

# **Tension in the Paradise: A Paradigm Shift in Urban Violence in Nigeria**

Aremu Fatai Ayinde and Aluko Opeyemi Idowu\*

*Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria*

*Corresponding author: opealukoheavenprogress@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

There had been a tremendous increase in the record of urban violence in the past decade and a clear tendency consistent increased. There is an average of ten (10) (reported) incidents of violence per day in each urban city in Nigeria regardless of it magnitude, an average of three hundred and fifty (350) crimes committed across the country per day regardless of it magnitude. This work reveals the effects of violence on development in Nigeria. The motive behind any group conversing for a right is seen as a collective bargaining for the public good. Conversely, this motive had dwindled down the lane taking a strange manoeuvrings and becoming a shift to personal aggrandizement and self glorifying egocentric motives. The Relative Deprivation theory is adopted in this work to effectively buttress the root cause of the problem of violence. This paper recommended institutional remedies and strengthened of internal democracy so as to ensure essential political, economical and social services for the citizenry and to mitigate religious bigotry, ethnic chauvinism and regional sentiments in the polity.

**Keywords:** Deprivation; Development; Governance; Public Policy and Violence

## **Introduction**

Violence within cities had always been in the news and at the wake of the millennium, its intensity had been amplified. It had been in the news for the very ugly reasons of unprecedented political violence, ethno-religious conflict, economic marginalization and other unforeseen imbroglios which have occurred in different parts of the world in different magnitude and impact on every facet of life. Indeed, the trend of urban violence and civil unrest did not elude Nigeria without replicating its own special kind of species.

The trend in Nigeria is in a vicious cycle which rotates from the west to the east, which moves to the south and finally lying on its belly in the North. In the west it is seen in the case of the brutal and nasty politico-ethno-religious violence being championed by the Militant Oodua People's Congress (OPC), (Fan et al., 2014). In the East, it was perceived in the solitary movement for secession by the war lords of the Eastern Nigeria under the hospices of the Biafra, (Omaka, 2014). The trend moved to the Southern Nigeria where the oil-lords-militants wreck great havoc on the ecology and the polity of Nigeria by illegal bunkery, kidnapping and deliberate destruction of oil refineries. This is due to the fact that the main stay of the economy is the crude oil which is drilled mainly from their territory, (Omoyibo and Osunde, 2014). The trend currently is at a march-time in Northern Nigeria under the chairmanship of the Boko Harams. Deliberate self harm, suicide bombing, destruction of government property especially educational facility and religious bigotry is their main operational terms (Wolff, 1969; Walker, 2012).

This culture of violence has not only been imbibed and sustained as part of the country's political behaviour since independence it has been one of the potent causes of the low participation of Nigerians in politics but not in religious activities. Adeniyi (2003) express concern over the situation of politics in Nigeria, when they observed that during

the ward congress of the PDP, an intra-party affair, many politicians went to the congress venue armed with assault rifles and acid containers for possible use on opponents.

Political violence negates law and order and peaceful coexistence. In addition to security concerns, it militates against the consolidation of democracy and political development. This in turn impacts on the social and economic well being of the nation and creates imbalances in social relations, (Howell, 2004). Political violence brings complex set of events such as poverty, ethnic or religious grievances which affect the social relationship of the people in the society.

This study adopts the methodology of interrogatory systematology where by the trend of violence in Nigeria is interrogated with the existing literature and empirical realities of the dynamism of the urban violence situations in Nigeria. However, the methodology adopted in this work is the relative deprivation theory which believes that no violence will erupt except the people are being aggrieved and deprived in some fundamental things.

The question that this work tends to give answers to revolve around what are the issues or circumstances that constitute urban violence in a developed community under the administration of seasoned intellectuals. Conclusion of this work is premised on the fact that as urban areas expounds the institutions and other socio economic facilities are choked up and needs an incremental upgrading so as to avert the outbreak of violence.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

In this section, attempt will be made to carefully conceptualize the term violence and Urban. There had been several views of what violence seems to be by various scholars. Wolf, (1969) conceived violence as the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of other people in the society. This notion is seen as pro-government agitations. The people have

the legitimacy to pour out their grievances and the use of state powers to suppress the wish of the people might be necessary evil to visit in few extreme cases.

Gurr (1970) posited that violence is the collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors including competing political groups as well as incumbents or its policies. This concept is essentially institutional and lacks merit of some remote factors that stimulate violence in the urban areas unlike the emphasis on political reasons. On the boarder sense, violence includes ‘crime’ against persons such as premeditated and un-meditated homicide, assault and rape. It also includes international deaths and injuries arising as consequences of war including youth violence (Muggah, 2012).

Violence can be mop-up in few lines as a good summary; it is the whole gamut of issue that refers to all forms of collective attacks within a political regime, directed at effecting changes in the body politics (Saka, 2010). In the same vein, urban as a concept in social science devoid of any easy definition, urban centres are generally understood as geographical areas whose population density is higher than the surrounding territories.

Finally, the UN-Habitat (2007) sees urban as a conglomeration built-up populated area that containing the city proper, suburbs and continuously settled commuter areas. On a classical view, Wirth (1938) conceived urban as a relatively large dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous population. Furthering this concept, Kendall (2007) repatriated that an urban area is a relatively large dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous population and added that they secure their livelihood primarily through non-agricultural activities.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Relative Deprivation**

The main premise of relative deprivation theory is that people generally experience dissatisfaction and resentment when their own outcomes do not match the outcomes of other people with whom they

compare (Cook et al., 1977; Gurr, 1970; Martin, 1981). Thus, the emergence of deprivation feelings is the result of comparative judgments, rather than being determined by objective outcome. As a result, those who are objectively least well off are not necessarily the ones who feel most deprived (Crosby, 1976).

When taking a closer look at the different ways in which the value of one's outcomes can be assessed, a basic distinction can be made between interpersonal comparisons and intergroup comparisons. Unfavourable interpersonal comparisons may result in feelings of individual deprivation, while unfavourable intergroup comparisons may lead people to conclude that their social group is deprived, relative to other groups. This is an important distinction because egoistical (individual) and fraternal (group level) deprivation are predicted to have fundamentally different behavioural consequences.

Fraternal deprivation is seen as an important precursor of political protest and intergroup social conflict, while the experience of egoistical deprivation has been associated with social isolation and individual mal adjustment. A curing critique of relative deprivation theory, however, is that it does not specify the circumstances under which people are likely to interpret their situation as individuals.

### **History of Violence in Nigeria**

Political violence has grown steadily with human history, its manifestation is seen in the history of all humanity for ages. It is an endemic feature of most of the developing world political systems. Developing countries have their fair share in this ordeal and Nigeria is not left out - politics has become an essential feature of the people means of achieving economic wealth (Tamuno, 1972). Nigeria independence was with minimum disturbances in 1960; but, it is rather greeted shortly after with gravitating spiral political violence.

This problem deteriorated in the elections conducted immediately after independence in the 1960s. In the Western Region, political violence, popularly referred to as "operation wet e", were recorded from 1964 to

1965 following both federal and regional elections as well as fissure between Awolowo and Akintola. There was violence in parts of Northern Region, especially between supporters of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and supporters of other parties, mainly the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Action Group.

The national election conducted in 1983 moreover, witnessed massive post-election violence following the declared landslide victory of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in Oyo and Ondo states considered to be stronghold of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Several persons lost their lives and large scale destruction of property was recorded (Alemika, 2011). This trend of violent activities transcends the 1960s into the current democratic enterprises which started in May 1999, with tremendous degrees of power struggle and violence killings.

Statistics show that over 10,000 lives were lost to violent clashes between 1999 to June 2002 (Adeleke, 2012). More so, the Nigerian Red Cross, was involved in the resettlement of over 250,000 individuals and 32,000 families as a result of various acts of violence in the country in 2001 alone (Olukorede, 2002; Olawale, 2003). For instance the index case of political violence, in Nigeria came after independence during the military coup of January 5, 1966 - a group of Nigerian young Army officers (Majors and Captains) seized power in a bloody coup assassinating the then Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa and Premiers Ahmadu Bello in the North and Ladoke Akintola, of the Western Region, (Diamond, 1995; Idahosa and Akov, 2013). This military coup led to the Nigerian Civil War 1966-1970.

When Nigeria successful return to democratic rule on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, the first significant civilian coup occurred in Nigeria on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2003, when the former Governor of Anambra State Chris Ngige, was abducted in a grand plot to unseat him. This plot was executed by the late Assistant Inspector General of Police, Mr. Raphael Ige, who later claimed he acted on an "order from the above" though the principal actors to such act remain unknown till today (Adeleke, 2012).

The trend of violence in 2003 and 2007 partly involves religious, ethnics and communal conflicts which build up to the recent 2014 blood bath across the country.

### **Trend and Dynamism of Urban Violence in Nigeria**

There are various feathers that the issue of urban violence had developed in the recent times in Nigeria thereby creating tension within the paradise. Some of the dynamism in the recent years includes the surge of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Boko Haram in the North, cultism and various ethnic militias across the geopolitical zones.

### **Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND)**

The MEND is the most recent, and most renowned, of the large number of militant groups in the Niger Delta, an oil-rich region of mangrove swamps and creeks in the south-south Nigeria and one of the world's largest wetlands. The militants like the Niger Delta's population at large, object to the environmental degradation and underdevelopment of the region and the inadequate but yet unaccountable benefits the community has received from its extensive oil resources. While there is a revenue-sharing plan in which the federal government distributes roughly half of the country's oil revenues among state governors, these funds do not trickle down to the roughly 30 million residents of the Delta. In 2003, some 70 percent of oil revenues was stolen or wasted, according to an estimate by the head of Nigeria's anticorruption agency. Whereas many residents used to work as fishermen, oil installations and spills have decimated the fish population (Obasi, 2010; Aver et al., 2013).

MEND's attacks have hurt Nigeria's oil exports—costing at least eight hundred thousand barrels per day, or over 25 percent of the country's oil output, according to Nigerian officials. A February 2006 attack on two Royal Dutch Shell oilfields accounted for some 477,000 barrels per day of the reduced output. Though the group regularly carries out

attacks against pipelines and is responsible for at least two car bombings, its primary tactic is kidnapping foreign oil workers.

It typically releases these hostages unharmed after a period of negotiations—via intermediaries—with oil company representatives and the government. This taking hostage tactics allows MEND to focus international attention on the Niger Delta and to exploit the blaze of publicity thus generated to announce their grievances and demands of the Nigerian government.

### **Cultism**

There are over forty-five (45) secret cults groups in Nigerian institutions of learning which are all equipped with an elaborate hierarchy, insignia and distinct attire. Some of the most notable of these secret cults include the Black axe, Eiyeye confraternity, Vikings, Amazons, Buccaneer, Mafia, and Dragons. The female students are not left as they have their own groups among which are Temple of Eden, Frigates, Barracudas, Daughters of Jezebel among others (Adewale 2005).

A record of one of the urban violence committed by these groups was the Tuesday May 2013 scenarios where a blood birth mass murder of nearly one hundred security operatives in Nasarawa state, North Central Nigeria, by a suspected armed local secret sect known as “Ombatse” (meaning we have arrived) cult group (Onwubiko 2013). They are easy tools in fomenting troubles. Politicians often recruit them, train and empower local secret sect to harass, intimidate and victimize perceived political opponents and opposing views against their political ambition.

### **Ethno-religious Crises**

There are over four hundred (400) ethnic groups, belonging to several religious sects in Nigeria. Since independence Nigeria has remained a multi-ethnic entity per excellence (Salawu 2010; Idahosa and Akov 2013). While it is true that it is not possible to know the exact number of ethno-religious conflicts due to lack of adequate statistical



data on this issue, it is interesting to note that about forty percent (40%) of ethno-religion based conflicts are credited to the fourth Republic of Nigeria. Ethno-religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria, are linked to citizenship within the context of identity, which is rooted in the politics of inclusion or exclusion.

These are tied to claims and counter-claims over identity as a basis for determining who is excluded or included from decision making as well as access to opportunities and privileges under the ‘we’ versus ‘them’ cliché (Kwaja, 2008; 2009, Aapengnue, 2010; Nwanegbo et al., 2014). These identity conflicts have had far reaching implications for the state. Babangida (2002), the consequences have been;

“waste of enormous human and material resources in ethnically and religiously inspired violent encounter, clashes and even battles, threats to security of life and properties, the heightening of the fragility of the economy and political process”.

### **Boko Haram**

The original name for the sect is The Group of Al-Sunna for Preaching and Jihad, as this is the English translation of Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awatiwal-Jihad. It was founded as an indigenous Salafist group, turning itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009. The group was founded in 2001 by late Muhammad Yusuf, in the town of Maiduguri. The residents of Maiduguri adopted the term “Boko-Haram” for the sect. Since 2009, the death of the leader has led to more violent attacks witnessed on regular basis in churches, security establishments and media organizations with huge human casualty that present the government as helpless and incapable of handling the insurgency (Okpaga et al., 2012).

The increasing spread of the insurgency led some political and religious leaders in the north to conclude that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and ignoble disgruntled

politicians as well. It has been observed that violence often catches the attention of government and the need to ensure security rather than finding lasting solution to problems are the primary considerations (Galtung, 2010).

Alao, et al (2012), also observed that governments often scratch conflict or contending issues at the surface and leave the fundamental issues unattended to. The issues involved are left unresolved, confused, the conflict arena and the numbers of conflicting parties are reduced to two such as government versus Boko-Haram, ignoring the fact that some of government top functionaries, traditional rulers, business magnets and frustrated politicians are interested parties who may also be serving as truce breaker.

### **The Effects of Urban Violence Nigeria's Development**

No doubt the aftermath effect of violence leaves a scare to be remembered of on the mind of all and sundry within and without the polity. Such effect can be seen politically, perceived economically, handled socially, and over viewed locally and internationally. The political menace that urban violence crop up with ranges from instable political regimes, policy somersaults, political process break down and secession as the last resort.

Economically, the effect of urban violence varies among the following; inflation where a large volume of money can only purchase a little commodities. It is also characterised with a weak economy where which cannot fend for itself but rather dependent greatly on foreign aid and economic bailout. Socially, the infrastructures are dilapidated and a large percentage of the citizenry are internally displaced while other groups have sought refuge in the neighbouring. The production and manufacturing sectors will first be temporarily short down before it will be permanently liquidated.

Internationally, the state will be seen as a pariah state which may be label as unsafe zone for foreign investors and international entrepreneurs.

The international community will therefore evacuate its diplomatic emissaries and all citizens present in the warring state and at last the state will be deserted of all political progress and economy development.

### **Recommendations**

Urban violence is a contagious virus whose genetic transcription is difficult to decode and interpret. Any society that gets infected of it is potentially paralyzed and calculatedly dead. This might be slow but definitely death in form of political, economical, social, and psychological manifestations. The following are recommended to the government, the civil societies and the individual that have stake in the urban communities.

The government must ensure that the various security agents of the state are properly oriented in the changing trend and dynamism of violence in the urban area. They should be properly equipped and strategically positioned so as to curtail any internal insurgency and any external aggressions. Finally, the government should provide adequately for the engagement of the services of the timing youth populace so as to engage in productive services to the state and not destructive catabolism.

The civil societies are enjoined to collaborate with the government by revealing adequate information to the necessary quarters so as to tame the spread of the virus- urban violence. Also they should support the continuity of morality and statesmanship among fractions within the state by engaging in the right and timely education and sensitisation of the populace on the need to be one's brother's keeper and not a brother's killer.

The individuals in the urban areas are also enjoined to support the 'good' policies of the states and never to pull down the government for filthy lucre and personal aggrandizement but rather in the lawful political institutionalised and constitutionally supported modus operandi. Finally, the individual should not see himself as superior to the state which will make him foment troubles and cause urban violence but as an important component of the state with invaluable calandos to the progress, stability and development of the same.

**Conclusion**

Urban violence manifest various ways but in progressive order. It includes; acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, harassment, maiming, kidnapping, and killing of all sought which include; suicide attack, homicide, genocide among others. Violence is not native to man but rather a consequence of his fallen nature, his actions against the grains of his nature.

This paper has significantly discussed the trend and dynamism urban of violence in Nigeria which is seen in the light of the MEND, Cultism, Ethno-Religious Violence and the Boko Haram. The effect of this is traced from the political, economy, social and international perspectives using the relative deprivation theoretical framework. Urban violence is a contagious virus whose genetic transcription is difficult to decode and interpret. In its aftermaths both its perpetrators and victims are losers.

The perspective taken in this work shows inevitability of violence in the urban area but ways to mitigate and ameliorate the effects is proffered to the respective stakeholders. Considering violence as a political option is considering destruction and considering political hegemony is considering progress and development of the polity.

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