Wonah (2016), argued that Boko Haram responded to perceived political marginalization of the North and particularly the Northeast. Such response was evident on the fact that many Northerners were affronted by the 2011 electoral victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian who originally ascended to the presidency on the death of President UmaruYar'Adua, a Northern Muslim. Arguably, Jonathan's re-election disrupted the ruling party's agreement to rotate the presidency between the South and the North every eight years and this gave rise to riots in Northern cities, causing over 800 deaths. Yet it is worthy of note that Boko Haram was formed before Jonathan's victory and has continued to exist under Buhari, a Muslim.

According to the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to then President Goodluck Jonathan, 'the sect is ideologically linked to Al Qaeda' and 'it rejects peaceful coexistence with Christians'. One can simply assert that while these facets related to gender, religion and politics are all correct, they paint an incomplete picture and on their own limit the understanding of a group that has mostly killed Muslims and young men (Wonah, 2016).On a contrary view, Das-Hara and Chouldbury (1997), locates the emergence and intensification of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria elitism in Nigerian politics. They defined the term 'elite' in its general sense as referring to "positions in society which are the summits of key social structure i.e. the higher positions in government, economy, politics, religion etc". These said political actors known as the elites represent the higher classed minority in possession of better education, greater wealth as well as possess easy access to culture, science and technology as well as embody the good qualities of a society (Nnoli, 2003). It is therefore not out of place to argue that, these elites control the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the people. From a distinct direction one can posit that the wisdom and knowledge posed by these elites are useful in such areas as, their political entrepreneurship, ideological commitments and manipulative skills in the realm of party politics and liberal democracy. Form the foregoing therefore, these elite in their quest for power and resources within the political system become divided into the two non-homogeneous colonial creations of Northern and Southern Nigeria. To this end one can say that, the effort for political power defines elite politics in Nigeria.

Accordingly, Ibeanu and Mbah (2012), argued further that, state power is a means of production for those who have acquired it. In their opinion, Boko Haram group emerged as instruments in the hands of the northern elite attain the position of the president after the death of former President Yar'Adua. Notwithstanding the fact that it existed in Borno State before then, it was not used by the consensus of the northern elite but utterances and comments from captured members of the sect suggest the support of the northern political elite. The spiralling of attacks of the sect after Goodluck Jonathan assumed power also lends credence to this thesis as there was an increased alignment on the basis of ethnicity as well as religion in an attempt to oust the then Presdient Jonathan. In a collaborative view, Mbah, Nwangwu and Edeh (2017), argued that, these youths were hurriedly mobilized along ethnic and religious line, especially the poor and downtrodden who have been reduced to street urchins and also live with exploitative Koranic mallams. To them, these mobilized youths were frequently deployed to kill non-Muslims and non-indigenes in the north.

In his view Chukwuma (2018), posited that the emergence of Boko Haram was preceded by intense political squabbling between and amongst some Muslim political actors in the north and their Christian counterparts in the south in the period leading to the electoral victory of Goodluck Jonathan as the President of the federal Republic of Nigeria. He further opined that, in a political milieu where in the major determining factor of electoral victory is very much dependent on the power of incumbency, the fact that the champ in the contest depends largely on the machineries of the state as a distributive centre for sectional interest, family members, cronies, praise singers, friends and courtiers of government is not out of place. Worthy of note at this

juncture, is that the electoral victory of came scarcely three years after power returned to the north, from an eight-year stopover in the south, where the north grudgingly ceded it in 1999 following the uproar that resulted from the annulled 1993 Presidential Election, which MoshoodAbiola, a southerner and a Moslem was acclaimed the winner. Recall that through nifty political engineering by mostly the Northern top politicians, a power sharing formular was put in place which ensures equity in power distribution between the North and the South, hence the idea of rotational presidency as articulated by the then ruling party. After Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (1999–2007) which saw the South retain power for eight years, power shifted to the North in May 2007 owing to the electoral victory of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president and based on the power sharing arrangement was supposed to remain in the North for another eight years to attain the presumed equity. In spite of provisions of the constitution which equips the Vice President to take over power in case of death of the President, the Northern politicians saw this ascendancy of Goodluck Jonathan after the death of Yar'Adua as was an attempt at returning power to the South without the North completing the agreed eight years. On this Alozieuwa (2012), argued that such logic of loss made manifest from Yar'Adua's death gave rise to political tension in which Nigeria was embroiled in the pre-2011 General Elections period. To this very end one can strongly conclude that politics by identity as always been the central point of discussions of politics in Nigeria is frequently characterized in terms by the north and south rivalry.

While contributing further to the discussion, Mbah, Nwangwu and Edeh (2017), asserted that the foundation of politics in Nigeria is often wobbly and mercurial. To them, the critical defining factors of politics in Nigeria may be clique, ethnic nationality, state, region or religion. To this end, one can therefore say that ethnicity has always remained the most politically vital factor in politics. Accordingly, the idea that Nigeria's varied ethnic nationalities express their interests and attempt to fill them politically is no longer an illusion. Most times politics is defined along the lines of ethno-regional identity as in the case of the North, South and Middle Belt, at other times it is defined in terms of ethno-religious groupings as in the mainly Moslem North and predominantly Christian South; other defining factors include minority versus majority ethnic groups, and numerous sub-ethnic identities. These perceptions of the North and South in Nigeria play important role in defining political positions and offices. The Federal Character question in Nigeria to a large extent explains this North-South relationship as the major plank on which the Nigerian politicians as well as actors hinged the idea of national cohesion. A look at Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, avails one of ample opportunity towards the very understanding of the dynamics of sharing public offices as provided for in the federal character principle. Consequently upon this, the notion and run through of distribution of federal government positions in Nigeria tend to greatly weaken the principle of fair play and unity as well as the objectives of the requirement. The federal character principle puts zoning or geo-political affiliation ahead of performance and qualifications, the promoting mediocrity above meritocracy which is detrimental to our public service and service delivery. It creates the impression that there is a balancing of geo-political representation at the federal level and ethnic or tribal at the state level. But the content of the character of the ruling class matters a lot.

The death of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (Nigeria's former president) brought to the fore, the issue of zoning of the presidential slot within the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and as such brought about division in the party hierarchy. This division lasted up to a point when the National Executive Committee of the party upheld the zoning principles but that President Jonathan has a right by the Nigerian Constitution to contest, if he so desires. Due to the issue as stated above a raging debate ensued which became highly receptive and capricious to the extent that it later became a national security problem, going by the dangerous and reckless harangue engaged by those in support of the policy. On this AlhajiLawalKaita, opined that should Jonathan contest and win the presidential election, the country will be made ungovernable for him by the North. To this end, Kanti Bello, the Senate former minority Chief described Jonathan's ascension to power as a "slap on the face of the Northerners" (Mbah 2014:595). When Jonathan eventually emerged the party flag bearer for the 2011 General Elections as well as his consequent victory, there became political instability in the country. Before and after the elections, prominent Northerners such as Junaid Mohammed, AngoAbdullahi, Isa Kaita and AdamuCiroma at different times threatened that hell would be let loose on Nigeria if Jonathan remained president of Nigeria beyond 2015. General MuhammaduBuhari while deliberating over his loss of 2011 presidential election, stated that, "if what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon will be soaked in blood" (Binniyat, Vanguard, May 15, 2012). This in effect means that there would be bloodshed if the 2015 elections are not conducted transparently. This threat was worrisome because, going by Buhari'smindset, the 2015 elections cannot be adjudged by him to be transparent if he does not win.

In 2013, AngoAbdullahi, the then chairman of Northern Elders Forum, was of the view that Jonathan does not have what it takes to be next president of Nigeria come 2015. According to him,"we in the North are waiting" (Daily Sun, Thursday, February 5, 2015). More so, Junaid Mohammed on December 2014, severely warned Nigerians when he held that, "there would be bloodshed if Jonathan stood for the 2015 elections".

Furthermore, he argued that the northerners with the population of over 85 million will vehemently rise against it. It is deducible therefore, from the foregoing that the escalation of Boko Haram insurgency, especially after the death of President Yar'Adua in 2010, is a by-product of the identity conflict and contradictions in Nigerian. The utterances above constitute the stimulant to the development of the insurgence but are largely implicated in its continued sustenance. Behind the facade of crisis in the ruling party is the ever discordant quest for power shift within and outside the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The failure of Obasanjo's third term ploy, the paralyzing complaint and eventual death of his successor, Musa Yar'Adua threw up fresh challenges for the party. Goodluck Jonathan, his then deputy from the South-Southern geo-political zone, not only completed his term in office, but contested and won elections in 2011 against the zoning principles of PDP. Then terror was unleashed on Nigeria, through armed attacks, bombing and maiming of innocent citizens and property. The sect was made an overt instrument of sectionalism in Nigeria.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the greatest challenges facing the country today is the threat towards unification of several fractionalizations in the country, as the strife for resource control and self-rule, identity politics and religious cleavages have continuously enveloped general consciousness. Nigeria is a plural state which was historically divided along ethnic and religious lines. According, it is not contestable that such division-ethnic, religious, tribal, cultural etc is not by any means artificial or accidental. But the unification of all these entirely divergent entities into a single and unified entity is by all means artificial and historically accidental.

Though Boko Haram insurgency could be traced back to 2002, the study equally revealed that identity politics in no small measure heightened Boko Haram insurgency under Goodluck Jonathan by informing the creation of an Islamic Caliphate as pursed by the sect. This is truism according to Chukwuma (2018), that not long after declaring Goodluck Jonathan the winner of 2011 presidential election than the insurgents began bombing and rioting in the bid to frustrate the government. More so, the fact that the death of Musa YarAdua gave the power back to the South was another cause for such crisis.

Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria under Jonathan as a result of identity politics leaves more to be desired. The fact remains that every government that comes into power in Nigeria is usually challenged with how to properly articulate all the conflicting interests in order to promote unity in diversity. In the bid to achieve any meaningful nation building agenda the study recommends the following;

There is an urgent demand for political actors in the state to muster the right political will to make laws that specify taut punishment for individuals, groups and organizations that preaches separation and abhorrence amongst the various groups that make up Nigeria either on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

Furthermore, Nigerians must come to the realization that using violence to resolve whatever grievances they may have against the state and other persons or groups will only make us worse off as lives that are wasted cannot be recovered and properties destroyed will take a long time to rebuild. Therefore, there is the very necessity for all Nigerians irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation to seek non-violent dealings and other unconventional conflict resolution method to resolve whatever ill-feeling they may have against the state and the political leaders at all levels. Nigerian must, in the course of interaction and discharge of responsibilities show kindness, be fair and considerate to people no matter the ethnic cleavages. Otherwise, the spirit and feeling of oneness would elude us and nation building would continue to be a mirage in Nigeria.

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