

The Dialectics Of Corruption, Poverty And Religious Fundamentalism In Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption is worldwide social phenomenon and events all over the world attest to its global reality. However, certain circumstances and socio-political ambient allow for its flourishing as it is the case in Nigeria. The concept of poverty on the other hand is also not peculiar to a particular race or part of the world. It is a phenomenon whose reality is as old as human history itself and it is evidential all over the world even in the so called developed nations. Meanwhile, Religious practice remains one of humanity's oldest activities, which expresses the ontological and transcendental dimensions of the human person without bias to colour, race, gender or social status. But religious extremism or fundamentalism is often activated by certain factors. A cursory look at recent events around the world generally and Nigeria in particular has revealed a great nexus between corruption, poverty and religious extremism epitomised in the activities of Boko Haram. This work employed the expository and analytical methods of philosophy to demonstrate that the current security challenges being faced by the Nigerian State cannot be addressed in isolation from the prevalent poverty and corruption in the land. Hence, the imperative of the tripartite approach in addressing Nigeria's contemporary challenges.

Introduction

The increasing wave of violence orchestrated chiefly by religious fundamentalism in Nigeria in recent times has raised a lot of concerns from well-meaning Nigerians. In the desire to bring an end to this unfortunate development in our national life, a lot of reasons have been advanced to rationalize the possible causes or factors that might have been responsible in particular. This paper is also propelled and motivated by the same desire to seek a way forward in overcoming the challenge posed by religious extremism in recent times especially in the northern part of the country. A cursory look at the Nigerian society has revealed a reality of poverty, robustly caused and cuddled by corruption. It is a truism that while corruption causes poverty, poverty can also cause corruption. Corroborating this assertion, Tunde Oseni (2013) notes that:

Corruption is a major cause of poverty as well as a barrier to overcoming it. The two scourges feed off each other, locking their population in a cycle of misery. Corruption must be addressed if aid is to make a difference in freeing people from poverty (<http://nigeriaworld.com/article/2008/may/092.html>).

Recent studies have also affirmed the nexus between poverty, corruption and religious extremism. The presence of the dual evil of corruption and poverty can be a fertile ground for the emergence of religious fundamentalism. This fact is premised on the evidence that the poor in every society are usually vulnerable to any form of manipulation. And the fundamentalist tendency on the other hand is usually midwifed and nurtured by the desire to maintain the ideals of the group they belong to. It is often propelled by the resolve to become the vanguard to restore society to its former idealized state. Members of any fundamentalist movements see themselves as saviours of the society. For this reason, they are able to justify almost any action, however extreme and any personal sacrifice, however great, for their cause. This fact is also evidenced in the activities of Jama'atul Ahlus sunnah lidda'awati wal Jihad (brethren united in the pursuit of holy war), popularly known as Boko Haram. Their intensification in the propagation of an extreme Islamic doctrine is hinged on their conviction that Western education and democracy are corruptive and immoral. Their activities are therefore aimed (according to them) at restoring Islam to its original ideals and replacing modern state formation with the traditional Islamic state because Western values run contrary to Islamic values.

Worth noting is their (Boko Haram) belief that, the moral decadence and evil in the society is as a result of the embrace of Western civilization and thus, in order to curb such evil, an Islamic society must be entrenched by destroying modern political institutions and infrastructures. It follows therefore, that amidst other factors or conditions that led to the emergence of Boko Haram, the twin evils of corruption in the system and the prevalent poverty in the land cannot be ignored. The movement has large and committed followers among the almajiris: Qur'an trainees who depend on their Mallam – teachers for knowledge, inspiration and their daily survival (Abimbola & Adesote 2012:19).

It shows the vulnerability of the less privileged to fall prey to religious fundamentalism. Among the rank and file of Boko Haram one can hardly find those in privileged families. This goes to show that those who have can hardly sacrifice their lives in anticipation of a better life here after. But those who don't have stand to lose nothing if the whole world collapses today. The modus operandi of Boko Haram and other religiously induced fundamentalism have given credence to this fact. This paper therefore engages expository and analytical methods of philosophical research to demonstrate the synergy between corruption, poverty and religious fundamentalism in contemporary Nigeria. And it also seeks to critically evaluate this connectivity in view of advancing the way forward.

The concept of Corruption

The term corruption has become a household name in Nigeria to the extent that one is tempted to assume that any attempt at its conceptualization is simply a waste of time. But even for the sake of the dynamism of reality and the changeability of phenomenon the concept of corruption needs to be a rethink to embrace other emerging realities that fall under its coverage. The ramifications and extent of what is usually termed corruption poses a challenge in ascertaining what peculiarities mark out the genre of this canker worm. According to the Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1990), corruption refers to the impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle, inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means (e.g. bribery) or a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct.

On his part, Joseph Nye (1967: 417) defines corruption as "behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (close family, personal, private, clique) pecuniary or status gains or violates rule against the exercise of certain types of private –regarding influence.

In the related understanding Victor Le Vine (1975: 2) defines corruption as the unsanctioned, unscheduled use of public, political resources and /or goods for private, that is, non-public ends. According to Gboyega cited in Orngu (2006: 6), corruption entails:

...the giving or taking of a bribe or illegal acquisition of wealth using the resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion in this regard, it is those who have business to do with government who are compelled somehow to provide inducement to public officials to make them favours(p.6).

Sequel from the above, the paper qualifies as corrupt, a public servant who accepts gifts bestirred by private person with the sole aim of inducing him to give special consideration to the interests of the donor. It can also embrace the act of offering such gifts or other tempting favours. In fact, extortion i.e. demanding of such gifts or favours in the execution of public duties may also be regarded as corruption. In this way, Chris Orngu (2006: 6) conceptualization of corruption becomes instructive. He sees corruption as:

any act that negates the principle of accountability and transparency, and ethical and moral standards in the course of responsibility discharged or social interaction in both the public and private sectors of the economy. And that, it involves any act that is antithetical to explicit or implicit rules of conduct in a social setting.

It can therefore, be said that corruption refers to any act that deviates from the official exercise of one's duty. It denotes an illegal, unethical, unprofessional, immoral and unauthorized utilization of one's public office for personal aggrandisement. It also involves bribery (giving and taking) that seeks to induce or influence action in one's favour. Although, it is a world-wide phenomenon,

corruption thrives more where it is tolerated and where the possibility of detection and consequent punishment is slim if not completely absent. It is with this fact in mind that Chinua Achebe (1983: 38) noted:

Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.

So, as of today, corruption is evident in the multi-dimensional forms in Nigeria ranging from private to public sectors of our national life. The will power to tame it has eluded successive administrations in Nigeria and those who benefits from it, employs all means possible to sustain the status quo. Hence, Wertheim (1965: 105) notes that

Corruption has almost become a way of life in Nigeria. It is also the bane of development and a major cause of social conflicts. The instrument of corruption in Nigeria includes money, position, contracts, and gifts of all kinds. These above named instruments are used as unnecessary favour, bribe of manipulate or pervert.

The bye-products of corruption in Nigeria is evidenced in poverty and it also strangulates development. In addition, corruption wastes skills and hampers productivity, inhibits quality and standards of goods and services available to the people and as well drains economy of its essence and viability. Corruption is simply insidious to any nation or wherever it exists. In Nigeria, one of the effects of corruption is pervasive poverty. With a population of over 167 million people, Nigeria is a country of paradox: abundant resources and abundant poverty. According to Tunde Oseni (2013)“the poverty line is so thick and wide that no one can rightly write about Nigeria without talking about the poverty of her majority (<http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2008/may/092.html>)

Poverty: A Concept Enunciation

The concept of poverty does not lend itself easily for definition. Poverty is often presented as an evolving concept linked to dominant development paradigms. As such, poverty is a highly contested concept. The dynamism and changes in the world today have called for the reconceptualization of poverty. Since the ancient times people are often subjected to many social problems because of its severe effects. It is generally seen as a shortage of basic needs in human life while extreme poverty is known as a case of having income which is less than one dollar per day with a threat to the people’s health and life (<http://www.antiessays.com/freeessay/31236.html>). The difficulties in the definition of poverty are usually linked to its understanding in different kinds of societies. But the phenomenon of poverty have to be understood both as a painful reality experienced by millions of human beings and as a construction of competing conceptualisations, definitions and measures. The definitions of poverty vary

according to the scope, i.e. whether it is confined to the material in exclusion of non-material elements. However, in order not to lose sight of the conditions wider meanings and of the inter penetration of the material and the relational symbolic; it is important that definitions of poverty are not divorced from wider conceptualisations.

So, for a broader conceptualization of poverty, it is worth noting that poverty is understood majorly in relation to the following

- i. Income or living
- ii. Income or capabilities.

Poverty in the first sense is measured in terms of a person's material resources, especially income and on the other with actual outcomes in terms of living standards and activities. As Stein Ringem (1983: 146) puts it "in the first case, poverty is defined indirectly through the determinants of way of life, in the second case, directly by way of life. The implication is "a low standard of living, meaning deprivation, in way of life because of insufficient resources to avoid such deprivations" (p.146).

That is to say, a poor person is one who has both a low standard of living and a low income. In this sense, it is assumed or rightly so that the people have right to a minimum level of resources which may guarantee them to live a life that meets certain basic standards. In this way, people who are financially dependent upon others or suffer from lack of dependents may be termed vulnerable to poverty.

In the second sense, poverty not just in terms of income and standard of living, but also in terms of an inability to participate in the society where one belongs. Here poverty is seen as "a denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life (UNDP.Human Development Report, 1997). According to Amartya Sen (1981: 114) the chief exponent of this perspective, income and standard of living are not intrinsically valuable in themselves, but they are simply instrumental to what really matters, namely the kind of life that a person is able to lead and the choices and opportunities open to him in leading that life. The under pinning element of this approach is the perception of living as involving "being and doing". Sen employed two key terms to express this idea namely "functionings and "capabilities". Functionings refers to what a person actually manages to do or be; they range from elementary nourishment to more sophisticated level such as participation in the life of the community and the achievement of self-respect . Meanwhile "capabilities" denote what a person can do or be, that is, the range of choices that are open to her. The underlying point here is the freedom people enjoy "to choose between different ways of living that they can have reason to value. Sen further argues that money is just a means to an end and the goods and services or commodities "it buys are simply particular ways of achieving functionings. The role of money in achieving functions depends according to Sen on the extent to which goods and services are commodified (i.e. are exchanged for money).

However, the relationship between money and capabilities/functionings depends in part on how the former is converted into the latter by individuals. But

again, this can vary according to personal factors such as age, sex, pregnancy, health, disability or even metabolic rate and body size which can affect the level and nature of a person's needs. Sen's underlying argument is that poverty should therefore be defined not in terms of income and actual living standard of capability failure, the "failure of basic capabilities to reach certain minimally acceptable levels. This formulation of Sen is helpful in a number of ways. It reminds us that income is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It also constructs human beings as people with agency for whom the freedom to be able to make choices about what they want to be and do, and about how they deploy the resources available to them is of fundamental importance. What is the issue of concern is according to NUSSbaum (2000: 5) "a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being".

The concept of poverty is also perceived in absolute and relative senses. In the absolute sense, poverty is understood as lacking sufficient money to meet basic physical needs. At its most basic, absolute poverty is defined in terms of survival, more commonly it refers to subsistence, linked to a basic standard of physical capacity necessary for production (paid work) and reproduction (the bearing and nurturing of children)(Keith & Sumption 1979: 27)

An absolute standard means one defined by reference to the actual needs of the poor and not by reference to the expenditure of those who are not poor. A family is poor if it cannot afford to eat.

Worth noting from the above is an unmitigated rejection of the alternative "relative definition developed by Townsend (1990: 31) and articulated in his celebrated work *Poverty in the United Kingdom*." Townsend criticized the narrow subsistence notion of needs, divorced from their social context, upon which absolute definitions of poverty are based. According to his alternative relative definition:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have their living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individuals or family that they are in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities.

In the relative sense therefore, poverty is said to be when people cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life, that is, the diets, amenities standards and services which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationship and follow the customary behavior which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society (Townsend,1993:36). Relative deprivation is thus, a multi-dimensional concept embracing all of the major spheres of life. Where relative deprivation occurs because of lack of material resources, people can be said

to be in poverty. Poverty is a specific ill in itself, while the poor people share many other problems with the non-poor; they are unique in having a relative shortage of goods and services at their disposal. Again, there are many effects of poverty such as death, under-feeding emergence of terrorism, war, homelessness, less opportunities of employment, high rate of felony, increasing illiteracy and increased favouritism. The poor are generally susceptible and vulnerable to so many influences including religious fundamentalism. Except in rare situations, the agents of terror and religious extremism are usually the poor. In some cases, they may enjoyed some sponsorships from the well-to-do, but the real action of terrorism is usually carried out by the less privileged.

Understanding the Concept of Religious Fundamentalism

The concept of religious fundamentalism has become a prominent phenomenon in international politics, playing an essential role in shaping the main events of the 21st century. The entrance of the concept in the vocabulary of the social sciences in recent times is to designate revivalist conservative religious orthodoxy. But originally, the word fundamentalism dates to an early 20th century American religious movement. The movement took its name from a companion of twelve volumes published between 1960 and 1915 by a group of protestant laymen entitled: *The fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth*. It owes its existence according to Beeman (2001: 12) particularly to the same evangelical revivalist tradition that inspired the Great Awakening of the early 19th century and a variety of millenarian movements. It came to embody both principles of absolute religious orthodoxy and evangelical practices which called for believers to extend action beyond religion into political and social life.

The people in this category had a set of well defined “*fundamental*” values. These values for them were in opposition to more modern ideas. They originally maintained that, it is important to stick to what faith (the bible) told them. Today, the term is deployed to qualify religious extremism where ever it is found. Religious fundamentalist believes that religious doctrines or propositions are absolute and immutable. They abhor change of whatever kind in religious matters. They find change oppressive and troubling as such their emergence is seen in the form of an orthodox restatement of traditional and conservative religious patterns. In his recent work titled “*Against Religion*” (Tamas Patak 2007: 27) listed what he sees as “Criss-crossing similarities-family resemblances in certain basic beliefs, values and attitudes that characterize the various religious groups labelled “*fundamentalist*”.

- i. They (fundamentalists) are counter-modernist: fundamentalist tendency manifests itself as an attempt by “besieged believers” to find their refuge in arming themselves with an identity that is rooted in a past golden age. And this identity is acted out in an attempt to restore that “golden past” (p.29)
- ii. They (fundamentalists) are “generally assertive, clamorous and often violent: this tendency is manifestly evidenced in the militancy ,

threats, intimidation and sometimes violence on the part of the extremists.

- iii. They (fundamentalists) are “the chosen” “the elect” “the saved”. It is from this conviction that they usually consider themselves “privileged and burdened” with a special mission on behalf of their deity and for the benefit of the world. Pataki notes that this attitude “is not restricted to fundamentalists groups but is a prominent mark of all of them(p.29)
- iv. Public marks of distinction; they consider this as a surest way of maintaining their sense of superiority and distinctive identity. Not only for the purpose of maintaining that distinctive identity, but also as “part of the narcissistic struggle to be considered unique and special(p.30)
- v. That there is only one true religion and one correct way of life, and this must be defended against in roads with other religious and secularism. In their mentality there is no room for religious pluralism and there is no middle ground, “you are either with us or against us”(p.30)
- vi. That there is an inerrant holy book, prophet or charismatic leader to whom literal obedience is mandatory. With this tendency any contrary treatment of their holy book or revered personage is visited with any protestation possible.
- vii. That law and authority comes from God. That every plausible legal structure must source its strength and provision from the holy book.
- viii. Female sexuality must be controlled and clear impassable boundaries must be established between men and women. This is premised on the belief that female sexuality is associated strongly with “animatism” and pollution; giving rise to taboos on certain sexual practices(p.32)
- ix. Sexual behaviour is a major concern of all fundamentalists. The concern is expressed especially in reference to the fear of and opposition of homosexuality.
- x. Fundamentalist and nationalism converge. It is the belief of the fundamentalists that moral life according to the will of God can only be fully lived in a society of fellow- practioners of the belief. This can only be achieved through God’s rule (theocracy). Hence, the struggle to bring about a government that can ensure the enthronement of God’s will in governance.

It is instructive to note that these tendencies are evident in the activities of the Boko-haram movement in northern Nigeria. However, many critical observers are not so much worried about the fundamentalists believing in certain fundamentals, but their sense of judgment about moral and religious absolutes and their virtual lack of tolerance and accommodation of other views in the society that is heterogeneous and increasingly pluralistic. However, it is worth noting that the features listed above by Tamas Pataki capture reasonably what we consider here to be religious fundamentalism.

The Nexus between Corruption, Poverty and Religious Fundamentalism in Nigeria

The recent happenings in Nigeria and the cursory look at the dialectics of the phenomenon of corruption and poverty has revealed a deep synergy with religious fundamentalism that has become a big threat to national and to some extent, regional security in recent times. The reality of poverty in Nigeria has been acknowledged by successive administrations. The establishments of agencies like, Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) etc. are eloquent testimonies to the reality of poverty in Nigeria and the government's efforts to eradicate it. But the culture of poverty, involves a sense of resignation and fatalism, and a strong disposition to authoritarianism with cultural attitudes tending towards undermining imposed reforms. This tendency might have been responsible for the failure of different attempts at addressing the scourge of poverty in Nigeria.

On the other hand, the establishment of the anti-graft agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) bears witness to the government's acknowledgement of the reality of corruption and the imperativeness of purging it from the system. This becomes more urgent owing to the synergy that exists between corruption and poverty. The Nigerian public system, as noted earlier, has been a fertile ground for the nourishment and flourishing of corruption which concomitantly breeds poverty. The Nigerian elites have continued to sustain the capitalists and exploitative structure instituted by the colonialists. The structure which leads to poverty that is, the poor are often in the spirit of capitalism subjected by the bourgeoisie so as to glean (collect undeserved) profits and capital via exploitation. It is thus the macro-structure of a capitalist society that produces inequality and consequently poverty. Institutions and class exploitation account for poverty as people suffer in the hands of the privileged class and institutional arrangements. Thus, Olusegun Oladipo (1999: 19) notes that:

Nigerian state for example has remained an instrument for the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the interests of the rulers and their friends and supporters rather than a vehicle for the pursuit of the common good. Indeed the socio-economic conditions in which the people struggle to meet their needs and protect their interest is now worse than it was at independence.

The implication of the above is that the poor are unable to attain higher living standards and thus they cannot come out of poverty because the capitalist arrangement is biased against them. There is a co-existence of low political consciousness due largely to high rate of illiteracy on the part of the masses and a high degree of centralization of resources which the exclusive ruling political class exploit. By so doing, they have created inequality and formed monopoly groups who tend to perpetuate power and privileges through social closure and labour market segregation thereby enforcing, exclusion (Ogboru and Abimiku 2013). As

such the problem of poverty in Nigeria has much to do with the inaccessibility of realistic opportunities by the poor as a result of exclusion that prevents them from getting out of poverty.

The usual feeling from those in that condition of poverty that is engineered by the ruling class is relative deprivation. It emerged from a gap between expected and achieved welfare that breeds collective discontent. It applies to those who find their own welfare to be inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves with. According to Gurr (1970: 24) most violence perpetrated is a direct result of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation. He writes, “relative deprivations 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. This concept of relative deprivation dates back to ancient Greece. Aristotle articulated the idea that revolution is driven by a relative sense or feeling of inequality, rather than an absolute measure. According to Gurr (1970: 24)

For Aristotle the principal cause of revolution is the aspiration for economic or political equality on the part of the common people who lack it and the aspiration of the oligarchs for greater inequality that they have, that is a discrepancy in both instances between what people have of political and economic goods relative to what they think is justly theirs.

This goes to show that, relative deprivation results from the feeling of frustration and consequently breeds aggression which may manifest in terrorism. That frustration of our desires and goals occasionally leads to anger is a common place. It is undoubtedly an unquestionable fact of our existence. Therefore, the recent security challenges facing our nation occasioned by Boko Haram cannot be discussed in isolation from the socio-economic realities of the northern region of the country. A reasonable population of Nigerians have already linked the acts of terrorism in northern Nigeria to the twins of poverty and corruption that reign in the land. Though the terrorist themselves have claimed to be motivated by the desire to Islamise the country, the hidden and salient factor of their frustration with the socio-political status quo cannot be ignored. According to Adewale Adeoye (2013: 2), “Boko Haram has become a rendezvous for disenchanting poor, a bold spit in the face of the North’s porachial, oppressive and undignified style of leadership which continues to impoverish its own population. He further notes that;

Boko Haram is a radical , revolutionary Islamic movement that is questioning orthodox political and economic traditions in Nigeria but which is proclaimed in the North where political leaders literally feed on the misery of the poor. Today Boko Haram appears to be exploring the deep-seated poverty in the North, the public distrust of the authorities and the ethnic cleavages in Nigeria to strengthen its recruitment base. (p.2)

Their anger with Western education cannot be divorced from the exploitative capitalist and imperialist tendencies it embodies. To be schooled in Western thoughts is to be made to believe in capitalism above any other welfare structure; this typically is opposed to the African humanistic and communalistic socialism as well as the core Islamic socialism. Corruption and poverty with the aid of capitalism has become the most dominant feature of our national life. Today, with the courtesy of corruption, the privileged ruling class flaunts their wealth in the midst of their poverty-stricken country men and women. According to Zarah A. Ngileruma (2013: 2)

Poverty remains the main root and the anchor of corruption in Nigerian politics. Poverty has increased over the past few years, in line with deterioration in the economic and social poverty line. The gap between the poor is so wide that the rich ones can afford to buy even the consciences of the poor ones. There is a lack of social security while unemployment has reached alarming levels.

Unemployment and poverty go hand in hand in an inequitable society. It is aggravated by failure to assure equality of opportunity for all the citizens. The people in such condition as it is the case in Nigeria become extremely vulnerable to all kinds of social vices which include corruption. Where corruption and poverty exist, the poor see their past as being blighted, their present compromised, and their future endangered, mortgaged and at risk. That feeling brings the sense of deprivation occasioned by frustration and the consequence is aggression in the form of terrorist activities to the society that has treated them so unjustly. The terrorist acts being perpetrated by the Boko Haram and other groups in recent times take their root from the deep-seated corruption and perverse poverty in the land.

The Way Forward

It is worth noting once again that religious fundamentalism or extremism is a tendency that is always expressed among some religious adherents of different religions down through the ages. It is not the exclusive reserve of one religion or another. They will always remain those with conservative religious tendency opposed to any form of dynamism, unorthodoxy and change. Corroborating, (Lionel Caplan 1989: 1) observes that “an adequate understanding of fundamentalism requires us to acknowledge its potentials in any movement or cause [...] we are all of us, to some degree and in some senses, fundamentalists. However, certain conditionalities can facilitate and nourish the flourishing of such tendency. Such factors like corruption, poverty and unemployment. There is a natural tendency in every human person who cannot help himself, and cannot receive help from his fellow men to always look beyond particularly to God for help. Mahatma Gandhi once said the “world has enough for our needs, but not enough for our greed”. It goes to show that the resources of our world, if equitably shared, can meet the needs of everyone but greed which manifests in form of corruption leaves those who are less-fortunate unable to access such usurped resources.

That feeling of exclusion and lack of participation creates the sense of frustration that usually finds expression in terrorism. This argument does not in any way ignore the religiously induced extremism which strives to change the world through evangelistic or Jihadistic promulgation of its belief structure. Even in this, fundamentalists often driven to social action get frustrated by their inability to achieve their orthodox evangelical goals as the results of changing social and political environments in the broader society. This attitude can also be found among an oppressed population defending itself from an oppressor. In their show of anger and frustration, fundamentalists often gravitate towards martyrdom or emphasize their oppression by the larger society in order to increase the appeal of their objectives both for their members and for the outside world. This tendency has found expression among the religious fundamentalists in Nigeria. In their show of commitment to their cause and their level of frustration, Boko Haram for example has adopted a strategy of suicide bombing as a way of creating martyrs and demonstrating their commitment.

When a people's frustration reaches the stage that life itself becomes nothing, then, solution to such frustration goes beyond mere call for dialogue and offering of amnesty as many are clamouring for in Nigeria. That kind of approach can be likened to the offering of palliatives to a chronic disease that will still resurface in a more dangerous way in a matter of time. The sustainable solution in this regard can only be the one that targets the root cause of the problem which in the case of Nigeria; corruption and poverty remains the twin-cause of frustration and violent expression of people's disenchantment. The way forward therefore, is the commitment to stamp out corruption and distribute wealth and reduce poverty. Unfortunately, successive leaderships in Nigeria have not demonstrated the required courage and will power to deal with the problem of corruption and poverty. According to (Chinua Achebe,1983) "corruption goes with power, and whatever the average man may have, it is not power. Therefore to hold any useful discussion of corruption we must first locate it where it properly belongs i.e. in the ranks of the powerful"(p.38). So, the failure of those with power and in leadership to tackle corruption makes its future in Nigeria very promising. This failure stems from the fact that those who should fight corruption are the ones deeply involved in its perpetration. Hence, the Elizabethan writer, William Shakespeare lamented "when correction is in the hands of those who do wrong, whom then do we turn to for correction?" Here lies the dilemma in the Nigerian fight against corruption.

Although, committed and honest leadership is needed to fight corruption, it is important to add that institutions also matter. It is in this light that Barack Obama submitted while on visit to Ghana in 2008 that, "what African needs now is not strong men, but strong institutions". The family, the educational sector, the legal system, the economy and of course, our political institutions, are in dire need of reforms. It is when the institutions are in good shape that they will be able to give a face or phase of hope to the people. In strengthening our institutions value-re-orientation is therefore imperative, since it is values that make institutions. It is the

values that individuals who run institutions cherished that impact on the operation and effectiveness of such institutions. One of such cherished values is service; if those in leadership consider their position as a call to serve, that will go a long way to impact service delivery to the people.

Again, it is to be noted that no campaign against corruption will be effective when the majority of the people live in abject poverty as it is the case in Nigeria. Empowering the people will help spell a death knell for corruption and will also sound a note of readiness for the maximization of Nigeria's developmental potentials. It is only when corruption is tackled and poverty reduced to the barest minimum that our people will leave the state of frustration and embraces a life of dignity that does not glory in self-destruction (suicide bombing) and in the destruction of others.

Conclusion

We have established in the foregoing that there is an intertwined relationship between corruption, poverty and religious extremism. The dialectics of the three phenomena makes any attempt at addressing one in isolation of others a vain exercise. It is the argument of this paper that poverty in Nigeria is the product of corruption, and corruption on the other hand denies other sections of the society the privilege to participate in the resources of their land, hence living a life that is not reflective of their dignity as human beings. In frustration, those in such conditions can be readily available to be used as agents of terror and societal intimidation. Therefore, in addressing the problem posed by the activities of Boko Haram, the State must look beyond the claim of the fundamentalists to the other possible factors that can explain their anger and violence. Their actions can be explained by relative frustration theory and not simply by their (claimed) desire to islamise the nation. Their actions so far and their methods as well as their main targets which is the Nigerian state explains that their activities are rooted in their frustration with the inability of Government to utilize the collective wealth to improve the living standards of Nigerians and the well-being of its people . The location of the causes of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria outside corruption and poverty will be greatly misleading.

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