

Poverty and Conflict as the Bane of Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The question of development has been much of a critical discourse in Nigeria. This is given the fact that Nigeria has the potentials to achieve development but this has become quite elusive. The country battles with the twin challenge of poverty and conflict. With an alarming rate of poverty in the country as well as incessant cases of communal or political conflicts, this paper argues that there is a nexus between poverty and conflict and both are borne out of a feeling of frustration by the people which leads them into aggression. While maintaining that the duo are not the only cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment, the study argued that these other factors such as leadership crises, corruption, among others are still tied to poverty and conflict. The paper concludes that the only path towards ensuring the development of the country is to tackle both to its roots.

Keywords: Conflict, poverty, development, frustration, aggression

1. Introduction

The quest for development has been an elusive concept in the Nigerian state. This is in spite of the efforts that have been put in by successive governments in the country since independence. According to the World Bank report¹, the GDP growth rate of the country between 2000 and 2014 averaged 7 percent but fell to 2.7 percent in 2015. The trend has however been negative as the country slipped into recession in 2017. The unemployment rate as at 2021 stands at 33.3% of the active labour force², the inflation rate stands at 19.64%³, while the poverty rate is projected to rise to 95.1m at the end of 2022⁴. For a country as blessed as Nigeria with numerous natural resources and also the biggest producer of oil in Africa and the sixth oil producer in the world, the country still has to deal with an infrastructural deficit worth about \$1.5tn and other indices of under-development. While the country has also had to grapple with bad governance and corruption, several policies such as the National Development Plan (2021-2025) have been initiated by different governments to drive development in the country but all these have not yielded much result. The country is rather tilting towards the status of a failed state.

The reason for Nigeria's under-development may be understandable if one looks at the plethora of conflicts that the country is engulfed in. The Northeast of the country is facing the continued incursion of terrorists of the ISWAP/Boko Haram; the Northwest is heaving hard under the assault of bandits/kidnappers; the North-central has face a handful of herders-farmers clashes; there is oil-bunkering and piracy on the high waters in the Southsouth; the Southeast bleeds from the dastardly acts of unknown gunmen and IPOB agitators; and the Southwest is not free from cases of

¹ World Bank Report, *Nigeria Development Update: The Continuing Urgency of Business Unusual* (IBRD-IDA: June, 2022), p. 2.

² National Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Statistics: Unemployment and Underemployment Reports (Q4)* (National Bureau of Statistics, March 2021), p. 18.

³ National Bureau of Statistics, *CPI and Inflation Report July 2022* (National Bureau of Statistics, August 2022), p. 1.

⁴ World Bank Report, *Nigeria Development Update: The Continuing Urgency of Business Unusual* (IBRD-IDA: June, 2022), Pp. 26-32.

kidnapping and attacks. These are asides inter-communal clashes that the country has also had to deal with.

The under-development of the country can also be understood in the face of the endemic poverty that almost half the population of the country are in. This is where the focus of this paper comes in. In this paper, it is argued that there is a nexus between conflict and poverty. We argued that the incessant conflict that the country is embroiled in is a by-product of the high level of absolute poverty many citizens in the country are in. We further argued that the duo of poverty and conflict are a major player in Nigeria's development crisis. It is argued that the interplay of poverty and conflict have inhibited development in the country. It is argued that the deprivation that the people are subjected to drives them into frustration which thereby makes them vulnerable tools to foment trouble. It is further argued that poverty and conflict have contributed largely in inhibiting the country's drive towards development.

2. Methodology

This study employs the qualitative approach in the analysis of the data collected. This study is descriptive in nature. It is based on describing and analyzing how poverty and conflict have become the bane of development in Nigeria. The data were sourced through secondary sources because the researcher consulted materials from journals, newspapers, textbooks etc.

3. Literature Review

Poverty

There is no single definition of poverty and this is as a result of a number of factors. Poverty affects different groups of people in such a way that the idea of poverty becomes relative depending on who is experiencing it⁵. Hence, poverty has been equated to the concepts of the disadvantaged, impoverishment, inequality, deprivation, the underprivileged, and the needy. However, three main approaches to poverty definition have been underscored⁶. The first is monetary poverty. This approach defines poverty in terms of the inability of a person's income (or consumption) to meet some minimum level of resources⁷. The second is capability poverty. Capability poverty has been defined as the inability of a person to achieve basic capabilities to adequately fulfill some specific functions at minimal level⁸. The third is the social exclusion poverty. Social exclusion occurs when an individual is denied the opportunity to participate in the normal activities of citizens regardless of whether he is willing to participate or not⁹. Laderchi et al. argued that the attributes of social exclusion include multidimensionality, dynamic, relational, active, relative and contextual¹⁰. The core difference between the social exclusion approach and the duo of monetary and capability

⁵ Mark Rank. *One nation underprivileged: Why American poverty affects us all* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2004), Pp. 14-22.

⁶ P. Kotler, N. Roberto, & T. Leisner. "Alleviating poverty: A macro/micro marketing Perspective", *Journal of Macromarketing*, 26 (3), 2006, 233-238.

⁷ C. Laderchi, R. Saith, and F. Stewart. "Does it matter that we do not agree on the definition of poverty: A Comparison of Four Approaches". *Oxford Development Studies*, 31 (3), 2003, Pp. 233-274.

⁸ Ruhi Saith. "Capabilities: The concept and its Operation". *QEH Working Papers Series*, (Queen Elizabeth Hall, University of Oxford, 2001), Pp. 4-8.

⁹ H. Silver and S.M. Miller. "Social Exclusion: the European Approach to Social Disadvantage", *Indicators*. 2 (2), 2003, Pp. 7 – 12.

¹⁰ C. Laderchi, R. Saith, and F. Stewart. "Does it matter that we do not agree on the definition of poverty: A Comparison of Four Approaches". *Oxford Development Studies*, 31 (3), 2003, Pp. 260-274

approaches is that while former focuses on the process and outcome of deprivation while the latter focuses on the elements of deprivation.

Three different factors have been identified as the cause of poverty. The first is the individual factor¹¹. The second are cultural and neighbourhood factors¹². The third factor is the structural factor which holds that poverty can be caused by the economic and social structures in a society¹³. A classic example of this is the capitalist system which is skewed in favour of those in control of capital. These approaches do not exhaust all definitions of poverty by scholars but for the sake of this paper, we shall adopt the definition of poverty as given by the World Bank. It views poverty as “*multidimensional and a situation in which people are unable to fulfill their basic needs as well as lack of control over resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime and the lack of political freedom and voice*”¹⁴.

Conflict

In discussing conflict, it is fundamental that we examine some of the various definitions of the concept. The Dictionary of Social Sciences gives five possible meanings of conflict: the indirect quest for mutually exclusive objectives by disposing of or weakening oppositions; opposition process coming short of a cooperative element; circumstance of goal variance or inconsistency between people or groups; competitive circumstance in which each group looks for position he knows is inconsistent with interests and wishes of the other; and opposition in the society or group.

Conflicts can incorporate all squabbles from those at the family unit level through those caused by pressure groups and social movements up to the armed violent conflict and it can happen between those in the same communities, between communities and more at elevated levels of authority and between states. This therefore brings us to the issue of identifying the various kinds of conflict. Oberschall¹⁵ recognizes the Weberian theory of “*conflict as action*” and “*social conflict*” as explained by Coser. The former he views is tilted to class struggle and physical violence while he argues that Coser takes into consideration the peaceful conflict of opinions and ideas. Wallace¹⁶ differentiate conflicts based on coercion – non-coercive or peaceful conflicts as against coercive or violent conflict.

There are various definitions and perception of conflict as seen in how various authors have conceptualized it. They can range from simple, non-violent disputes with positive results, (for example, a football match¹⁷, spontaneous and poorly organized uprisings like riots, to coordinated and organized violent uprisings like war. Conflicts can likewise be peaceful, efficient and focused

¹¹ Herbert Gans. *The War against the Poor* (New York, NY: Basic Book. 1995), Pp. 11 – 26.

¹² B. Mandell & B. Schram. *An Introduction to human services: Politic and Practice*. (New York, NY: Pearson Education Inc, 2003).

¹³ L. Beeghley. *The Structure of social stratification in the United States* (New York, NY: Pearson, 2000).

¹⁴ Uzoh Bonaventure, “Poverty – Conflict Nexus: The Nigerian Experience”, *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention* · October 2016.Vol. 3 (10), p. 2834.

¹⁵ A. Oberschall *Social Conflict and social movements* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 30.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Wallace, “Institutional conflict work in democratic societies” *UCI Ombudsman: The Journal*, 1993).

¹⁷ J.P. Powelson. *Institutions of economic growth: A theory of conflict management in developing countries*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 34; K.E. Boulding, “The power of non-conflict” *Journal of social studies* 33 (1), 1977, p. 26.

on changing government policies¹⁸. Hirschleifer¹⁹ depicts conflict as the contrary condition to production: since power is utilized to produce goods as opposed to utilizing labor to make them. Boulding²⁰ portrays conflict as an objective coordinated movement intended to improve the situation of one group to the detriment of the other. Simmel (in Coser, 1972:34)²¹ portrays conflict as the component that reinforces relationships - the method by which society holds itself together by ensuring consensus within groups.

While all the above may give altogether different translations of conflict, there are various issues featured here that may help characterize conflicts. Firstly, conflict has a task to carry out in the society despite the fact that this may only become clear ex post – the question of whether or not this task is negative or positive is an open debate. Besides, conflict is fundamentally about a contradiction of opinions or values. The level of conflict and the idea of the objectives influence the degree of conflict that rises. Thirdly, the presence of violence is a sufficient but not necessary condition for conflict.

Development

The idea of development is an ambiguous one as there are many definitions, interpretations, and theories of the concept from various scholars. For example, Meier²², defines development as the act of raising to the highest value the Gross National Product through the process of capital accumulation and industrialization. The concept is also defined by Peet²³ as “*an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change, and striving purposefully and creatively to attain new goals*”. Reyes²⁴ sees development as a social condition in a nation whereby the needs of the citizens are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems. Todaro and Smith²⁵ also defines “*development as a multidimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes, and institutions, as well as economic growth, reduction of inequality, and eradication of absolute poverty*”. The guideline to the fourth National Development plan (1980-85) also provided “*that development has often been couched in terms of material things, rather than people, in terms of creation rather than revolution. True development it says must mean the development of man. It is also clear that development does not start with goals and things; it starts with people*”.

¹⁸ J. M. Rothgeb Jr. “Investment Dependence and Political Conflict In Developing Countries: A Comparative Regional Analysis”. In S. Chan (Ed) *Foreign direct investment in a changing global political economy*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 188..

¹⁹ J. Hirschleifer. "The Technology of Conflict as an Economic Activity," *American Economic Review* 81 (2), 1991, Pp. 130-134.

²⁰ K.E. Boulding, “The power of non-conflict” *Journal of social studies* 33 (1), 1977, p. 26.

²¹ L.A. Coser. *The functions of social conflict*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1972)

²² K. J. Meier. *The Political Economy of Regulation: The case of Insurance* (New York: Suny Press, 1988).

²³ R. Peet. *Theories of Development*. (New York: Guilford Press, 1999).

²⁴ G.E. Reyes. “Four Main Theories Of Development: Modernization, Dependency, World-System, And Globalization”. *Nómadas. Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas*, 4(2), 2001, Pp. 109–124. University of Pittsburgh, USA.

²⁵ M. P. Todaro, & S. C. Smith. *Economic development*. (8th ed.). (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 2006).

The concept of development shares a similitude to the concept of sustainable development. Cerin²⁶ defines sustainable development as that bordering on the principle of meeting human development goals while simultaneously sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. According to Taylor²⁷, the three pillars on which sustainable development rests are economic growth, environmental protection and social equality. A noticeable point in the discussion and definition of development as well as sustainable development is that development is tied to man. Put differently, development is one that has man as the utmost beneficiary. Man must be at the centre of the discourse of development or else such will not qualify as development.

4. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, we shall be adopting the frustration-aggression to explain the meeting point of poverty, conflict, and development. In 1939, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears published a monograph on aggression in which they introduced the frustration-aggression theory (F-A). The theory has had great effects on the study of aggressions and has been a major influence on further study and engagements on aggression²⁸. Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) stated that “*the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression*”²⁹. Frustration, as used here, is not an emotional experience as it is used in common parlance. On the contrary, it is referred to as “*an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response*” and a goal-response is taken to mean the reinforcing final operation in an ongoing behaviour sequence³⁰. The idea behind this theory is the need to understand why some persons resort to aggression or react to issues in an aggressive manner. The classical position as given by Dollard et al is that that aggression is *always* based on frustration and that frustration *always* leads to aggression. The implication of this is that frustration became both a sufficient and necessary condition for aggression – a position that was considered too general.

Miller³¹ reformulated this position, particularly the latter part of the claim. Without doubt, it is not right that frustrations cause aggressive outbursts by necessity. Miller therefore repositioned the second part of the hypothesis to read: “*Frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression*”³². In other words, frustration does not necessarily cause aggression but it actuates those motivational forces which are diffuse and not necessarily specific to aggression. Miller’s reformulation of the hypothesis can be summed up as: frustration triggers behaviours that may or may not be aggressive but any aggressive act is caused by frustration. This reformulation changes the dynamics of the nexus between

²⁶ P. Cerin. “Bringing Economic Opportunity Into Line With Environmental Influence: A Discussion on the Coase Theorem and the Porter and Van Der Linde Hypothesis”. *Ecological Economics*, 56, 2006, Pp. 209–225. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2005.01.016.

²⁷ Taylor, S. J. (2016). *A Review of Sustainable Development Principles*, (Centre for environmental studies, South Africa: University of Pretoria, 2016).

²⁸ Dolf Zillmann, *Hostility and Aggression*, (Hillsdale, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979).

²⁹ John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears. *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven, CT, US: Yale University Press, 1939), p.1.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

³¹ N.E. Miller, “I. The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis”, *Psychological Review*, 48(4), Pp. 337 – 342.

³² Ibid, p. 340.

frustration and aggression. Hence, Miller's reformulation holds that frustration is not a sufficient, but necessary condition, for aggression³³.

The hypothetical treatment of the hindrance of aggression is connected with the time issue, in that the absence of prompt, clear signs of aggression is expected to prompt delayed secret results that ultimately 'break out' in various structure. Dollard et al. perceived that not all frustrations produce clear aggression, and to represent this reality, they placed inhibitory powers whose strength was said to differ emphatically with the seriousness of the discipline expected to result from the specific goal reaction. It was suggested that if discipline (an idea that was widened to incorporate such things as injury to a cherished item and inability to accomplish set goals) was expected to offset any motivators that could be acquired, clear aggression would be restrained. Dollard et al. argued that overt aggression must not be taken as nonaggression. In fact, the supposed non-overt aggression will birth manifest overtly in a near future as it lingers on.

A major signifier of the of frustration-aggression theory borders on the *displacement* of aggression. By displacement of aggression, we mean a situation where aggression is directed at one who is not the cause of the frustration. As regards this phenomenon, Dollard et al argued that a particular frustration does not only instigate aggression against the cause or source of the frustration but also have the aggression targeted at subjects that are to some degree connected or not connected to that source.

Dollard et al. further argued that the more difficult or the more the sanctions that are anticipated to follow proposed acts of aggression against a particular target, the more likely for the possible act of aggression against the target to be halted. However, this aggression does not go away like that. It does not disappear. Rather, the difficulty of directing the act of aggression at the source of frustration means that the aggression will be replaced by alternative, less punishment-burdened acts or an alternative target is created to replace the primary target of aggression. This transfer of the aggression to another source is what is referred to as the displacement upon other targets. The frustrated individual is motivated to find targets for his/her aggressive tendencies. This becomes necessary because it is only when the aggression is eventually passed or vented that the frustrated individual is able to rest³⁴.

In a civic state, the denial of people of their expected or anticipated goals brings about frustration. This is also same with the Nigerian state. Citizens have a castle of dreams and expectations which they hope are achieved in good time. However, when such expectations are dashed due to the preponderance of bad governance or bad policies, it gives birth to frustration which invariably leads to aggressive tendencies. As aggressive tendencies are not meant to exist in a vacuum, there is a need for them to have targets. Thus, when these youths have their hopes dashed, the state and the government which is the machinery of the state becomes the primary target of their aggressive tendencies (borne out of the frustration that the inability to achieve the goals). Unfortunately, the state controls the monopoly of force and so provides government with the needed protection that makes it difficult for it to be a soft target of aggressive tendencies of frustrated individuals. This is coupled with the sanctions of prosecution if arrested for ventilating such aggressive acts or even death where security forces are unleashed on protesters. For fear of these heavy sanctions, there is a transfer of the aggression on other soft targets. This theory gives perspective to the series of conflict in the country.

³³ Dolf Zillmann, *Hostility and Aggression*, (Hillsdale, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979).

³⁴ Dolf Zillmann, *Hostility and Aggression*, (Hillsdale, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979).

5. The Poverty and Conflict Nexus

The nexus between poverty and conflict can be seen from viewpoint of both cause and consequence. Poverty is both a cause and consequence of conflict. Poverty is a consequence of conflict just it can also lead to conflict.

There have been researches that tries to establish that conflict creates or leads to impoverishments. Collier (1999), in examining the internal wars which took place between 1960 and 1992, posits that there is a relationship between and the GDP of a country³⁵. He submits that conflict is connected to the reduction of GDP per capita growth by 2.2 percent. Also, Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) investigates the economic effect of the Basque terror campaign and submits that the terror led to a reduction of the GDP per capita by 10 percent³⁶. Mueller and Tobias (2016) research also that the conflict situation led to an average of 18% during the period of the conflict as against what obtained during non-conflict periods³⁷. Also. In its study of the Syrian crisis in 2017, the World Bank finds out that the Syrian state has lost, between 2011 and December 2016, about USD 226 billion in GDP³⁸. It is also not a mistake that most of the poorest countries have had series of conflicts, particularly civil wars. According to the World Bank Report (2020) on country's Gross National Income (GNI), the ten poorest states in the world are Burundi, Somalia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Liberia, Niger, and Democratic Republic of Congo. Safe for Niger, the remaining nine countries on the list are either battling with or have had protracted armed conflict. In the case of Niger, series of constitutional crises and bad governance have led to the state of the country.

This points to the fact that the effect of civil wars is felt both during the conflict and during the post-war period. While during the civil war many are displaced, there is no room for productivity as the quest to stay alive is what is utmost. *"Rapid descents [into chronic poverty] can occur because of a catastrophic change in circumstances that depletes household assets or places the household in a situation where its assets cannot be effectively utilized. An unfortunately all too common example of such a descent is when violent conflict breaks out and a rural household flees to take on refugee status."*³⁹ When the war is over, the victims are not restored. In fact, the case is that they are impoverished the more. *Armed conflict affects the productivity of the workforce in the long run through lack of education, stunting, injuries and mental disorders. It is as if conflict imposes a kind of debt burden that builds up during conflict and needs to be repaid once violent conflict has ended.*⁴⁰

On the reverse side, poverty is also a cause of conflict. This should not be mistaken that poverty is a sufficient condition for conflict. Poverty may lead to conflict and if and only if other factors are present⁴¹. Seeing the link between poverty and conflict and poverty as a cause of conflict is better seen from the vulnerability approach. The position here is that a person who is vulnerable becomes a ready tool for conflict. Robert Chambers (1989) provides a comprehensive definition of

³⁵ Paul Collier. "On the Economic Consequences of Civil War". *Oxford Economic Papers*, 51(1), 1999. Pp. 168–183.

³⁶ Abadie Alberto, and Javier Gardeazabal. "The Economic Costs of Conflict: A Case Study of the Basque Country ." *American Economic Review*, 93 (1), 2003, Pp. 113-132.

³⁷ H. Mueller and J. Tobias. *The cost of violence: Estimating the economic impact of conflict*. IGC Growth Brief Series 007 (London: International Growth Centre, 2016).

³⁸ World Bank. *The Toll of War : The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria*. (Washington, DC.: World Bank, 2017). <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/27541>.

³⁹ David Hulme and Andrew Shepherd, Conceptualizing Chronic Poverty, *World Development*, **31**, (3), 2003, P. 414.

⁴⁰ H. Mueller and T. Channon. *Conflict and Poverty. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 9455*. (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2020), p. 3.

⁴¹ S. Verstegen. *Poverty and Conflict: An Entitlement Perspective*, (CPN Briefing Paper, 2001).

vulnerability when he defined it as: *Vulnerability here refers to exposure to contingencies and stress, and difficulties coping with them. Vulnerability has thus two sides: an external side of risks, shocks, and stress to which a household or individual is subject; and an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss*⁴². From this definition, we can identify three significant features of vulnerability which are germane to our understanding how poverty leads to conflict. These three features include exposure to risks, lack of coping strategies, and serious consequences of such risks. A poor person is one who is severely exposed to risk and so can be blackmailed into resorting to violence or engaging in anti-social acts. Take for example, a hungry man who is offered money to go disrupt a meeting may likely do so when he knows that failure to collect the money he is offered will spell hunger for him. The inability to have coping strategies subjects the poor to vulnerability. Like said earlier, while poverty is not the only cause of conflict but it poses a conflict risk. Austin (1999) uses sub-Saharan Africa as a good example of how poverty causes conflict⁴³. As the home to countries with very low personal income, it is also a theatre of conflict. In fact, of the 63 low-income countries, 38 are located in Sub-Saharan Africa and these are countries associated with conflict. There is also the argument that people venture into conflict because they less to lose because of poverty. *“In other words, the more individuals have to lose, the less likely they will risk joining a conflict.”*⁴⁴

In discussing the nexus between poverty and conflict, it is important for one to understand that neither poverty nor conflict is sufficient condition for the other. It may not be right that poverty alone causes conflict because there are other factors that also causes conflict. In the same vein, conflict is not a sufficient condition for poverty. The fact that conflict can impoverish the people does not mean it is the only thing that leads to impoverishment. There are many causes of poverty and conflict is only one of such⁴⁵. What this means is that there is no finality on the relationship between poverty and conflict but their relationship is at best regarded as indirect⁴⁶. This is not to say that this perspective on the nature of the relationship between poverty and conflict is the only one. On the contrary, there are other views on the nature of the nexus between poverty and conflict. Some scholars hold that the relationship between them is a two-way relationship⁴⁷; some others have also maintained the relationship is complex⁴⁸; while some consider the relationship to be bifurcated⁴⁹.

6. Poverty and Conflict as Bane of Development in Nigeria

The interplay of poverty and conflict can play a devastating role on development in a country. The relationship between development and poverty-conflict is two ways. On one side, the interplay of the two would be an obstacle to development and on the other hand, development “...is

⁴² R. Chambers. “Vulnerability, Coping and Policy”, *IDS Bulletin* 20(2), 1989, p. 1.

⁴³ Arthur Moe. *The Causes and Dynamics of Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa*, US Army War College, 2009.

⁴⁴ Arthur Moe. *The Causes and Dynamics of Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (US Army War College, 2009), p.13..

⁴⁵ R. Luckham et al. *Conflict and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Assessment of the Issues and Evidence*, *IDS Working Paper 128*, (Brighton: IDS, 2001).

⁴⁶ S. Versteegen. *Poverty and Conflict: An Entitlement Perspective*, (CPN Briefing Paper, 2001), Pp. 9-10.

⁴⁷ Rasheed Dramen, *Poverty and Conflict in Africa: Explaining a Complex Relationship*, (Africa-Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Programme, Addis Ababa, 2003), p.1.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Goodhand, “Violent Conflict, Poverty and Chronic Poverty”, *Chronic Poverty Research Centre*, Working Paper 6, May 2001, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Rasheed Dramen, *Poverty and Conflict in Africa: Explaining a Complex Relationship*, (Africa-Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Programme, Addis Ababa, 2003), p.15.

a permanent process of moderating conflicts and managing contradictions in society at large”⁵⁰. As mentioned in the conceptual clarification, our idea of development is focused on human development. This notion of development puts humans and their wellbeing at the heart of development drives.

The Nigerian state has been grappling with underdevelopment that are occasioned by the interplay of these two forces. A cursory look at the different events in Nigeria will justify this claim. In the Northeast and the Northwest where banditry and terrorism are prevalent, there is also a high record of poverty with each having an average of 67% poverty rates. These are regions that are also known for their huge contributions to agriculture in the country. For instance, the top ten largest rice producers in Nigeria Kebbi state – 3.5 million MT; Jigawa state – 2.1 million MT; Kano state -1.6 million MT; Ekiti state – 1.5 million MT; Benue state – 1.5 million MT; Ebonyi state -1.5 million MT; Kaduna state – 634,410 MT; Niger state – 380,000 MT; Cross-River state – 50,000 MT; and Ogun state – 20,000 MT.⁵¹ This statistics reveals that these two geo-political zones account for more than half the 5million MT produced in Nigeria. However, these two have fallen under the radar of terrorism and banditry. The implication of this is that farmers have abandoned their farms for fear of becoming body counts or kidnapped. The effect is that the contributions to GDP in Nigeria plummeted. Suffice that banditry in Nigeria took an increasing dimension in 2017 particularly with Maradi and that period witnessed the spread to other areas. This is coupled with the fact that Boko Haram/ISWAP were still carrying out pockets of attacks in Bornu largely. The statistics equally show the effect of this on the GDP of the country, more importantly in the contribution of agriculture to the GDP. In the third quarter of 2016, Agriculture contributed 24.11% while it contributed 19.28% to nominal GDP in the second quarter of 2017⁵². There was an improvement in the third quarter of 2017 as Agriculture contributed 24.44% to GDP⁵³. The state of insecurity took a toll on the contribution of Agriculture. By the second quarter of 2021, it contributed 22.13% to GDP while it improved to 22.13% in the first quarter⁵⁴. In the second quarter of 2022, Agriculture contributed **21.90%** to GDP⁵⁵. This effect was also seen in the level of food inflation in the country. Food inflation stands 22.02% as at July 2022 compared to 20.60% recorded in June 2022⁵⁶.

The IPOB/ESN/unknown gunmen is also taking a huge toll on the state of development. With its Mondays sit-at-home order, the five states in the Southeast geo-political zone of the country have been subjected to sit at home on Mondays. This is aside the other killings, kidnappings, and destruction of government facilities that have taken place in the zone since the crisis emanated. The huge economic losses that have followed have been enormous. For example, the sit-at-home order has caused so much loss since it started in 2018. It has been projected that the zone loses #10bn for every sit-at-home in the zone⁵⁷. What that means is that the zone loses as much as #520bn yearly and about #2trn in the last four years. It has even been estimated that the country has lost a whooping

⁵⁰ S. Verstegen. *Poverty and Conflict: An Entitlement Perspective*, (CPN Briefing Paper, 2001), Pp. 9.

⁵¹ <https://www.commodity-port.com/2022/03/08/rice-production-in-nigeria-and-its-statistics/>

⁵² National Bureau of Statistics, *Nigeria Gross Domestic Report Q2 2017* (National Bureau of Statistics, August 2017), p. 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ National Bureau of Statistics, *Nigeria Gross Domestic Report Q2 2022* (National Bureau of Statistics, August 2022), p. 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ National Bureau of Statistics, *CPI and Inflation Report July 2022* (National Bureau of Statistics, August 2022), p. 1.

⁵⁷ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/09/ipob-south-east-loses-n10b-in-every-sit-at-home-gov-umahi/>

#50.38tn to the myriads of crises rocking the country in 2021⁵⁸. The effect of this revelation is better appreciated if one looks at the claim that Nigeria has an infrastructure deficit of \$1.5tn⁵⁹.

The place of poverty in leading the path of the country towards underdevelopment is also best understood in the light of the quality of governance and the choice of electorate during election. There has been a weaponization of poverty such that it has been an instrument used by the political class to manipulate the electorate into making uninformed or manipulated choices who in turn get to government and siphon public funds. The interconnectedness of leadership and development is an established discourse in scholarship⁶⁰. Leadership is necessary to drive the quest for development. By implication, where leadership is missing or lacking, development will be a far dream. This has been a major hurdle for Nigeria to cross because of the flawed leadership recruitment process in Nigeria. The political elite sway events in the political space to their side by weaponizing poverty. They unduly influence voters using money and the entrenched poverty as a tool to perpetuate themselves in power. The people therefore choose leaders who are self-seeking and not those who will protect their interests. Ultimately, "... *The greatest losers (in Nigerian elections) are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is made the determining factor in elections. Can we not move from politics of money and materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development?*"⁶¹ With this manipulated process comes the attendant corrupt and the end effect of underdevelopment. This is captured thus:

As a result of this corruption of the political and electoral process, the benefits that should have come from more than a decade and a half of democracy and significant earnings accrued from crude oil exports have not materialised. Instead, the country continues to suffer from poverty and underdevelopment, while the political elite keep siphoning the commonwealth, living in affluence, and controlling politics for their own narrow selfinterests.⁶²

The impact of the duo of conflict and poverty is evidenced in the inability of the country to meet up in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals. On 25 September, 2015, the 193 member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals aiming to transform the world over the next 15 years. These goals are designed to eliminate poverty, discrimination, abuse and preventable deaths, address environmental destruction, and usher in an era of development for all people, everywhere. An interrogation of these goals will reveal how poverty and conflict have made it impossible to achieve these goals. First, it must be said that these goals are pointers to social development which the UN aims to achieve with them. Not only is Nigeria lagging behind in the achievement of these goals it is ranked 139th among 193 countries compared in terms of their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). in the 2021 SDG index⁶³.

⁵⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Peace Index 2022*, (IEP: 2022).

⁵⁹ <https://nairametrics.com/2021/11/03/nigeria-needs-1-5-trillion-to-close-infrastructure-deficit-in-ten-years-buhari/>

⁶⁰ Hailu Shawel, "The Link between Political Leadership and Development", in *Economic Focus*, Vol 6, No. 6, 2004, Pp. 9-10 (Transl: Yonas Admassu).

⁶¹ Olusegun Obasanjo, cited in INEC, *Political Party Finance Handbook*, (Abuja: INEC), P. 5.

⁶² Emmanuel Ikechi Onah & Uche Nwali. "Monetisation of Electoral Politics and the Challenge of Political Exclusion in Nigeria", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 2018, p. 18.

⁶³ United Nations, *2021 Sustainable Development Report*. Retrieved from <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings> on 12th September, 2022.

7. Conclusion

Poverty and conflict are two factors that have bedevilled Nigeria's quest for development. It is so bad that the country is heaving hard under their weight. With a continually rising rate of unemployment and the depletion of the middle class, the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria keeps getting widened. This has also led to a proportionate increase in the rate of crime and insecurity. As mentioned earlier in this paper, poverty (acute poverty you may call it) increases the vulnerability of the poor and makes him/her susceptible to violent tendencies that will result to conflict. On the reverse, the occurrence of conflict further plunges the victims to more poverty. Those who are displaced will lose their means of livelihood and possibly their properties. This is asides the loss of life. This is the same tale with all conflicts that the country has been engulfed in. Nigerians and Nigeria have lost about \$6.9bn to Boko Haram insurgency in the past thirteen years⁶⁴. A former Minister of Petroleum also said that Nigeria lost up to \$100bn to Niger-Delta insurgency in about ten years⁶⁵. Houses and government infrastructure were razed to the ground in the various (inter-)communal clashes the country has faced, and people's means of livelihood has been adversely affected by these conflicts. The interplay of poverty and conflict have had damaging effect on development in Nigeria and this explains why those geo-political zones in both the Northern and the Southern region record the highest level of poverty in the region. For example, the Northeast and the Northwest which are riddled with banditry and terrorism record poverty level as high as 71.86% and 64.84% respectively. The Northcentral which is caught up in herders-farmers clashes has a poverty level of 42.70% while the Southeast which is battling with the IPOB/ESN/Unknown gunmen crises has a poverty level of 42.44%. This is a wide difference from the South-south that has a poverty level of 21.28% while the Southwest has a poverty level of 12.12%.

As it had been mentioned earlier, poverty and conflict are not the only factors responsible for Nigeria underdevelopment. However, these other factors such as leadership crises, corruption, among others are still tied to poverty and conflict. The inability to move past the crop of leaders is simply because the masses are so poor that they cannot challenge the ruling class who only need to toss a few notes in their faces. All these causal factors of underdevelopment are still tied to the interplay of poverty and conflict. These two have been a major clog in the wheel of development of Nigeria and they keep sinking the country's economy further.

There is a need to deal with these two by the political class if it sincerely seeks Nigeria's development. There is an urgent need for government to tame the rising conflicts across the country. To expect a country to thrive in the face of conflicts as this is like building castles in the air. The rising conflicts have led to the destruction of infrastructural facilities in affected areas and this compound the woes of the country to rectify the massive infrastructural deficit. There is also the need to engage in intensive poverty eradication. What is needed to pull the over 90m Nigerians in poverty out of the poverty threshold is to provide the needed incentives, not hand-me-downs. When these two have been put in check, it will become a lot easier to fix the other problems bedeviling the Nigerian state.

⁶⁴ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/509483-about-6-9-billion-lost-to-boko-haram-insurgency-in-north-east-governor-zulum.html>

⁶⁵ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/02/21/kachikwu-clarifies-nigerias-100bn-loss-to-militancy-in-niger-delta/>