

Review

Unemployment and poverty as sources and consequence of insecurity in Nigeria: The Boko Haram insurgency revisited

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Central to the discussion in this paper is the issue of the crisis of unemployment and extreme poverty prevailing in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern region where it is endemic. It is the contention of this paper that contrary to expectations and dreams nourished by many that the country's abundant resources will help alleviate poverty from among the citizenry, lack of judicious utilization of these resources by the country's leadership has undoubtedly created a vicious circle of poverty among Nigerian masses. More importantly, the expectations of the citizens in 1999 that democracy will afford them good job opportunities with improved standard of living has been proved unrealistic. Rather, the gap between the rich and the poor widens as the level of official corrupt practices exacerbated. Although, while it is unarguable that unemployment and poverty are not sufficient variables in explaining heighten insecurity in Nigeria vis-à-vis Boko Haram insurgency in the northern part of the country, this paper establishes that there exists a strong connection in unemployment, poverty and prevailing insecurity in the region. The experience of Muhammed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia in December 2010 arising from unemployment which later sparked popular uprising in Arab world dubbed 'the Arab Spring', confirms the position of this paper that there is a nexus between poverty, unemployment and widespread discontent. Therefore, the paper adopts the combination of Marxist, Relative-Deprivation and Frustration-Aggression theoretical frameworks for analysis.

Key words: Unemployment, poverty, Boko Haram, insecurity/terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Today, unemployment and poverty constitute major challenges facing mankind across known boundaries including the most developed societies like Western Europe and America. However, it remains much more endemic among the Third World countries and parti-

cularly Africa with the worst case in Nigeria. According to the United Nations publications (Borode, 2011: 149), over one billion people in the world today live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries, particularly in rural areas of low income countries in

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Africa. The most tragic is the fact that youths within the age bracket of 14 to 50 year old are the worst hit (Ajaegbu, 2012). This makes it more dangerous because this vulnerable group is susceptible to committing and/or perpetrating all sorts of crimes like terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, assassination, thuggery, prostitution, drug and human trafficking and so on. Also, most violent protests, demonstrations and revolutions and several mob actions leading to outbreak of wanton destruction of lives and properties including lawlessness in many societies as we are witnessing in the Arab world and elsewhere today are triggered by this same group of people, the youths. In other words, most prevailing violent conflicts involving youths in Africa and indeed Nigeria are intricately linked to unemployment and poverty. In his thesis, Ikejiaku (2009: 15) described the absolute poverty in Africa with what he called 'poverty qua poverty', the term used in describing the real poverty in Africa where majority of people find life excruciatingly agonizing due largely to difficulty in meeting or satisfying their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and qualitative education. Writing from the same premise, Schaefer (2005: 2) wrote that "worse, the continent [of Africa] on average has grown poorer over the past two decades despite enormous aid disbursements and substantial gains in technology and trade that have helped boost growth in other regions", particularly on the Asian continent.

On the crisis of unemployment in Nigeria, Ajufo (2013: 307) contended that "unemployment has become a major problem bedevilling the lives of Nigerian youths, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behaviour. Youth unemployment is devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically". Accordingly, it is apposite to argue that a society bedevilled with the problem of endemic rate of unemployment and poverty especially among its productive segment of the population as it is currently the case in Nigeria, will have its peace and stability endangered with dire consequence of retrogression instead of progress. As noted by World Bank Development Report of 1984 in Washington on Africa, (Onimode, 1988), the paradox of the deepening crisis of mass poverty in Africa and the enormous wealth of the continent is very painful.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This paper adopts three theories to explain the existing nexus among unemployment, poverty and insecurity in the country. Undoubtedly, these frameworks explain the interrelatedness between and among the three variables. While unemployment reinforces poverty, violent conflict and extremist desirability is often times spurred by endemic and vicious poverty level.

Theoretically, Marxism originates from the philosophical view of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel, including other

socialist writers. The origin of this theory dates back to 1848. The theory was later reinforced by the works of several Marx-inspired scholars particularly the Underdevelopment and Dependency theorists like Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallenstein, Dos Santo and Paul Baran to mention these few (Fanon, 1963; Santos, 1970; Frank, 1972; Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1974; Wallenstein, 1974; Amin, 1976; Ferraro, 1996).

The theory arose out of concern over the unequal ownership and distribution of the means of production that bifurcated society into two antagonistic classes – the class of 'haves' and 'have-nots', the pauperized and the wealthy, the working class/proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Thus, the Marxist theory exposes the exploitative tendencies and appropriation of the supposed commonwealth to the few at the detriment of the masses. According to this theory, conflict, insecurity and instability such that depicts Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria arises out of the life and death struggle between two dominant socio-economic classes. On one hand is the class of those who control the means of production vis-à-vis the state power and on the other, those who rely on their labour for survival – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or poor masses. Hence, Marxist conflict theory concludes that since the relations of production based on equality, moral affection and absence of classes collapsed, class antagonism will continue to prevail in the society. Marx therefore predicted that conflict in their different permutations and manifestations will cease only when an ideal communist stage of social progression where state will disappear is attained and equality of all is actualized. According to this theory, this can only be achieved through inevitable overthrow of the exploitative (capitalist) system in a bloody revolution (Machel, 1977: 5; Appadorai, 1975: 117-118).

The relevance of this theory in explaining the wave of insurgency in Northern Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. While it is true that few wealthy people like the former Commissioner for Religious Affairs in Borno State, Usman Dirkwa (see Daily Trust, October 14, 2014, p. 1), including the former Governor of the state, Ali-Modu Sherriff, have been identified of having links with the Islamic sect (the claim which has not been confirmed by any court of law in Nigeria), it is the contention of this paper that quite significant number of Boko Haram members are drawn from those within the lower rung of the society. This point is reinforced by Danjibo (cited in Obiyan and Usman, 2013) who, held the view that the Boko Haram crises broke out due to failure of governance in Nigeria to halt extreme poverty especially among the youths of Northern extraction. Buttressing this point, Mallam Hussaini Salisu, an Islamic cleric, cautioned that "the level of frustration and poverty among youths in the country is a fertile ground for activities of such groups; their conduct is totally un-Islamic but the

whole problem boils down to the failure of government at all levels to make the welfare of the citizenry a priority. A nation that allows its youths to be idle is sitting on a time bomb because frustrated people seek relief in religion" (Tell, August 10, 2009, p. 38); hence, the relevance of this theory in explaining the prevailing insurgency in northern Nigeria.

On the other hand, explaining relative deprivation theory, Ted Robert Gurr in his book, *Why Men Rebel* (Gurr, 1970) pointedly explicated that instead of an absolute standard of deprivation, a gap between expected and achieved welfare leads men to discontent and eventual violence. This theory also applies to individuals who find their own welfare to be inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves. He argues that relative deprivation is the term used to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to violence". This gap between an individual's expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent.

To Gurr (ibid), violence and extremism like the Boko Haram insurgency in the North is as a result of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation by the young people who contrary to believe that democracy will improve their living conditions worsened it off. In his assertion, Obi (2008: 7) noted that "the high expectations of the people that democracy would reverse decades of poverty, corruption and underdevelopment have hardly been met by the new democrats". This ultimately created feelings of deprivation and impulse to form a rebel group and undertake senseless terror attacks on both the innocent citizens and government.

Historically, the concept of relative deprivation dates back to ancient Greece. For example, Aristotle (Gurr, 1970 cited in Richardson, 2011) articulated the idea that revolution and other actions such as terrorism are driven by a relative sense or feeling of inequality, rather than a natural instinct. In other words, the impulse to attack or desire terrorism by (young) people stems from a discrepancy between what people perceived are theirs or considered to be legitimately theirs but are deprived of getting by others. Invariably, Gurr believes that this perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities is what leads to discontent rather than seeing instinct to become violent as a natural reaction. Hence, relative deprivation theory is illustrated this way: Mr A feels deprived of object X, Mr A does not have X but wants to have it. Mr A knows of other people who have object X and believes obtaining X is realistic only that it he or she was deprived of it by a person or group of persons. This deprivation engenders frustration that eventually leads to aggression in form of terrorism and other violent conflicts.

In Gurr's analysis (Gurr, op. cit.), the primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism; the anger induced by

frustration is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities. This view was supported by Dollard et al. (1939) who postulated that frustration leads men to act aggressively. Therefore, Richardson (op. cit.) argued that while frustration is caused by relative deprivation, the resulting aggression is manifested as terrorism. He linked high unemployment rates and poverty with terrorism. To him,

When a large group of highly educated individuals enter the work force and levels of unemployment are high, the individuals may feel over-qualified and disappointed relative to what they expected to gain from their education. Presumably individuals pursue higher education with the expectation that additional studies or training will help them find better jobs. As a result, well-educated individuals may feel greater discontent from unemployment than those who did not expect such grand employment opportunities. This socioeconomic discontent, in turn, may result in political violence (p. 7).

Accordingly, frustration-aggression theory which is an off-shoot of relative deprivation theory explains that prevailing events such as terrorism and wave of violent extremism in Africa and particularly Nigeria are products of frustration and aggression. The fundamental thesis of this theory as formulated originally by John Dallard et al (cited in Fawole, 1994: 12 – 13) is that "the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise that the existence of frustration leads to some form of aggression". According to the analysis offered by Ted (1970), the potential for collective violence is a function of the extent and intensity of shared discontents among members of a society and the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents. The fundamental point here is that, discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participants in collective violence with relative deprivation defined as the perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and value capabilities. These value expectations, according to Gurr, represent the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightly entitled while value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining, given the social means available to them.

Similarly, Feierabends and Nesvold (1971) said that, "systemic frustration leads to aggression, that is, the frustration collectively experienced by the members of a polity and which is caused by the political system under which they live induces the tendency to resort to political aggression". According to this theory, if group of individuals experience any frustration collectively, and this is perceived to result from the policies and actions of the government, it may likely induce them to challenge and perhaps remove the source of discontent. In this light, the contention of Feinberg (1973) cited in Ojo (2010: 45) who said "a world with equal rights is a more just world. It is also a less dangerous world, generally,

and one with a more elevated and civilized tone” resonate.

The adoption and adaptability of these theories for this paper is apt considering the fact that majority of those who engage in the Boko Haram insurgency are mostly people within the youth age bracket who have no job and decent means of livelihood. One of the Nigerian national dailies; the *Nigerian Tribune* (Monday, August 10, 2009, p. 17) put it more succinctly when it reported that:

In some other more serious climes, the recent mayhem in the North should be an opportunity for the state as represented by federal, state and local governments in Nigeria to put some commitment in their statutory responsibility of protecting life and property. Such will of course include creating an enabling environment for individuals to have access to good life and be able to actualise themselves. This is the first step towards security of life and property. To neglect to do this is to give rein to violence, anarchy, even anomie in whatever guise or disguise. The insensitivity of the government and the resentment of the citizenry are the recipe for an avoidable and eventual conflagration.

From the foregoing, there is a sense in arguing that unemployment and poverty coupled with government indifference to tackle them head-on provide fertile grounds for terrorism with its accompanied security implications to thrive in the country. More worrisome is the fact that the affected persons are those whose agility, youthfulness, viability and exuberance are predisposed to be hijacked by merchants of terror with dire consequences for the nation’s security.

BOKO HARAM AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

Admittedly, several factors are responsible for prevailing level of insecurity that has permeated the entire country especially the unrelenting Boko Haram insurgency since 2009. Particularly, scholars and analysts have adopted several causative factors and reasons to discuss the origins, philosophy and motivations of the dreaded Boko Haram. Some of the reasons that easily sufficed include but not limited to, one, the quest of core north to Islamize Nigeria since the era of Jihad by Usman Dan Fodio in 1804; two, increased poverty and unemployment rate especially in the northern region, and three, the recruitment of hungry street beggars called the ‘Almajiris’ who are the alienated ones in the society by the political elites in the north for selfish/sectional and parochial ends. Another reason is the disapproval of some northern political elites about the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan during the 2011 general elections. Others include inadequate and ineffective policing of Nigeria’s porous borders that encourages influx of many unacknowledged foreigners into the country as well as the expansion of the frontier of global terror network on no-border basis as part of the globalization drive and so

on (Hodgkin, 1975; Adetoro, 1982; Falola, 1998; Adetoro, 2010; Onuoha, 2010; Adesoji, 2010; Marchal, 2011; Suleiman 2011; Adenrele, 2012; Usigbe, 2012).

While all these reasons and many others provide profound explanations about Boko Haram and insecurity in the country, this paper adopts the unemployment and poverty variables.

According to Piazza (2006: 159), “terrorism and other forms of political violence are a product of poverty”. He argues that since the events of September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the U.S. by al-Qaeda group, the presumed link between material want and terrorist activity has been cited by political figures from across the political spectrum and has found its way into mainstream economic development and international security policy discussions. For example, at the November 2001 UN General Assembly meeting in New York, forty-one Heads of State and Government in attendance urged the world body to address the issues of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment which they believed are major factors precipitating international terrorism.

Thus, in his address to the General Assembly, the then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan proclaimed: “No one in this world can be comfortable or safe when so many people are suffering and deprived” (ibid). While describing terrorism as the “dark side of globalization” and noting that one-half of the world’s population survives on less than \$2 per day, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, in a January 2002 speech, urged American policymakers to promote national security by easing the growing international disparities in wealth (Teresa, 2002). Also, even though the IMF and World Bank through their imposed policies, encouraged underdevelopment and consequent dependency of Third World economies with attendant poverty, the statement credited to the former Vice President for Private Sector Development, Infrastructure and Guarantees at the World Bank, Nemat Shafik is apt. To Shafik, he asserted that the legacies of economic stagnation, high levels of unemployment, and uneven economic development among the Third World countries provide “fertile ground on which terrorist seeds can flourish”. During December 2001 gathering of Nobel Peace Prize laureates in Oslo, Norway, Desmond Tutu, Kim Dae-Jung and Oscar Arias Sanchez concurred that the causes of terrorism lied in poverty, inequality, and the absence of social justice in the developing world. Agreeing with them, the then United States President George W. Bush, at the Monterey Development Summit in March of 2002 said: “We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror” (Kreisler, 2001; Jai, 2001; Blustein, 2002).

Contrary to common belief that always limits the reasons for eruption of sectarian violence in Nigeria to issues of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, ethnic and tribal diversities; youth unemployment and poverty are major causes and therefore provide explanation for understanding such. As noted by Danjibo (n. d: 15 - 16),

A large army of unemployed vagabonds roam around the streets paying the dues of discipleship by begging and scavenging. These are ready to get involved and even perpetrate violence for a token. I visited a Catholic hospital in Kaduna shortly after one of the religious crises occurred. I met some admitted Almajiri who had been seriously injured during the crisis. One of them who had lost his limb was in deep pain and was crying with the words: "why should this happen to me? Now I have lost my life because of N200". Upon further inquiry, the victim revealed that a large number of them (the Almajiri) were given some money to go perpetrate violence.

According to *Aljazeera* report cited by Danjibo (ibid), it was stated that the eruption of Boko Haram violence extremism is fuelled by the fact that Nigeria, one of the largest producers of oil in the world has its vast bulk of the population live below the poverty line of one U.S. Dollar a day. While the paper maintained earlier that poverty and unemployment have the entire country in their firm grips, it is apt to argue that Northern Nigeria, the enclave of dreaded Islamic sect called Boko Haram, is the worst hit. Again, former governor of the CBN, Charles Soludo, made no pretence about this when his statistics revealed that whereas the North-Central recorded 67% of people living below the poverty line, the North-West and the North-East recorded 71.1 and 72.2% respectively (ibid).

Instructively, while the tearing of certificates and renunciation of studentship from tertiary institutions by some graduates and students of University of Maiduguri, Ramat and Federal Polytechnics in Borno and Yobe states respectively (Onuoha, 2010; Danjibo, n .d) to join Boko Haram could be attributable to brainwashing of the affected people by extremists, the failure of Nigerian government to provide employment to many graduates among them who were (and are still) roaming the streets in search of unavailable job opportunities provide justification for this action. Although, there is extent to which one can emphasize the point on poverty and unemployment as reasons terrorist tendencies become attractive to many. This is because, there have been reported cases of those from wealthy background like Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab yielding to terrorist inclination. The emergence of Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria could also be as a result of alleged age-long quest of core Northern Nigeria to Islamize the entire Nigerian state. This line of argument was supported by Adesoji (2010) who remarked that the Boko Haram uprising was a manifestation of ambition of certain conservative elements in the core northern region of the country to achieve Islamic revivalism in Nigeria. He specifically said that "the Boko Haram uprising of July 2009 was significant in that it not only set a precedent, but also reinforced the attempts by Islamic conservative elements at imposing a variant of Islamic religious ideology on a secular state" (p. 95). This revival was fuelled by escalation of extremism of similar terror groups

as been currently witnessed by Sunni Arabs in the Middle East and the Maghreb like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Shabab operating in Somalia and Kenya.

Nonetheless, it is not unlikely that those educated youths who tore their university degree certificates and withdrew from institutions of higher learning to demonstrate their loyalty to the sect, could have done that out of frustration. Supporting this line of thinking, Danjibo (n. d) observed that,

One can imagine the frustration for a young man or woman who had graduated from the university and could not secure job years after graduation. For such a person, Western education will ever remain valueless. As a matter of fact, such youths live in a country where education is treated with much disdain and where the educated are insignificant, but where uneducated political bandits are assigned status privilege.

Corroborating Danjibo's viewpoint, Wright (2006: 123), writing on incidence of rising extremism in the Arab world, argued that,

Radicalism usually prospers in the gap between rising expectations and declining opportunities. This is especially true where the population is young, idle, and bored; where art is impoverished; where entertainment – movies, theatre, music – is policed or absent altogether; and where young men are set apart from the consoling and socializing presence of women. Adult illiteracy remained the norm in many Arab countries. Unemployment was among the highest in the developing world. Anger, resentment, and humiliation spurred young Arabs to search for dramatic remedies.

Today, considering the vast number of educated graduates roaming the streets in the country, education which hitherto promised greater future and opportunities to many has lost its relevance because to them, it failed to provide jobs to them. In this regard, the argument of Teshome (2008 cited in Ucha op. cit.) who contended that "education, once seen as the surest, undisputed gateway to employment, no longer looks so certain" juxtaposes this thinking. Arguing from this premise, Ucha (2010: 127) noted that:

The fact that you are an educated Nigerian is no guarantee that you will be employed...Unemployment-induced poverty tends to increase the crime rate and violence in the country. Most unemployed youths resort to crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud and other forms of fraudulent activities. The reservation wage they get from these activities is typically barely enough to take care of their basic necessities.

Perhaps, the above reasons explain the terrorist attraction to many young people in the Northern part of the

country. It is no doubt that unemployment and poverty are conspicuous in Nigeria especially in the northern region. To this end, Ucha (ibid) argued that “in Nigeria, widespread and severe poverty is a reality. It is a reality that depicts a lack of food, clothes, education and other basic amenities. Severely poor people lack the most basic necessities of life to a degree that it can be wondered how they manage to survive” (p. 128). He went further to posit that,

Many graduates in Nigeria wander the streets without anything reasonable to do for a living. The government is capable but unwilling to provide jobs for them. Employment in Nigeria is usually not based on merit but depends on how connected you are with people that have power. This leaves many highly qualified people in poverty as seemingly no one cares to know what they are capable of achieving. These people are missing out on the income they would have got if they were employed. The number of quality jobs in the economy is low and many government resources are misallocated (p. 128).

In his submission on the susceptibility of northern Nigeria to the garb of religious extremism and fanaticism, Usman cited in Danjibo (op. cit.), averred that economic hardship and denial of basic necessities triggered by bad governance are responsible. Commenting on the resort of the young people to terrorist persuasion, Salisu reasoned that,

The level of frustration and poverty among youths in the country is a fertile ground for activities of such groups (like Boko Haram)... [T]heir conduct is totally un-Islamic but the whole problem boils down to the failure of government at all levels to make the welfare of the citizenry a priority... A nation that allows its youths to be idle is sitting on a time bomb because frustrated people seek relief in religion (Tell, August 10, 2009, p. 38).

NIGERIA AND THE CRISIS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

Several studies have shown that there is linkage between poverty, unemployment and terrorist motive among youths on a global scale. Ucha (2010: 51) poignantly put it that “unemployment is a major factor contributing to poverty in Nigeria. When people are unemployed, their source of livelihood depletes over time. The cost of living becomes high and the standard of living goes down. There are many people in Nigeria who lack the opportunity of being employed”.

The situation of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria can be appropriately described using the epitaph of Onimode’s ‘paradox of wealth and mass poverty’. Nothing explains the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in Nigeria than what Onimode (ibid), writing on Africa, argued that “in contrast to the cynicism of the

vicious-circle-of-poverty theorists that a country is poor because it is poor”, Africa (and particularly Nigeria) is poor not because it is not richly endowed with resources but due to poor management of these resources by its political leaders. Put it differently, the abundant resources, materials and human that the country is blessed with ironically underpin the basis of profound misery of the vast majority of the populace.

Specifically, for a country like Nigeria that parades high deposits of material and mineral resources which range from its famous oil and natural gas to substantial reserves of coal, iron ore, zinc, tin, limestone, lead and niobium (used for superconductors) and many untapped ones including a significant proportion of arable land, approximately 90 per cent, has no business to populate poor citizens. Coincidentally, Nigeria’s vast resource availability complements its large population. While the population of the country as at 2006 was 140 million, it was estimated to have reached 164.75 million by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see NPC Report, 2006 and Oxford Business Group Report, 2012). According to the said report of the Oxford Business Group (OBG), adolescents and youths constitute considerable per cent of the country’s population. The findings of the United States Statistics Division (UNSD) in 2010 (OBG Report, 2012), indicated that “with a growth rate of 3.2%, Nigeria has a relatively young population, with 42.4% aged between 0-14 years, and only around 5% over the age of 65”. Nigeria has a vibrant youth population of 80 million, representing about 50 – 60 per cent of the total nation’s population with annual entrant into labour market of over 1.8 million between 2006 and 2011. Despite this, majority of them remain either unemployed or underemployed (Ajaegbu, 2012 and The Punch, August 8, 2013). Thus, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) contended that during this period, overall unemployment experienced quantum leap from 12.3% of labour force to 23.9%. In fact, Ajaegbu (op. cit.) averred that the situation became more critical in 2011 when Nigerians aged 15 – 24 (37.7%) and those between ages 25 – 44 (22.4%) were willing to work but did not get jobs. Therefore, in BLG Report in 2011 (cited in ibid), on average, youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is 46.5% in 2011 and most affected are educated male youths who are supposed to be breadwinners for their families (Okafor, 2011).

In a recent survey result conducted by the Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala Polls (NOI Polls), a country-specific polling services named after its initiator, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (NOI), unemployment and poverty were identified as the major causes of drug and substance abuse by teenagers and young adults in Nigeria and by implication, terrorism and involvement in other nefarious activities. Although there is no agreeable per cent rate of youth unemployment in the country but as noted by Adawo et al (2012: 389), notwithstanding the doubtful unemployment rates posted by Central Bank of Nigeria in 2002, it is observable

that unemployment rate in Nigeria has reached unacceptable dimension. He went further to assert that “indeed, the labour market in Nigeria is dangerously close to saturation”. This claim was supported by Ajaegbu (2012: 315) who argued that

Violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism are the most inhumane crimes that continue to plague Nigeria. Lately, kidnappings for ransom and terrorism have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs. The causes are not farfetched as studies have associated rising youth unemployment to the increase in violent crimes.

Furthermore, Ajufo (2013: 307, 308) corroborated this assertion when she said,

Unemployment has become a major problem bedevilling the lives of Nigerian youth, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behaviour. Youth unemployment is devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically (as it is) causing frustration, dejection and dependency on family members and friends, who also have their own problems to contend with. The high rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country.

Or succinctly put, massive unemployment has made youths in the country to become elements of destabilisation and threat to socio-economic peace as more youths are now used by unscrupulous politicians to cause havoc in the country. While the Federal Government of Nigeria puts the unemployment and youth unemployment rates at 23 and 40 per cent respectively, it is believed that over 70 per cent of youth population in the country is unemployed (The Punch, op. cit.). Reporting the reaction to alarmingly increasing rate of unemployment rate in Nigeria, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (see *ibid*), said that the spate of unemployment in Nigeria has remained a source of concern to the Nigerian government. Accordingly, she was reported to have said,

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), each year, about 1.8 million young Nigerians enter into our labour market and we need to ensure that our economy provides jobs for them (NBS, 2012). In fact, some people ask, ‘What keeps you awake at night, with regard to this economy?’ I say it is the issue of job creation. And I know this is what keeps Mr President (Goodluck Jonathan) awake at night as well.

Ironically, the north in particular that has laid claim to federal power particularly the presidency for substantial period of Nigeria’s nationhood since 1960 continues to occupy the lower level of human development index

compare to the south as regional poverty is always widespread and even more severe there. This made Professor Charles Soludo, the then governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria to observe in July 2008 that persistent high levels of poverty in the country had become “a northern phenomenon” (see International Crisis Group Report, 2010). In this report, it was revealed that of the ten states with the highest incidence of poverty, eight were in the far northern zone. These include Jigawa which topped the list, with 95 per cent of its people classified as living in poverty. Jigawa State was followed by Kebbi, 89.7 per cent; Kogi, 88.6 per cent; Bauchi, 86.3 per cent; Kwara, 85.2 per cent; Yobe, 83.3 per cent; Zamfara, 80.9 per cent; Gombe, 77 per cent; Sokoto, 76.8 per cent; and Adamawa, 71.7 per cent (for details on this see Emeka Mamah, “High Poverty is Northern Phenomenon – Soludo”, *Vanguard*, 19 July 2008 cited in *ibid*). In his view, Shehu Sani (Sani, 2009: 3) found that as many as 76 per cent of northerners are “earning a daily income of less than the equivalent of one American dollar”.

Consequently, it is convenient to say that when a particular segment of a nation’s population especially the productive youths has no jobs and decent living, the tendency is that they become easy preys to terrorism and other vices. This clearly expresses the current situation the country is facing. In a society like Nigeria where those who loot the commonwealth of the people are flaunting them about freely in the face of extreme poverty and hunger, temptation to extremism and violent behaviour naturally become irresistible and attractive to those without any form of consolation and safety-net. In their writing, Piazza and Hippel (n. d: 34) noted that,

The notion that poverty is a root cause of terrorist violence is widely asserted... This assertion is not surprising considering how well it fits with basic liberal economic theory, which pre-supposes that individuals are motivated primarily by material well-being. Those who have opportunities to sustain and better themselves will likely accept the system in which they live and behave peacefully. By contrast, those confronting socioeconomic distress and deprivation are more likely to be drawn to radical and possibly violent movements, including terrorist movements.

The above quotation is supported by several submissions of those who believe that extremism and security challenges it posed to 21st century civilization is reinforced by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and ignorance. For instance, while commenting on the rapidity with which terrorism was taking on America and the rest of the international community in 1994, Bill Clinton, the then American president said that “the forces of terror and extremism... feed on disillusionment, on poverty, on despair”. Thus, in his view, containing and ending terrorism is to “spread prosperity and security to

all". Again, the al-Qaeda-led attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, further bolstered the poverty-terrorism thesis. According to former president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, while reacting to September 11 attacks on the U.S. remarked in December 2002 that "this war is viewed in terms of the face of bin Laden, the terrorism of al-Qaeda, the rubble of World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, but these are just symptoms. The disease is the discontent seething in Islam, and more generally, the world of poor". This was supported by the position of the then U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who in 2002 concurred by saying that "I fully believe that the root cause of terrorism does come from situations where there is poverty, where there is ignorance, where people see no hopes in their lives" (for details on comments of Bill Clinton, James Wolfensohn and Colin Powell, see Piazza and Hippel, *ibid*).

Though not totally dislodged, the foregoing, with all intents and purposes, dismisses the assumption that tends to remove poverty as source of discontent and terror enticements. It laid bare the sophistry surrounding the argument that most terrorists come from backgrounds more privileged than that of the average member of their national or regional population; and that rather than poverty and despair being root causes of terrorism, privilege, education and opportunity are contributory factors (Pipes, 2001; Kreuger and Jitka, 2002; The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004; McDermott, 2005).

This is true particularly in Nigeria because, in contrast to popular expectation that the advent of democratic governance in 1999 will reverse the long years of suffering, poverty, inequality and alienation of the mass of the people to era of prosperity, leadership at all levels of governance failed the people. Their expectation and hope were dampened as their situations and conditions deteriorated and exacerbated with increased unemployment rate, illiteracy, low income and hunger. This led to spontaneous formation of several ethnic-based armed groups and sporadic search for tribal identity. This led to militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, kidnapping and robbery in the East and West; and series of religious violence including the prevailing extremism vis-à-vis Boko Haram in the North.

Even though poverty and unemployment alone do not provide exhaustive explanations regarding the causes of terror in the land, there however furnish considerable and reliable excuse and justification because, poor people especially youths who lack economic opportunities are naturally resentful about their socio-economic status and thus, view themselves as having been alienated from mainstream society. In particular, this smouldering resentment is worsened by the large and growing mismatch or gaps in living standards among rich and poor people whom in the description of Frantz Fanon (Fanon, 1963), are called "the wretched of the earth", which result in intense feelings among this group that

they are being unfairly deprived of proper living conditions, what Ted Gurr would call the "relative deprivation" and linked to likelihood of terrorist desire. As clearly pointed out by Piazza and Hippel (*op. cit.*: 37 – 38),

In this state of rage and hopelessness, the poor are more susceptible to the lures of political extremism. Ordinary law-abiding citizens who are placed under economic distress or who are confronted with opulence while they struggle to make ends meet become primed to the anti-status quo message that is part and parcel of many terrorist group ideologies, and therefore, they are more likely to sympathize with terrorists. This sympathy can even lead them to aid, shelter and provide information to terrorists, to refuse to cooperate with government agents fighting terrorism, and to be more likely to join terrorist groups themselves.

When Hillary Clinton, the immediate past U.S. Secretary of State visited Nigeria in August 2009, she squarely blamed the leadership and governance failure in the country as a source of disconnect and discontent that encourage violence embrace by the youths. In her words, (quoted in *The Nation*, Friday, August 14, 2009, p.1), she remarked that:

The most immediate source of disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is the failure of governance at the federal, state and local levels.... Lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state".

Undoubtedly, Clinton's assertion is a validation of Chinua Achebe's (Achebe, 1983) who strongly blamed leadership for 'the trouble with Nigeria', the caption that was coincidentally chosen as the title of his book. Therefore, to Achebe,

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are (sic) the hallmarks of true leadership...

He went further to say,

Nigeria is a nation favoured by providence... The vast human and material wealth with which she is endowed bestows on her a role in Africa and the world which no one else can assume or fulfil. The fear that should nightly haunt our leaders (but does not) is that they may already have betrayed irretrievably Nigeria's high destiny. The

countless billions that a generous providence poured into our national coffers;... would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle-rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of our poor and needy. But what have we done with it? Stolen and salted away by people in power and their accomplices...

Therefore, it is the argument of the paper that high incidence of poverty rate as well as unemployment coupled with sharp practices by the political elites underscored the prevailing insecurity dotting the entire landscape in the country as orchestrated by Boko Haram group in Northern region.

Conclusion

The paper x-rayed the interconnectedness between terrorism and poverty in Nigeria with focus on the activities of Boko Haram sect in the north. Having identified issues of neglect, poverty, alienation, underdevelopment and youth unemployment in the region as temptations to radicalism, government at all levels – the federal, state and local – must as a matter of urgency embark on sincere programmes and policies targeting this group nationwide and particularly the affected region by opening up more job opportunities for the teeming youths, establish schools for sound education to combat illiteracy and ignorance, provide skill acquisition centres that will spur small and medium scale enterprises and reform the electoral and governance systems that will respect the choice of the people in election and democratic process amongst others. In fairness to the government especially the federal government, its previous efforts in the area of provision of access to basic education like the Universal Primary Education (UPE), later Universal Basic Education (UBE) and recent introduction of Almajiri School programme by both the Federal Military Government of General Olusegun Obasanjo and President Goodluck Jonathan respectively must be commended. Despite their challenges and limitations, if vigorously pursued and sustained, especially the Almajiri School programme, it will go a long way in re-orientating vast majority of children in core northern states. This will help minimize attraction to religious fanaticism vis-à-vis the vulnerability to be brainwashed by those who use religion as veneer to perpetuate terror. Also, this should be complemented with creating jobs and reviving the agricultural sector that was hitherto the predominant occupation in the north, and major driver of the nation's economy. When these are put in place, the feeling of deprivation and alienation that breeds discontent among them will be removed and the country will be better for it.

Conflict of Interest

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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