

# *THE ROOTS OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: EXPLORING THE POVERTY CONNECTION*

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**KEY TERMS:** Nigeria, Terrorism, Poverty.

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Is there a link between poverty and terrorism in Nigeria? This paper is developed to answer this question. Using the frustration-aggression and horizontal inequalities explanation of violence, the paper argues that the paradox of wealth and poverty has created grievances that have undermined the stakeholder interests of citizens in the state, the solidarity and identity between citizens and leaders, and the social responsibility roles of citizens. This, the paper notes, has made citizens vulnerable to mobilization and recruitment for violence against the state, just as it has made them withdraw cooperation with and obedience from the state. Evidence of this is the complaint by security forces that cooperation of citizens in the fight against terrorism is low or poor. The paper thus concludes that although poverty may not have created terrorists or that there is no causal relationship between poverty and terrorism in Nigeria, poverty has created conditions for terrorism to thrive in the country. In this regard, it is critical for the Nigerian government to bring poverty reduction into its anti-terrorism engagement strategy. Budgetary reforms to ensure pro-poor budgeting and vigorous anti-corruption programmes will be crucial in achieving this. But the challenge might be the culture of impunity and politics which is characterised by the pursuance of private interests against the public good.

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For over a decade now, Nigeria has been plagued by domestic terrorism, triggered initially by militia insurgents in the Niger Delta, who attacked oil production infrastructure, attacked security operatives, and engaged in the kidnapping of oil company personnel working in the region. Politics induced kidnappings across the country, and the Boko Haram<sup>6</sup> insurgency in the northern part of the country that followed has now assumed talking points in national and international discourse. The major concern is how to curb terrorism in the country, yet the point of departure has been identification of the causes. Thus far three viewpoints can be identified. The first blames it on dissatisfaction with the country's system or structure of governance, ethnicity-based political domination and discrimination, inequity in resource allocation, horizontal inequalities and ethnic nationalism (Naanen, 1995; Amuwo & Herault, 1998; Ibaba 2009<sup>a</sup>). The second point is linked to failed expectations of improved living conditions underpinned by deepening poverty, dissatisfaction with the government, and the perception and/or conclusion that government policies only promote the private interests of the custodians of political power (Muazu, 2011; Bartolotta, 2011). The third explanation blames terrorism in the country on religious fundamentalism or extremism (Tribune, 2010). On this point, Bartolotta (2011) has identified unemployment and corruption as the roots of extremism, suggesting that poverty, a major manifestation of unemployment and corruption in Nigeria, lies at the roots of extremism. While not overlooking the other factors linked to terrorism, this paper explores the role of poverty. The

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<sup>6</sup> Although it is widely known as "Boko Haram" meaning "western education is forbidden," the actual name of the sect is Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lid Da'awaiti wal jihad, meaning "people committed to the Teachings of the Prophet and Jihad" ( Muazu, 2011)

justification for this is the consistent rise in the poverty rate and increase in the population living in poverty.

The dominance of the poor in the membership of the protest movements that engage in terrorism, as evidenced by the poor socio-economic status of those arrested on allegations of terrorism and the concentration of these groups (protest movements) in poorer neighbourhoods, highlights poverty as a factor which should be investigated via terrorism studies in Nigeria. Using the frustration-aggression and horizontal inequalities (HIs) explanation of violence, the paper argues that poverty cannot be dissociated from terrorism in Nigeria. The thesis of the paper is anchored on two perspectives. Firstly, that the paradox of poverty and the resultant feelings of neglect by the citizens have fed into horizontal inequalities. Secondly, it has alienated grievance-filled citizens from mainstream society and undermined the solidarity between citizens and government. Significantly, conflict literature has linked “ideas, beliefs, and behaviours relevant to violence” to the social environment (Bogat, Leahy, von Eye, Maxwell, Levendosky, & Davidson, 2005), and the paper brings this into the discourse on terrorism in Nigeria.

The remaining part of the paper is divided into five sections as follows: (1) What is Terrorism? Conceptual Issues and Nigerian Realities; (2) Poverty-Terrorism Nexus: Contending Issues; (3) Paradox of Poverty: Incubation of Grievance and Dissenters; (4) the Geography of Terrorism: Interrogating the Poverty Connection; and (5) Conclusion.

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### **What is Terrorism? Conceptual Issues and Nigerian Realities**

The meaning of terrorism can be discerned from the international conventions on terrorism and the state anti-terrorism legislations that proscribe it. For example, Article 2 of the UN draft Convention on International Terrorism (2004)<sup>7</sup> classifies acts of terrorism as unlawful and intentional means that result in:

Death or serious bodily injury to any person; or serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment; or Damage to property, places, facilities, or systems (place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment) resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international Organization to do or abstain from doing any act.

In broad terms, terrorism is seen both as a crime and tactic of warfare. As crime, it pertains to the use of violence to kill and destroy public infrastructure or personal property. As a tactic of warfare, it refers to a deliberate attack of the civilian population or non-combatants in times of war (Schmid, 2004). But the goals for using violence as strategy are also important in defining terrorism. Although the political objective appears most defining, other goals of violence are not overlooked in the description of terrorist behaviour. The definition of terrorism and

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<sup>7</sup> This draft is still under negotiation and was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 by India. The UN Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism which deals directly with this issue was established by Resolution 51/210 in 1996.

the proscription of terrorist acts by the Nigeria anti-terrorism Act of 2011<sup>8</sup> provide the framework for the identification of terrorist acts or behaviour in the country. This Act defines terrorism as:

An act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organization; and is intended or can reasonably be regarded as having been intended to (1) unduly compel a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; (2) seriously intimidate a population; (3) seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization, or (4) otherwise influence such government or international organization by intimidation or coercion

The Act further lists terrorist acts as (1) “an attack upon a person’s life which may cause serious bodily harm or death; (2) kidnapping of a person; (3) destruction to a government or public facility, transport system, or an infrastructural facility, including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, public place or private property likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss; 4) the seizure of an aircraft, ship or other means of public or goods transport and diversion, or the use of such means of transportation to influence government or international organization by intimidation or coercion; (5) the manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into and development of biological and chemical weapons without lawful authority; (6) the release of dangerous

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<sup>8</sup> The Nigerian Anti- Terrorism Act of 2011 is presently being revised for amendment by the National Assembly.

substances or causing of fire, explosions or floods, the effect of which is to endanger human life; (7) interference with or disruption of the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource, the effect of which is to endanger human life; (8) an act or omission in or outside Nigeria which constitutes an offence within the scope of a counter terrorism protocols and conventions duly ratified by Nigeria; and (9), an act which disrupts a service but is committed in pursuance of a protest<sup>9</sup>.

From the standpoint of the draft UN Convention on International Terrorism and the Nigerian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011, the ongoing violent behavior and attacks of the Boko Haram Islamic sect on international and national institutions, such as the 2011 attacks on the United Nations building and Police Headquarters building in Abuja, the burning of homes and schools, and destruction of telecommunication infrastructure, qualify as terrorist activities. Although commentators and analysts suggest that the objectives of the Islamic sect are unclear, Bartolotta (2011) has indicated that the group has a “political goal which seeks to create an Islamic nation in 12 northern states of Nigeria.” This suggests, therefore, that the violent attacks by the group are intended to force the actualization of this objective, which captures a critical criterion of terrorism noted by the UN Convention on Terrorism and the Nigerian Anti-Terrorism law as noted earlier.

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<sup>9</sup> In this provision, demonstration and stoppage of work is not considered a terrorist Act if it is not intended to “unduly compel a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; seriously intimidate a population; or influence such government or international organization by intimidation or coercion.”

Similarly, pre-amnesty<sup>10</sup> attacks on oil infrastructure and kidnapping of oil workers by ex-militia groups in the Niger Delta adequately come across as terrorist acts. Groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) used violence as a tactic to achieve the goals of self-determination, resource control and ownership and environmental protection. Between 2006 and 2008 alone, a total of 317 persons were killed in 66 attacks while 113 were kidnapped and taken as hostages (Ibaba, 2011, p.251). Oil infrastructure was badly damaged and oil production disrupted, leading to a drastic decline in oil production output and, by extension, oil revenues (Obi, 2009). This has been linked to the amnesty offer by the Nigerian government which helped to restore oil production to over two million barrels per day against under one million barrels per day before the amnesty was introduced (Joab-Peterside, 2010; Courson, 2011).

In like manner, non- oil related kidnappings across the country, seen by some as evidence of a failing Nigerian State (Adibe, 2012), fall within the description of terrorism. From using kidnapping as a tactic of achieving the goals of self-determination among others in the Niger Delta, it has spread to other parts of the country and has become a commercial enterprise or tool of political intimidation (Adibe, 2012). People are kidnapped and released after the payment of ransom and or making commitments to withdraw from political contest. Although the literature has yet to document politically motivated kidnappings, it has been related by some kidnap victims that the intention for kidnapping them was a strategy of political

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<sup>10</sup> The period before October 4, 2009 when the Amnesty which offered forgiveness to militia combatants ended

opponents to ruin their political careers by making them spend monies meant for electioneering or political campaigns on ransom payments. The act of kidnapping, in this case nonoil-related kidnapping, keeps an individual in illegal custody and a hostage against his will, and creates fear or intimidation in the victim and his relations and associates, with a view to making commercial or political gains. But what are the causes of terrorism? Table 1 attempts to provide some answers.

**TABLE 1: CAUSES OF TERRORISM IN SELECTED COUNTRIES**

<b>Cause (s)</b>	<b>Country</b>
Communities struck by <i>poverty</i> , disease, illiteracy, bitter hopelessness	Armenia
Social inequality, marginalization and exclusion	Benin
Political oppression, extreme <i>poverty</i> and the violation of basic rights	Costa Rica
Injustices, <i>misery</i> , <i>starvation</i> , drugs, exclusion, prejudices, despair for lack of perspectives	Dominican Republic
Inequality and oppression	Finland
Oppression	Malaysia
Alienation of the young in situations of <i>economic deprivation</i> and political tension and uncertainty, sense of injustice and lack of hope	New Zealand
Rejection of the West with all its cultural dimensions	Palestine
Hunger, <i>poverty</i> , deprivation, fear, despair, absence of sense of belonging to the human family	Namibia
Situations which lead to <i>misery</i> , exclusion, reclusion, the injustices which lead to growing frustration, desperation and exasperation	Senegal

**Source: Schmid, 2010, p.2**

Table 1 indicates that poverty is linked to poverty, but the literature sharply disagrees on this. Although the literature does not accept that there is a causal link between poverty and terrorism, particularly because empirical studies have yet to prove this (Schmid, 2010) or that poverty does not create a terrorist, it acknowledges that poverty promotes or enhances the achievement of the goals of terrorists. Furthermore, it recognises that poverty does not stand alone in encouraging terrorism, as it interacts with factors such as lack of political freedom, political repression, religion and ethnicity.

### **Poverty-Terrorism Nexus: Contending Issues**

Does poverty cause terrorism? Whitehead (2007) answers no categorically, but adds that “poverty often makes the terrorists’ goals easier to achieve. ‘Similarly, Aftab (2008) concludes after an empirical study on the causes of militancy in Pakistan that “poverty, in and of itself, does not fuel extremism,” suggesting that although poverty may support extremism, it cannot stand alone; a view supported by Abadie (2004) who opines that the risk of terrorism is not high with poverty if other factors such as political freedom are addressed. Piazza (2006) demonstrates the denial of the poverty-terrorism nexus with data on economic growth and terrorism in 10 terrorism-impacted countries.

**TABLE 2: TOP TEN COUNTRIES FOR TERRORIST INCIDENTS—GDP PER CAPITA AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICES**

Country	Incidents: 1986-202	Rank	Average GDP per Capita <sup>11</sup> USD	2001 Human Development Index (HDI) <sup>12</sup>
India	237	1	2,358	115- Medium
Columbia	129	2	5,615	62- Medium
Yemen	59	3	1,608	133- Low
Turkey	56	4	5,805	82-Medium
Greece	48	5	11,862	23- High
Israel/Palestine <sup>13</sup>	48	6	12,651	49-High
Angola	45	7	2,510	146- Low
Peru	45	8	4,622	73-Medium
Pakistan	40	9	1,928	138- Low
France	39	10	22,897	13- High

*Source: Piazza, 2006*

In another study, Piazza (2011), reviewed the contending issues in the poverty-terrorism nexus and highlighted the following viewpoints: (1) “Economically developed countries are less likely to experience international terrorists attacks than developing countries; (2) Social welfare spending reduces international terrorists attacks; (3) Countries with higher levels of economic inequality experience higher levels of terrorism than

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<sup>11</sup>“GDP, a measure of total wealth produced and consumed in a country divided by the total population” (Piazza, 2006)

<sup>12</sup> “HDI, an index that measures level of economic development considering income, literacy, and life expectancy, are widely used measurements for comparing levels of poverty and wealth across countries” (Piazza, 2006)

<sup>13</sup> “Figures for per capita GDP and Human Development Index rankings are population-weighted averages for the State of Israel and Occupied Territories” (Piazza, 2010).

more egalitarian societies; (4) The selection regimes by terrorists which favour higher socio-economic status recruits, obscure the fact that pools of potential recruits are produced by poverty; (5) Economically developed countries are more likely than developing countries to experience terrorists attacks; ( 6) Increased income levels in countries reduce the probability that their nationals will launch terrorists attacks abroad; and ( 7) Countries with higher incomes and higher levels of political democracy and economic openness are more likely to be targeted by international terrorists” ( pp.349-340).

It is discernible from the issues raised above that the poverty-terrorism nexus debate can be located in the context of international and domestic terrorism. At the international level clear doubts arise in relation to the linkage. For example, the point noted earlier that more developed countries are more likely to experience terrorist attacks. Understandably, such attacks may arise on account of other issues relating to religion or hate by nationals of other countries, for example, attacks on the United States of America and her interests abroad by groups such as al-Qaida and her associates. For domestic terrorism, however, the link with poverty can easily be appreciated in spite of the lack of empirical evidence. Piazza (2011) noted earlier that “countries with higher levels of economic inequality experience higher levels of terrorism than more egalitarian societies. ‘Poverty is one measure of economic inequality, and it can be argued, therefore, that a country with a high population living in poverty is more vulnerable to terrorism than a country with minimal level of people living in poverty. Whitehead (2007), while dismissing the fact that poverty breeds terrorists, made the point that it can create conditions that will realize terrorist goals, just as Abadie (2004) suggested that poverty only influences terrorism when other terrorism-prone factors are left unattended to.

It stands to reason, therefore, that poverty can hardly be disconnected from domestic terrorism; however, it cannot stand alone. Thus, poverty without freedom and good governance can support terrorism. Equally, poverty within the context of a failed, fragile or falling state may trigger terrorism. Goodhand (2001) has noted two dimensional effects of poverty that can throw up violence. Firstly, the population living in poverty can easily “turn to organized banditry.” Secondly, poverty contributes to grievances, and this can turn to violence if poverty coincides with ethnic, religious, language or regional boundaries” (pp.34-36). Furthermore, poverty, particularly that which occurs in the midst of riches, can alienate citizens from the government leadership, break down the solidarity between citizens and the government, and undermine the stakeholder/proprietary interests of citizens in government and society. Such citizens tend to be vulnerable to manipulation by individuals seeking to attack the state. Significantly, too, they may not join to attack the state but may not cooperate with the state in the fight against terrorism. For example, they may provide hiding places for terrorists or refuse to pass on or share information on terrorists with security operatives, either to secure their daily living or simply as a demonstration of dissatisfaction with the state. The next section examines how this applies to Nigeria.

### **Paradox of Wealth and Poverty: The Incubation of Grievance and Dissenters**

Without doubt, Nigeria is blessed with numerous mineral/natural resources that provide opportunities for sustainable development and wealth creation, as indicated in Table 4.

**TABLE 3: MINERAL RESOURCES FOUND IN NIGERIA**

<b>Geo-Political Zones and Component States</b>	<b>Mineral Resources</b>
<b>South-East</b> (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo)	Gold, Salt, Limestone, Lead/Zinc, Oil/Gas, Clay, Iron-Ore, Lignite, Glass-Sand, Phosphate, Gypsum, Coal, and Marcasite
<b>South-West</b> (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo)	Kaolin, Feldspar, Tatum, Granite, Syenites, Glass-Sand, Clay, Bitumen, Sand tar, Oil/Gas, Phosphate, Gemstone, Gypsum, Dimension stones, Coal, Bauxite, Gold, Talc, Tantalite, Tourmaline, Columbite, Marble, Silimanite, Cassiterite, Aquamarine, and Dolomite
<b>South-South</b> ( Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers)	Clay, Limestone, Lead/Zinc, Uranium, Salt, Lignite, Oil/Gas, Gypsum, Uranium, Manganese, Marble, Glass-Sand, Iron-Ore, Kaolin, Bitumen, Dolomite, and Phosphate
<b>North-West</b> ( Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara)	Barytes, Sapphire, Kaolin, Gold, Clay, Serpentine, Asbestos, Amethyst, Kyanite, Mica, Aquamarine, Ruby, Rock Crystal, Topaz, Flousspar, Graghite, Silimanite, Tourmaline, Gemstone, Tantalite, Pyrochlore, Cassiterite, Copper, Glass- Sand, Gemstone, Lead/Zinc, Maoline, Marble, Salt, Silica-Sand, Gypsum, Laterite, Potash, Flakes, Granite, and Salt
<b>North-East</b> ( Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe)	Kaolin, Bentonite, Gypsum, Magnesite, Barytes, Bauxite, Amethyst, Lead/Zinc, Uranium, Diatomite, Clay, Limestone, Gemstone, and Soda ash
<b>North-Central</b> ( Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau and Federal Capital Territory (FCT))	Lead/Zinc, Limestone, Iron-Ore, Coal, Clay, Marble, Salt, Barytes, Gemstone, Gypsum, Kaolin, Felsdpar, Dolomite, Talc, Tantalite, Gold, Cassiterite, Columbite. Mica, Emerald, Tin, Granite, Phrochlore, Coal, Wolfram, Bismuth, Fluoride, Molybdenite, and Bauxite

*Source: Sawyer, 2008, pp. 114-115*

In spite of these mineral resources, vast arable land that is suitable for agriculture and huge revenues derived from oil and gas, the country remains poor. These many resources

notwithstanding, the country has depended almost entirely on oil for its national revenues for the better part of its existence.

However, the huge revenues derived from oil have barely impacted on the poor. Although the country generated about USD 509.6 billion between 1960 and 2006 (Nafziger, 2008), the poverty rates provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicate the rates to be 28.1percent, 46.3 percent, 42.7 percent, 65.6 percent and 54.4 percent for 1980, 1985, 1992, 1996 and 2004 respectively ( UNDP, 2006, p.35). In spite of huge oil revenues which stood at USD 11. Billion in 2007 and USD 16.5 billion in 2008 (Ibaba, 2009<sup>b</sup>, p.561) and USD 59 billion in 2010 (Business Day, 2010), the poverty rate rose from 54.4 percent in 2004 to 69 percent in 2010 (NBS, 2010). The data indicates that the population living in poverty has risen consistently from 17.1 million in 1980 to 34.7 million in 1985, and later to 39.2 million, 67.1 million, 68.7 million and 112.5 million in 1992, 1996, 2004 and 2010 respectively ( NBS, 2010). Why?

Although several factors, including ethnicity-based politics, political instability and lack of democratic institutions, have been identified as factors explaining this paradox, corruption is noted to be the major culprit. The former chairman of the Nigerian anti-graft agency Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) reported in 2004 that the country was losing 40 percent of her USD 20 billion oil revenue to corruption (REUTERS, 2004). Only recently, Obi Ezekwesili, former world Bank President for Africa, noted that Nigeria has lost an estimated USD 400 billion to corruption and misapplication of funds since 1960, and that 80 percent of the country's oil revenue ends in the hands of just 1 percent of the about 160 million Nigerians ([www.vanguardngr.com](http://www.vanguardngr.com);Tobi Soniyi, 2012). The findings of Piazza's (2011) study on poverty, minority economic discrimination and domestic terrorism, which highlighted the

fact that the countries whose minority communities are affected by economic discrimination are more vulnerable to domestic terrorism, is instructive. This draws attention to the role of economic discrimination in terrorism, and this paper makes the point that corruption in Nigeria ends in economic discrimination. Following Obi Ezekwesili's claim as noted above, it would be correct to argue that the majority of the population is discriminated against economically. The point here is that on account of corruption only a small proportion of national revenues trickle down to address the goals and objectives of national development. Table 5 provides data on selected African countries to highlight the link between corruption and economic development. It shows that countries that are more corrupt are less developed.

**TABLE 4: CORRUPTION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS:  
A COMPARISON OF 10 SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

Country	GDP Per Person (Purchasing Power Parity) USD	Anti-Corruption Rating %
Mauritius	13,700	75.7
South Africa	13,300	58.6
Botswana	10,900	67.1
Angola	4,500	7.1
Senegal	1,800	45.7
Rwanda	1,600	34.3
Nigeria	1,500	8.1
Kenya	1,200	15.7
Liberia	900	11.0
DR Congo	700	1.9
	<b>World Average: 10,200</b>	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa Average: 28.8</b>

*Source: Atojoko, 2008, p.99*

But this comes with some costs. Corruption, one consequence of using the state to pursue personal gains by the

ruling elites, results in obsession with political power and alienation of citizens from the state (Ake, 2001). In Nigeria, this alienation has manifested as the government's failure/inability to meet citizen's needs and aspirations, citizen's apathy to politics or elections, and the response of the political/ruling elites with election rigging or vote buying/commercialization of the entire electoral process. The outcome is that governance hardly improves the living standards of citizens who no longer have proprietary interests in government. Furthermore, the political ruling elites do not need the support of common citizens to win or retain power, or, at best, can manipulate them to get their support. In this regard, state institutions such as the judiciary have become weak and ineffective, making citizens lose faith in them and holding them in contempt. This is exacerbated by corruption with impunity, as indicated by the numerous celebrated cases of corruption trials of public officers and bank and business executives that have only resulted in plea bargain convictions or convictions that are widely seen to be a slap on the face.

This, in my view, has created grievances that can be located in the context of frustration-aggression. However I examine this from the perspective of implicit and explicit aggression. Implicit aggression here refers to withdrawal of obedience and support to the state. An individual in this category may not attack the state, but at the same time he may not prevent the state from either attacking or supporting it to contain its attackers or terrorists. The explicit category consists of those who are willing to attack the state, either covertly or overtly. These groups of citizens are vulnerable to manipulation, particularly when religion and ethnicity are implicated. The understanding of this will be enhanced by locating it within the

context of the frustration-aggression theory and the nexus between horizontal inequality and conflict.

The frustration-aggression explanation of conflict, pioneered by John Dollard, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, O.H Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939 ( Berkowitz, 1989), has been used as one of the dominant explanations of violence . This theory explains conflict from a psychological perspective and blames conflict on the inhibition or blockage of goal attainment. Faleti (2006: 47) explains this with the “want-get-ratio,” “expected need satisfaction” and “actual need satisfaction.” The explanation is that the gap between what people feel they want or deserve and what they actually get results in frustration, which culminates into aggression and violence. Although frustration does not always lead to violence due to intervening variables such as the fear of sanctions, the linkage cannot be disputed (Berkowitz, 1989). The targets of violence in this context are the individual, institution or organizations perceived to be the cause of deprivation, or those related to it (Faleti 2006: 47). Theories of aggression have supported this idea by noting that it occurs as an innate response to frustration, although the theories also acknowledge that it can be either instigated by instinct or may be learned. It does clarify that frustration-aggression is more systematically developed and has empirical backing (Gurr, 1968).

The point to discern here is that many poor Nigerians do expect that they should, and consequently blame their condition on the Nigerian state, suggesting that dissatisfactions with the government have created conditions which either trigger, support, or facilitate aggression and violence. This is, however, made prominent when poverty coincides with ethnic or religious boundaries. The horizontal inequalities (HI) explanation of

conflict makes this point clearer. The literature has defined HI's as:

Systematic inequalities<sup>14</sup> between ..... groups.... People can be grouped in many ways, and most people are members of many groups. There is a large range of types of group: national, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and age are some obvious important ways that people are categorised. Horizontal inequalities often have their origin in historical circumstances, such as colonial policies, which privileged some groups over others. Sometimes, however, horizontal inequalities are not caused by deliberate agency at all but simply become evident for example when traditional peoples on the periphery of modernizing societies are drawn into closer contact with the more powerful and technologically proficient groups. An initial advantage often leads to long-term cumulative advantages, as resources and education allow the more privileged groups to secure further advantages. Likewise, group deprivation tends to be reproduced over time. Horizontal inequalities affect individual well-being and social stability in a serious way, and one that is different from the consequences of vertical inequality<sup>15</sup>. Unequal access to political/economic/ social resources by different cultural groups can reduce individual welfare of the individuals in the losing groups over and above what their individual position would merit, because their self-esteem is bound up with the progress of the group. But of greater consequence is the argument that where there are such inequalities in resource access and outcomes, coinciding with cultural differences, culture can become a powerful mobilising agent that can lead to a range of political disturbances. (Ostby, 2004; Stewart, 2001; Stewart, Brown & Mancini, 2010).

The above reference brings into focus the possibilities of group grievances arising from poverty and related factors.

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<sup>14</sup> Poverty is one of the characteristics that define inequality.

<sup>15</sup> This refers to inequality among individuals.

The point to note is that “poverty magnifies underlying grievances such as ethnic and religious differences” (3PHS, 2007). Although poverty is widespread in Nigeria, ethnic and religious identity have been mobilised in the expression of dissatisfaction with governance or dissent against the state. It is important to emphasize that whereas ethnicity and religion play key roles in the mobilization of people against the state, the actual rallying point of is their poverty or a threat to the people’s material well-being. For example, in January 2012, Nigerians were united by a perceived threat to their material well-being because of of the federal government policy of removing subsidies on petroleum products. In this case, persons from different social levels, from ethnic groups and from religious affiliations came together to protest against the policy. Yet a common thread that ran through the utterances of protesters was the paradox of wealth and poverty. Clearly, people were incensed with the widespread poverty in the land, and the government’s inaction on corruption was perceived to be the dominant cause of poverty in the country. Thus poverty, in the face of high level corruption among the political and ruling elites, appears to have incubated grievances and created conditions for dissent.

### **The Geography of Terrorism: Is there a Poverty Connection?**

Is there a geography of terrorism in Nigeria? And is there a poverty connection? I think so. But I do not mean that there is a causal relationship between poverty and terrorism in Nigeria or that poverty has created terrorists in the country. The point is that poverty has supported terrorism, either by being a rallying point of mobilising violence against the state, as was the case in the Niger Delta before the 2009 amnesty, or developed a “no stakeholder” attitude among citizens as suggested by complaints

of security operatives that citizens were not supporting them fully in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in the North. Although there is no data on ex-militants and Boko Haram' members and citizens in the North to make an empirically-based argument on this, the paper explores this point by examining the points where terrorism-prone violence is concentrated in the country in relation to the poverty rate and the population living in poverty. Here is a presentation of the poverty rates in the States for 2004 and 2010.

**TABLE 5: PROFILING THE POVERTY STATUS OF STATES- 2004 & 2010**

Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010	Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010 <sup>16</sup>
<b>South-East</b>				<b>North-Central</b>			
Abia	22.3	57.8	1,638,051	Benue	55.3	67.2	2,835,331
Anambra	20.1	57.4	2,400,486	Kogi	88.6	67.3	2,206,421
Ebonyi	33.1	73.6	1,599,696	Kwara	85.2	62.0	1,470,075
Enugu	31.1	63.4	2,065,126	Nassarawa	61.6	60.4	1,125,418
Imo	27.4	50.7	1,997,528	Niger	63.9	33.9	1,339,134
All Zone	34.2	59.2	9,700.887	Plateau	60.4	74.7	2,374,497
				FCT	43.3	55.6	781,291
<b>South-South</b>				All Zone	63.3	59.7	12,132,167
Akwa-Ibom	34.9	53.8	2,109,071	<b>North-East</b>			
Bayelsa	20.0	47.0	800,578	Adamawa	71.7	74.3	2,353,899
Cross River	41.6	52.9	1,528,263	Bauchi	86.3	73.1	3,418,510
Delta	45.4	63.6	2,606,576	Borno	53.6	55.1	2,838,307
Edo	33.1	66.0	2,124,099	Gombe	77.0	74.2	1,746,578
Rivers	29.1	50.6	2,623,812	Taraba	62.2	68.9	1,585,206
<b>All Zone</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>11,792,399</b>	Yobe	83.3	74.1	1,720,298
				<b>All Zone</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>13,662,798</b>

<sup>16</sup> The population living in poverty rate was calculated with the 2006 population figures. Thus with the estimated population growth of about 2 percent, the total population, and by extension those living in poverty would be more than the numbers indicated here.

Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010	Geo-Political Zone/States	Poverty Rate 2004	Poverty Rate 2010	Population Living in Poverty 2010 <sup>16</sup>
<b>South-West</b>				<b>North-West</b>			
Ekiti	42.3	52.6	1,245,095	Jigawa	95.1	74.2	2,484,697
Lagos	63.6	49.3	4,443,721	Kaduna	50.2	61.8	3,749,197
Ogun	31.7	62.5	2,468,905	Kano	61.3	66.0	6,193,230
Ondo	42.1	46.1	1,586,312	Katsina	71.1	74.8	4,332,848
Osun	32.4	38.1	1,304,366	Kebbi	89.7	72.5	2,346,555
Oyo	24.1	51.8	2,896,443	Sokoto	76.8	81.9	3,027,842
All Zone	57.0	50.1	14,043,842	Zamfara	80.9	71.3	2,324,269
				All Zone	63.9	70.4	24,458,638

*Source: NBS, 2004 & 2010.*

A number of issues can be discerned from Table 5, in relation to the poverty-terrorism nexus, in particular, the concentration or frequency of terrorism-related violence such as kidnapping and bombings in the South-East, South-South, North-East and North-West geo-political zones. The first point to note is the increase in poverty by 25 percent, 7.2 percent, 6.5 percent and 1.8 percent in the South-East, South-South, North-West and North-East geo-political zones respectively between 2004 and 2010. The South-West and North-Central<sup>17</sup> zones that experience very little of such violence recorded declining poverty rates of 6.9 percent and 3.6 percent respectively. Furthermore, the population living in poverty draws attention to the paradoxes that create grievance and aggression. The Niger Delta illustrates this point. The implementation of the 13 percent derivation principle has resulted in huge revenue inflows, but these have not impacted on poverty as indicated by the figures provided in Table 5. Between 2000 and 2008, states in the South-South geo-political zone received over three trillion naira (N3,055,229,154,416.49) with revenues increasing from NGN 103,942,755,947.75 in 2000 to NGN 852,112,410,145.40 in 2008, an increase of about 28 percent.<sup>18</sup> The comparison of the revenues received by the states of the South-South zone with other zones (as demonstrated in Table 8), and the meager development impact in the area can be explained as part of the poverty underlying frustrations which promotes violence.

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<sup>17</sup> Although Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) that is in the North-Central zone, has witnessed some of the worst attacks by the Boko Haram sect, the attacks are widely believed to have originated from the strongholds of the sect outside the FCT.

<sup>18</sup> Revenue figures were collated from the Federal Ministry of Finance website, [www.fmf.go.ng](http://www.fmf.go.ng)

**TABLE 6: REVENUE ALLOCATION TO STATES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE FCT FOR JULY 2011:  
A COMPARISON OF GEO-POLITICAL ZONES AND INDIVIDUAL NIGER DELTA STATES SHARE**

<b>Geo-Political Zone</b>	<b>Component States</b>	<b>Amt Received=N</b>	<b>% Share Of Total Revenue</b>	<b>Niger Delta States</b>	<b>Amt Received=N</b>	<b>States With Highest Allocations In Geo-Pol Zones</b>
South-East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo	58,197,059,062.79	9.4	Akwa-Ibom	53,306,124,568.94	<b>Anambra State</b> 12,623,612,932.39
South-South	Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers	211,654,649,857.26	34.3	Bayelsa	34,647,053,596.42	<b>Akwa-Ibom</b> 53,306,124,568.94
South-West	Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo	90,162,744,993.12	14.6	Cross River	12,669,685,403.20	<b>Lagos</b> 22,821,435,409.32
North-Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau, FCT ( Federal Capital Territory)	74,456,298,995.49	12.1	Delta	45,135,728,733.04	<b>Benue</b> 13,616,448,796.04
North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe	74,770,928,152.15	12.1	Edo	13,709,711,061.89	<b>Borno</b> 15,597,584,329.34
North-West	Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara	106,971,162,761.56	17.4	Rivers	52,186,346,493.77	<b>Kano</b> 22,906,019,625.04

*Source: Adapted from Nigerian Tribune, 2011, pp. 1 & 53*

Similarly, although states in geo-political zones other than the South-South have received far less revenue from the Federation Account when compared with those received by South-South states, they have also experienced a quantum leap in revenue inflow from the Federation Account. Yet these have also not impacted adequately on poverty as the figures for these states indicated in Table 5. Table 7 provides some revenue figures to demonstrate this point.

The second point to discern from Table 5 is the coincidence of increasing poverty with groups that have the perception of marginalization or strong ideological views about their religion. The South-South is made of minority ethnic groups, and in the context of ethnicity-based politics, they link the poverty of the region to ethnicity-based political domination. Similarly the South-East, made of the Igbo ethnic nationality, have severally complained of marginalization by the Nigerian state and attributed to its their poor/low development. These standpoints triggered agitations, protests and mobilizations that laid the foundations for militancy and kidnapping. In the North-East and North-West, the coincidence of poverty with the preponderance of the Boko Haram sect appears to have facilitated mobilizations for violence.

**Table 7: A Comparison of Revenue Inflow from the Federation Account to South-East, North-East and North-West Geo-Political Zones- August 1997, March 2000 and July 2011 Figures for States and Local Governments Only**

<b>Geo-Political Zones</b>	<b>August 1997 Revenue Inflow NGN</b>	<b>March 2000 Revenue Inflow NGN</b>	<b>July 2011 Revenue Inflow NGN</b>
South-East	616,813,713.97	2,627,084,268.89	58,197,059,062.79
North-East	1,013,861,387.99	3,562,702,661.34	74,770,928,152.15
North-West	1,117,769,294.75	4,350,998,946.77	106,971,162,761.56

*Source: Okoko & Nna, 1997, pp.26-28; National Times, 2000, p.20; Nigerian Tribune, 2011, pp. 1 & 53*

It may be argued that these huge revenue inflows over time barely impacted on poverty due to the expansion of public expenditure due to the increase in population. The point, however, is that public expenditure neglected the poor.

The data on Bayelsa State, which vindicates this point and which captures the public expenditure pattern at all levels of government, is represented here:

**TABLE 8: TREND OF CAPITAL BUDGET ALLOCATIONS IN BAYELSA STATE:  
2007, 2008 AND 2009 BUDGETS ONLY**

Year	Amount Allocated to Selected Sectors ( in NGN) and % of total capital Budget					
	General Admin <sup>19</sup>	Agriculture	Education	Health	Water Supply	Rural Development
2007	16,715,820,000 (16.0%)	2,025,800,000 (2.9%)	14,570,000,000 (13.9%)	8,416,231,200 (8.0%)	2,100,000,000 (2.0%)	1,740,000,000 (1.7%)
2008	10,652,227,482 (8.7%)	4,031,414,000 (3.3%)	10,159,807,513 (8.3%)	9,847,500,000 (8.1%)	4,360,000,000 (3.6%)	2,025,137,811 (1.7%)
2009	19,496,148,754 (15.8%)	15,810,500,000 (12.7%)	11,866,127,479 (9.6%)	9,717,000,000 (7.9%)	4,536,164,869 (3.7%)	2,000,000,000 (1.6%)

*Source: Bayelsa State Budget, 2007, 2008, 2009*

In 2008, Bayelsa State budgeted 11 billion on Miscellaneous for Government House, but budgeted NGN4 billion for agriculture, NGN4.4 billion for water supply, and NGN2 billion for rural development. These expenditures clearly neglect the poor in resource allocation, just as it provides avenues for corruption that benefits the ruling/political elites.

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<sup>19</sup>The point to note here is that the expenditure on general administration covers building and furnishing of government lodges; office equipment and furniture; renovation of government guest houses and liaison offices; consultancy services; and installation of internet facilities in Government House.

**Conclusion**

This paper examined the poverty-terrorism nexus in Nigeria and concludes that although there is no causal relationship between poverty and terrorism in the country, poverty has created an enabling environment for terrorism to thrive. While noting that poverty does not stand alone, the paper posited that concentration of terrorism-related violence in geo-political zones, such as the South-South, South-East, North-East and North-West that witnessed increase in poverty levels from 2004 to 2010, is an indication of how poverty is conducive to terrorism. Within the context of the frustration-aggression and Horizontal Inequalities explanations of violence, the paper argued that the high incidence of poverty amongst those who live in the country despite enormous mineral resources and huge oil revenues in the face of high level corruption by the political and ruling elites, have created grievances among them.

The high level of corruption among the political and ruling elites has the consequence of undermining the solidarity between citizens and leadership, as the Nigerian State has alienated the citizens from it. In the opinion of the paper, this has further weakened the stakeholder interests of citizens in the state and, by extension, their social responsibility roles. This appears to explain the vulnerability of citizens to mobilization and recruitment for violence against the state and their reluctance to support the fight against terrorism as evidenced by the complaints of security forces that citizen cooperation in the fight against terrorism is low or poor. The willingness of Nigerians to conspire with non-Nigerians to engage in bomb attacks on the country, as alleged by security operatives, and the kidnapping of persons, including government functionaries, also vindicates this point. This paper is not claiming that the poverty justifies terrorism or that every poor person can engage in terrorism in Nigeria. The point is that the population living in poverty are

prone to terrorism, and the social status of persons who have been paraded as terrorist suspects by security services and operatives, vindicates this point. Poverty thus tends to promote the objectives of terrorism and raises policy implications. In this regard, it is critical for the Nigerian government to bring poverty reduction into its anti-terrorism engagement strategy. Budgetary reforms to ensure pro-poor budgeting and vigorous anti-corruption programmes will be crucial in achieving this, but the challenge might be the culture of impunity and politics which is characterised by the pursuance of private interests as against the public good.

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