Crisis of Governance and Urban Violence in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the crisis of governance and urban violence in Nigeria, using a documentary technique with an analysis of several theories including the Frustration and Aggression Theory, the Social Disorganization Theory, the Social Control Theory and Ecological Theory. It is argued that the outbreaks of violence have become unprecedented across the Nigerian cities, while successive attempts at promoting peace in the country are yet to succeed significantly. This situation is examined in the light of the dynamics of political instability and its concomitant outcomes. Several dimensions of urban violence including ethno-religious violence, electoral violence, youth militancy, and civil unrest are discussed. The findings in this paper suggest the need for fundamental changes in the extant attitude of government to violent groups in the Nigerian cities. Human rights and social justice should be given priority treatment in order to prevent resurgence of urban violence in Nigeria.

Key words: Governance, Underdevelopment, Urbanism, Violence

Introduction

Cities provide diverse opportunities for social mobility as they become centers of socio-economic activities. Yet, they serve as arena of violence, which can be attributed to the crisis of governance, especially in developing countries with many years of political instability and poor leadership. Most political decisions are taken in urban areas, and as a result of this practice, general reactions to the quality of governance largely occur there. The syndrome of urban violence has come to limelight with the rapid increase in the rate of urbanisation worldwide. The proportion of the world’s population living in urban areas has increased from less than five percent in 1800 to 48 percent in 2002, and it is expected to reach 65 percent in 2030, while more than 90 percent of future population growth will be concentrated in cities in developing countries, and a large percentage of this population will be poor (UNICEF, 2002; United Nations, 2002; United Nations, 1991).
The present rate of urbanisation in Africa – 40 percent – is projected to reach 54 percent by 2025 when 60 percent of the world’s population would be living in cities, and developing countries would constitute most of the larger urban agglomerations (Massey, 2002). In 1900, the five largest cities were London, New York, Paris, Berlin and Chicago, while in 2015 they will be Tokyo, Bombay, Lagos, Dakar and Sao Paolo (Massey, 2002; United Nations, 1999). Urbanisation usually reflects the patterns of social change in a society, and cities are often described as cradles of civilisation and sources of cultural and economic renaissance (UNICEF, 2002). In their discourse on the trends of urbanisation in Africa, Annez, Buckley and Kalarickal (2010: 222) noted that: “Urbanization in Africa is ‘flight,’ reflecting choices made under duress, rather than migration to unduly attractive cities.” This observation is however incomplete as urbanisation could be based on natural growth in human population and voluntary or involuntary migration.

Estimates on the rate of urbanisation in Nigeria showed that the proportion of the Nigerian populations living in urban areas increased from 11 percent in 1952 to 31 percent in 1985 and 46 percent in 2002, respectively (Ogun, 2010). It can be deduced from the abovementioned estimates that the crisis of urban violence could affect over 50 percent of the Nigerian populations. As shown in a report from the World Bank (2011), Nigeria’s population has increased from 140 million people in 2006 to 154.7 million people in 2011 but its major problems include inadequate infrastructure, corruption and policy instability.

Virtually all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria have experienced rapid urbanisation due to high rate of population growth in the country. Lacey (1985) recognised the rapid urbanisation across different Nigeria’s regions, including Aba, Benin, Enugu, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Sapele and Warri in south-eastern Nigeria; Jos, Kaduna, Kano and Zaria in northern Nigeria; and Ibadan and Lagos in south-western Nigeria.

In the light of the foregoing, the socio-economic and political situations in Nigeria are addressed in the present paper through an examination of the crisis of governance and urban violence in the country. Nigeria is one of the countries with accelerating rate of urbanisation, and its emergence in the context of colonialism by the British government has generated several crises that are yet to be satisfactorily resolved. The crisis of governance remains central to other crises in the country since the colonial era. The major fallout of the Nigerian crisis of governance is the proliferation of urban violence of various dimensions such as ethno-religious violence, electoral violence, youth militancy and civil unrest.

There are several studies in this area of research, especially from Western perspectives (Goldmann et al, 2011; Grubesic, Mack and Kaylen, 2011; Moran, 2011; Simpson and Arinde, 2011; Spano and Bolland, 2011; Steenbeck and Hipp, 2011; Warner and Burchfield, 2011; Harrnoff-Tavel, 2010; Malesevic, 2010; Warner, Beck and Ohmer, 2010; Cockburn, 2008; Kennedy, 2008). Three cases of urban violence were cited by Harrnoff-Tavel (2010). The first case is the 2005 French experience of a wave of violent disturbances which beset the Paris suburbs; it eventually spread to 200 cities in France. The second case is the 2008 experience of armed violence among different gangs in Cape Town, South Africa. The third case is the 2010 Brazilian experience of armed violence between drug gangs and police in Rio de Janeiro.
Consistent with the Brazilian experience of urban violence, Penglase (2011) mentioned the July 2010 case of Wesley de Andrade, an 11 year-old boy killed by a stray bullet while at school. The death of Andrade led to protests by students on the downtown beach of Copacabana as well as several days of primetime television coverage and the dismissal of the commander of the local police battalion.

Similarly, Mark Duggan, a 29 year-old Black man was killed in August 2011 by a stray bullet from a British police in Tottenham in North London (Simpson and Arinde, 2011). Like the case of Andrade in Brazil, the death of Duggan in Britain resulted in mass unrest and riots by youth in major cities including Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham and Birmingham. In the report by Simpson and Arinde (2011), it was shown that 16,000 police officers were deployed to quell the riots in the affected areas of the United Kingdom. Memories of previous cases of urban violence in the UK can be recalled. In the summer of 2001, for example, civil disturbances took place in several northern English towns (Cockburn, 2008). Another example is the 1985 Broadwater Farm riots, which resulted in serious tension between the Black community and the UK police.

There are many instances of urban violence across the world but some instances of urban violence may follow a different trajectory in each country. Thus, the increasing waves of urban violence in the Nigerian cities suggest the need for further studies that will focus on contemporary issues in governance and urbanisation. The present paper therefore examines crisis of governance and urban violence in Nigeria. The discourse is organised into five major sections as follows: crisis of governance in Nigeria, dimensions of urban violence in Nigeria, consequences of urban violence, theoretical bases to urban violence and peace-making processes. The study concludes with recommendations based on a synthesis of different ideas across the sections.

**Crisis of Governance in Nigeria**

Governance entails the process of making decisions and implementing them based on different considerations such as popular participation, respect for the rule of law, observance of human rights, transparency, free access to information, prompt responses to human needs, accommodation of diverse interests, equity, inclusiveness, effective results and accountability (UNICEF, 2002). Failure to adhere to these considerations usually results in crisis of governance as the political situations in many African countries demonstrate. The Nigerian experience of crisis of governance can be examined from different perspectives with reference to a number of issues such as colonialism, decolonization, constitutional development, political instability and reforms.

From the British perspective of colonialism, Nigeria officially emerged in 1914 through an amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates. The northern protectorate was established in December 1899 to serve as a framework for integration of areas in northern Nigeria, while the southern protectorate was established in 1900 to integrate different structures such as the Lagos Colony established in 1861, the Oil Rivers
Crisis of Governance and Urban Violence in Nigeria by Akinwale and Aderinto

Protectorate (ORP) established in 1884 and the Royal Niger Company (RNC) established in 1886 (Falola and Genova, 2009). The ORP was named the Niger Coast Protectorate (NCP) in 1893; this was done for administrative convenience. Similarly, the RNC was an offshoot of the United African Company (UAC) established in 1879.

The protectorates were established in order to protect the economic and political interests of the British government in the management of the Nigerian resources. In this case, exploitation of the Nigerian resources by the British government constitutes a crisis of governance. As a result, the Nigerian cities were beset by mass protests and riots. A number of activists protested against the introduction of water tax bill in Lagos in 1908. There was a public protest against inequitable land tenure policies in Lagos in 1912. The 1929 riots by women in Aba can be equally recognized as part of the early memories of urban violence in the Nigerian cities. The above mentioned cases of urban violence were mismanaged by the British government due to its neglect of the Nigerian cities. The Nigerian experience of marginalization in the constitutions enacted by the British government provides a basis for further analysis of crisis of governance in Nigeria.

The Nigerian constitutions have been marred by vested interests, although they were reviewed severally between 1922 and 1999. The Nigerian first constitution – Clifford Constitution – was enacted in 1922, while the second constitution – Richard Constitution – was enacted in 1946 as a result of flaws in the first constitution. The flaws then included a bias in the composition of the legislative council, which comprised 46 members including only four educated men from western Nigeria (Falola and Genova, 2009).

The second constitution was enacted in 1946 in order to ensure inclusiveness in governance; it mandated the formation of the Federal House of Representatives with 184 seats for elected representatives from the three regions – the East, the North and the West – that were created in the constitution. A total of 94 seats were allotted for delegates from the North, while only 42 seats each were allotted for delegates from the East and the West. Out of the remaining eight seats, six seats were allotted for delegates from the southern Cameroon, while two seats were allotted for delegates from Lagos, which was then the Federal Capital Territory. Both Clifford and Richard Constitutions were enacted without wide consultations, hence the criticisms they attracted from different groups of people in the Nigerian cities.

Then the third and fourth constitutions which are usually called the Macpherson and the Lyttleton Constitutions were based on consultations with some groups of Nigerians. The Macpherson Constitution was enacted in 1951, while the Lyttleton Constitution was enacted in 1954. The former indicated an approval of some structures such as a central legislative council with 147 seats including 68 seats for delegates from the northern house of assembly and 34 seats each for delegates from the western and eastern houses of assemblies. The above mentioned structures were consolidated in the latter, which placed Nigeria on the path of regional autonomy. All the four constitutions enacted by the British government during the colonial era in Nigeria were marred by discontents and unhealthy rivalries among the Nigerian ethnic groups.
In the light of the foregoing, attempts to ensure Nigeria’s political independence were frustrated in the 1950s due to rivalries among the Nigerian ethnic groups. In the course of the rivalries, riots occurred at sabon gari – migrant residential area – of Kano in 1953 due to disagreement among political elites over the date for the actualization of the Nigerian political independence. While a total of 227 people sustained injury during the riots, the number of recorded deaths was 36 people including 21 people from southern Nigeria and 15 people from northern Nigeria. Subsequently, both the western and eastern Nigeria attained their political independence in 1957, while the northern Nigeria attained it in 1959. Eventually, the Nigerian political independence from the British government was celebrated on 1st October 1960.

It can be recalled that the struggle for decolonization was delayed in Nigeria; this can be attributed to lack of cooperation between diverse groups in southern and northern Nigeria. For instance, the struggle for decolonization was more pronounced in western Nigeria, which became the centre of mobilization and campaign against colonialism since 1934. Then, the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) was established and it served as a driving force for the actualization of the goal of socio-economic development of the Nigerian society. The LYM was renamed the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936 due to membership from different parts of Nigeria.

The NYM confronted the colonial government with demands for quality education and placement of Nigerians in senior civil service positions. Some groups of people defected from the NYM in the 1940s and the incidence was followed by emergence of different ethnic associations, which metamorphosed into political parties such as the Action Group (AG) in western Nigeria, the Northern People Congress (NPC) in northern Nigeria and the National Council of the Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in eastern Nigeria.

The political parties then constituted a major framework for decolonization, although each party also reinforced ethnic consciousness in its domain, thereby making it possible for Nigerians to develop a sense of divided loyalties, partly to the nation and partly to ethnic or religious groups. It was in this context that the goal of nation building and national integration was frustrated in Nigeria, as different groups have developed ability to mobilize their members in order to resist crisis of governance in Nigeria. A close observation of the Nigerian socio-economic and political situations shows that the original interest in patriotism, which was demonstrated by different groups in Nigeria at early stage of national struggle for decolonization, has faded away.

In his observation of the political structure of different countries in Africa, Amin (2009) recalled a series of struggle for decolonization among African students in Europe prior to the attainment of political independence in Africa. In response to various crisis of governance, the Anti-Colonial Students’ Union (ASU) and the West African Students Union (WASU) as well as other pressure groups were established during the struggle for political independence. Consequently, a vibrant group of indigenous political elite emerged in the struggle to wrestle power from the colonial administrators in Africa, although the African liberation project produced three divergent groups (the Brazaville,
the Monrovia and the Casablanca groups), which metamorphosed into the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on 24th May 1963 through a treaty signed by 32 African political leaders (Sahnoun, 2009). While the Casablanca group, comprising Algeria, Ghana, Morocco, Mali, Egypt and Libya, adopted a violent approach to decolonization, both the Brazaville and Monrovia groups advocated caution and gradual approach to decolonization. Nigeria was in the Monrovia group and a signatory to the OAU, which was renamed African Union (AU) in 2001 as a result of agreement among African leaders including presidents of Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. The African leaders also formulated the New partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The OAU was spearheaded by different African leaders, including Ben Bella of Algeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea, Emperor Haille Selassie of Ethiopia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria (Amin, 2009; Anyaoku, 2009; Sahnoun, 2009). These African leaders were concerned about the necessity of good governance for Africa’s development, but many of them were overthrown by the military, and as such, their aspiration for good governance could not be achieved (Ake, 2003). Subsequently, many African countries, including Nigeria, were forced into prolonged military rule and various forms of instability, and recourse to violence as a means of resolving political issues became prominent (Boafor-Arthur, 2008: 8). It has been shown that:

One of the demons that have contributed in holding development at bay is political instability [...] all the countries in the sub-region have harrowing tales regarding national stability. Even for those who are not yet members of the exclusive regional poor man’s HIPC club like Nigeria and Cape Verde, national stability has not been an easily accessible commodity especially in Nigeria.

The above description shows that crisis of governance is coterminous with poverty, as political instability is a major characteristic of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). This situation can be linked with corruption – the illegal use of official positions for personal benefits – which has also exacerbated the crisis of governance. As argued by Falola and Genova (2009), the Nigerian crisis of governance manifested through corruption based on a patronage system with lack of accountability. Nigeria was ranked as the second most corrupt country in the world in 2004; it remains a highly corrupt country. This reflects in mounting debts and underdevelopment of Nigeria despite its rich abundant resources. It is generally believed that the majority of the Nigerian populations suffer due to lack of access to the Nigerian wealth, which has been usurped by a few Nigerians, especially politicians and their cronies. In their recent writing on corruption in Nigeria, Falola and Genova (2009) reported that Nigeria’s military leaders stole over $2.2 billion from the government coffers for personal use. The issue of corruption and its implications for other abnormalities were equally described in a recent study by Adesoji (2010:100):

With the notorious corruption among the political elite, the country’s vast wealth has failed to improve the lives of citizens. This, coupled with stolen
election mandates, has led to a growing disenchantment with the Western system of governance [...] Interestingly, fanatical uprisings have mostly originated in the North.

The Nigerian crisis of governance can be examined from different perspectives without ignoring its links with a combination of factors including poverty, corruption and political instability. Surprisingly, Carothers (2009) noted that some powerful external forces like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have promoted political instability in Africa through their contributions to forcible regime change under the guise of democratic promotion, thereby frustrating the process of African development, which they intended to promote.

In the light of renewed interests in Africa’s development, the OAU was transformed into African Union with new programs such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The APRM was designed to promote compliance with principles of good governance, economic transparency, democracy and observance of human rights, although voluntary participation has affected its efficacy (Khati, 2006). The NEPAD was equally established in recognition of the fact that post-colonial Africa inherited weak states and dysfunctional economies, which were further aggravated by the Cold War, poor leadership, corruption and bad governance (Kebonang, 2007). Nigeria was actively involved in NEPAD despite its relatively poor record of good governance.

The weak state and dysfunctional economies bequeathed by colonial administrators remain a major setback against sustainable development in many African countries, including Nigeria, which has been witnessing crisis of governance since it was established in 1914. The British officially colonized Nigeria following the Berlin Agreement of 1885 but granted the country political independence on 1st October 1960. However, the colonial administrators had planted many seeds of crisis in Nigeria before the end of colonialism. The emergent political leaders in Nigeria could not reach a consensus on the need for political independence, hence the outbreak of “the Kano Riot” of 16th-19th May 1953, which led to the death and destruction of many people and property, respectively. The riot was followed by many political crises in the 1960s and 1970s, especially as a result of perceived manipulations during national population census and elections.

Controversies over the perceived manipulations of population census and elections as well as other aspects of decision-making on national issues remain unabated in Nigeria. Much crisis has ensued in Nigeria since the inception of colonial administration in Nigeria particularly after the colonial administrators seized communal land and imposed taxation on the Nigerian populace. Nigeria’s crisis of governance started with colonialism by the British government and metamorphosed into various dynamics of political instability in the post-colonial era particularly with the advent of different regimes of military dictatorship and corrupt civilian administrations. For instance:
The military expectedly failed to provide good governance and leadership. But it would appear that based on the expectations from the supposedly democratic governments [...] one can talk of a mediocre level of performance. One can safely conclude that Nigeria has been under ‘a coalition of bad leadership’ whether military or civilian (Okunade, 2008:21).

The Nigerian political regimes are largely characterized by bad leadership, corruption and social exclusion of the Nigerian populace. The Nigerian military incursion into politics led to upsurge of coups and prolonged military rule with devastating effect on the socio-economic development in Nigeria. Following the brutal overthrow of the first Nigerian civilian administration, the military governed Nigeria from 16th January 1966 to 29th May 1999 excluding a brief period of civilian administration of 1st October 1979 to 31st December 1983. A summary of different coups in Nigeria is presented in Table 1 for clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Date of Coup</th>
<th>Leader of Coup</th>
<th>Period of Rule by Coup Plotter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15th January 1966</td>
<td>Major Patrick Chukwuma Nzeogwu</td>
<td>One Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16th January 1966</td>
<td>Major-General Aguyi Ironsi</td>
<td>Six Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>29th July 1966</td>
<td>General Yakubu Gowon</td>
<td>Nine Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29th July 1975</td>
<td>General Murtala Mohammed</td>
<td>Seven Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13th February 1976*</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel Buka Suka Dimka</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>31st December 1983</td>
<td>Major-General Muhammad Buhari</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>27th August 1985</td>
<td>General Ibrahim Babangida</td>
<td>Eight Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>22nd November 1993</td>
<td>General Sanni Abacha</td>
<td>Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Adapted from Falola nd Genova (2009) and Obasanjo (1987)
* General Olusegun Obasanjo became the fourth Head of State in Nigeria due to the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed by Lieutenant Colonel Buka Suka Dimka.

The military rule in Nigeria resulted in constant use of force and abuse of human rights. These issues have been resisted by different groups in the Nigerian cities. For instance, Decree 34 of 1966 led to riots across the Nigerian cities. Also, the initial imposition of military rule led to civil war in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970. A radical wing of the Nigerian military declared the war, which lasted for three years during which a monumental proportion of human lives and property were lost. Other factors, such as ethnicity and corruption, contributed to the war. Extending beyond the syndrome of military rule in Nigeria, several civilian administrations have not been able to significantly eradicate the Nigerian crisis of governance. Virtually, all the Nigerian extant elections were hotly contested: 1959, 1964/65, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007 (Obi, 2007). The previous elections in 2011 were also contested.
The military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida annulled the presidential election, which was conducted on 12th June 1993, thereby expanding the scope of political crisis in Nigeria. Some cases of manipulations in the elections conducted on 14th and 21st of April 2007 have been uncovered. It is noteworthy that democracy has been endangered in Nigeria despite the official recognition of multi-party system. Over 50 political parties were registered between 1999 and 2007, but only three parties (People’s Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) and Action Congress) have dominated the Nigerian elections since then.

This situation resonates with Boron’s (2008) exposition of the limits of democratisation in a capitalist society. Gboyega (2003) indicated that the elected political leaders in Nigeria did not act as servants of the people, but rather as lords with imperial dispositions. Open disagreements among the political elite have generated some controversies. A more recent example is the war of attrition which broke out and culminated in damaging confrontations between the President and the Vice President who ruled Nigeria for eight years (1999-2007). As such, the problem of nation building in Nigeria has not been laid to rest, and despite its remarkable potentials, Nigeria remains one of the most volatile countries in the world. Its heterogeneity is constantly manipulated by elites in their race for the control of the state resources.

**Dimensions of Urban Violence in Nigeria**

It is widely acceptable that an urban area is a relatively large and dense permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous peoples (Perchonock, 1994). This description shows some features with far-reaching implications for urban violence and its escalation. In his description of violence and humanitarian actions in urban areas, Harroff-Tavel (2010) distinguished urban violence from violence that is purely criminal. He mentioned different forms of urban violence including social and political uprising, hunger riots, identity-based violence among ethnic or religious groups, clashes between territorial gangs, terrorism and acts of xenophobic violence directed against migrants. However, urban violence has intertwined with different forms of violence in urban areas. This situation was described by Harroff-Tavel (2010: 347):

*Armed urban violence between groups that are generally considered as criminal (drug dealers, territorial gangs, mafia-type groups, etc.), or between those groups and government forces or private militias, raises some complex legal (and political) problems. This is particularly the case when that fighting is between groups engaged in a collective confrontation of major intensity, which testifies to a high degree of organization.*

As conceptualized in the present paper, all forms of violence in urban areas constitute a serious social problem irrespective of their nomenclatures. Any form of violence that constitutes a threat to security of lives and property of a large number of people in an urban area is considered an urban violence, as used in the present paper. This conceptualization is based on recognition of the fact that urban violence can be more
devastating compared to violence in a rural setting. In a recent study by Aliyu, Kasim and Martin (2011), urban violence was expressed in terms of ethnic and religious conflicts. Also, Penglase (2011) argued that representations of urban violence are often centered upon concerns with transgression. Such representations always reinforce anxiety and fear among members of the public.

Different waves of urban violence have occurred in Nigeria since the advent of colonialism by the British government. Resistance to colonialism in the Nigerian cities constitutes the bedrock of urban violence exemplified with different records of mass unrest and riots including the 1929 riots in Aba, the 1945 general strike by the Nigerian labour and the 1953 riots in Kano. The trends of urban violence continued in the Nigerian cities even after the 1st October 1960 celebration of the Nigerian political independence from the British government. Cases of urban violence were recorded in the Nigerian cities in the 1960s and beyond. Such cases include the riots that erupted from political party conflicts in the 1964 general election and the civil war that extended across the Nigerian rural and urban areas between 6th July 1967 and 7th January 1970. Historians have shown that the Nigerian civil war led to the death of many people and damage to property worth billions of pound measured in term of the Nigerian official currency, which was established in 1958 and used till 1973 when the Nigerian pound was changed to the Nigerian naira (Falola and Genova, 2009).

The major causes of the war include ethnic rivalry, corruption, political instability and agitation for resource control. The end of the war laid the foundation for the emergence of a new social class who made huge profits from supplying arms and ammunition to warriors in violence-prone areas (Bamgbose, 2009; Odoemene, 2008; Erinosho, 2007; Obi, 2006; Adejumobi, 2005). Some vicissitudes of urban violence in Nigeria between 1960 and 1998 have been summarized by Falola (1998). His views are highlighted as follows:

When the country won its independence in 1960, the most destabilizing factor was ethnicity [...] the 1993 election of a civilian president was complicated by conflicts between Muslim and Christian candidates [...] But the most notable crisis occurred in 1978 in Zaria [...] In 1980, the Maitatsine crisis claimed thousands of lives [...] On the last day of October 1982, eight large churches were burned in the prominent city of Kano [...] A major riot in Kaduna that same year claimed at least four hundred lives. In 1984, violence sparked by Muslims in Yola and Jimeta killed approximately seven hundred people (including policemen) and left nearly six thousand people homeless [...] At Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, Palm Sunday turned disastrous as Christians clashed with Muslims, leading to the destruction of three churches. In the south, at the University of Ibadan, Muslims set fire to a sculpture of Jesus in front of the Chapel of Resurrection [...] In 1991, the religious crisis in Bauchi state reached the breaking point, leading to numerous deaths and massive destruction. In the same year, Kano and Katsina witnessed a series of riots. In 1992, large-scale violence returned to Kaduna state, with severe clashes in
Zangon-Kataf, Kaduna, and Zaria [...] In May and June 1995, a new crisis erupted in Kano [...]. In May 1996, eight people lost their lives when the police clashed with a group of Muslim students. (Falola, 1998: 2-4)

About 50 episodes of urban violence, which culminated in the death of over 10,000 persons and internal displacement of over 300,000 people, were recorded in Nigeria between 1999 and 2003 (USAID, 2005). Over 51,000 people were displaced during the 2006 religious violence in northern Nigeria (IRIN News, 2006). Estimates on the 2007 violence in northern Nigeria showed that 29 persons died; 12 churches were destroyed; 90 people were injured, and 3,500 people were displaced (US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2008). More recently, violent clashes involving various militant groups and the Nigerian government’s Joint Task Force (JTF) escalated between 2004 and 2009. It was reported that militant activities resulted in over 92 attacks on oil companies in 2008, and as a result, over 1,000 people were killed, and crude oil exports declined to 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in March 2009, down from 2.6 million bpd in 2006 (International Crisis Group, 2009).

The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) declared an “oil war” which led to repeated attacks on oil companies and death of several people in the Niger Delta cities including Warri, Yenagoa and Port Harcourt. The MEND later declared a unilateral ceasefire but revoked it on 30 January 2009, following the JTF’s attack on the camps of some militants. In reprisal, militants attacked a civilian helicopter in the Niger Delta on 25 February 2009 through a General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), which seriously wounded at least one passenger and forced the local Aero Contractor-operated Sikorsky to make an emergency landing (International Crisis Group, 2009). Another fresh violent conflict erupted in Jos from 28 to 29 November 2008; this resulted in the death of over 700 persons and destruction of properties worth millions of naira. In July 2009, over 600 deaths were recorded in a series of attacks associated with ‘Boko Haram” violence in Bauchi and its environs (Adinoyi, 2009; Balogun, 2009; Eya, 2009).

Most of the cases of urban violence in Nigeria can be attributed to crisis of governance, given different perspectives on the issue. Urban violence has become pronounced in different cities in each of the six geo political zones in Nigeria. Specific instances of urban violence in northern Nigeria include ethno-religious violence in Kano, Kaduna, Zaria and Maiduguri. The instances of urban violence in northern Nigeria were buttressed by Adesoji (2010: 97) with the following examples:

These include the Kano metropolitan riot of October 1982, the Ilorin riot of March 1986 [...] the Kafanchan/Kaduna/Zaria/ Funtua religious riots of March 1987, the Kaduna Polytechnic riot of March 1988, the acrimonious, nationwide debate on Sharia (Islamic law) at the Constituent Assembly in October/November 1988, the Bayero University crisis of 1989, the Bauchi/Katsina riots of March/April 1991, the Kano riot of
Focusing on the waves of urban violence in central Nigeria, Kendhammer (2010) observed that Jos has become the site of repeated deadly ethnic riots since the democratic transition in 1999. The riots in Jos resulted in the deaths of 3000 people between 2001 and 2004; such riots have been described as religious, ethnic, or between ‘settlers’ and ‘indigenous’ populations. Several instances of urban violence equally occurred in eastern Nigeria in the fourth republic, especially through the activities of the Bakassi Boys in Aba, Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Onitsha. Similarly, the OPC has contributed to waves of urban violence in western Nigeria, particularly in Lagos and Ibadan. In southern Nigeria, several cases of urban violence were recorded in Warri and Port Harcourt during militant attacks on multinational companies in the area.

The Nigerian experience of urban violence resonates with Malesevic’s (2010) discourse on the continuity of the trauma of war. Citing the intellectual contributions of classical sociologists such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber, Malesevic (2010) mentioned the major reflections of the collective violence in the 19th and 20th centuries. Additional cases of urban violence in the Nigerian cities are presented in Table 2 below.

### TABLE 2: CASES OF VIOLENCE IN THE 2003 NIGERIAN ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of Reported Violence</th>
<th>Political Parties Involved in Violence</th>
<th>Scene of Violence</th>
<th>Outcomes of Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>AD, PDP vs AD, ANPP, PDP, PDP vs ANPP</td>
<td>Lagos, Delta, Oyo, Edo, Ondo, Yobe</td>
<td>deaths, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>PDP, ANPP vs PDP,</td>
<td>Benue, Borno, Imo,</td>
<td>deaths, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PDP, ANPP vs PDP, AD vs PDP, PDP vs AD, ANPP vs PDP</td>
<td>Plateau, Abuja, Katsina, Lagos, Delta, Ondo, Sokoto</td>
<td>deaths, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>ANPP vs PDP, PDP vs AD, ANPP, ANPP vs PDP, AD vs PDP, ANPP, UNDP, PRP,</td>
<td>Edo, Osun, Benue, Kwara, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Edo, Katsina, Plateau, Bauchi, Ondo</td>
<td>deaths, displacements, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>PDP vs AD, AD vs PDP, PDP vs ANPP</td>
<td>Lagos, Delta, Kaduna, Adamawa</td>
<td>deaths, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>AD vs PDP</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>deaths, injuries, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Peace and Development Projects (2004)
The data presented in Table 2 show some instances of urban violence associated with political party conflicts, which have characterized the Nigerian fourth republic since 1999, a period that marked the beginning of the fourth republic. It is noteworthy that the third republic, which would have commenced on 1st October 1993, was aborted by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. The second republic was terminated on 31st December 1983 via a military coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari, whereas the first republic lasted for five years (1st October 1960 – 15th January 1966) due to military coups. It can be observed that both the military and democratic rulers in Nigeria have been accused of arbitrary governance by different groups of people in the Nigerian cities. Those groups have promoted different forms of urban violence as a counterforce against arbitrary governance in Nigeria. Thus, the discourse on urban violence in Nigeria can be extended beyond the cases of political party conflicts cited in Table 2.

A review of the sociopolitical situation in Nigeria by Kendhammer (2010) suggests that the effect of party politics on ethnicity has been paradoxical, indicating the fact that policies designed to end ethnic outbidding and the ethnicization of party politics have resulted in higher levels of ethnic violence. An implication of a practice among members of the PDP was highlighted in a way by Kendhammer (2010: 48):

The Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) succeeds as a multi-ethnic coalition on the basis of informal bargains and accommodations. The practice of ‘zoning’, which distributes the spoils of office according to an ethnic formula, produces incentives for local elites to embark upon ethnic violence or ethnic mobilisation as a way of advancing the interests of their local constituencies.

The proliferation of urban violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has also been traced to the Nigerian crisis of governance:

Violent conflicts have persisted in the Niger Delta communities of Nigeria despite efforts by successive governments and international organisations to broker peace in the region [...] One of the major factors contributing to the lack of peace in the region is the pervasive perception by local communities of the Nigerian government’s inability to satisfy their basic human needs. As an example, approximately 96 per cent of all government revenue comes from the Niger Delta region. However, many of these communities are still poor and do not feel they are receiving a fair share of the resources in their territory. (Akinwale, 2008: 8)

Some other factors contributing to violence in the region include collusion between foreign investors and local elites; poverty and ignorance; the rise in youth militancy; structural barriers, and divergent interests of state elites and local leaders.
The Nigerian experience of violence is analogous to situations in many African societies where:

*Violent conflicts continue to undermine human security; they pose a major threat in many parts of the continent. Analysis of civil strife in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi, reveals that war and violent conflict have retarded development; conflict has had pernicious societal effects, including extensive damage and loss of human life, infrastructure and natural resources.* (Institute for Security Studies, 2008: iv)

The above mentioned consequences of urban violence require further elaboration since the issues raised thereon can be situated within the ambit of experience of different groups in the Nigerian cities. The Nigerian crisis of governance has been aggravated by urban violence, before, during and after elections. Nigeria has not been able to recover from the damage to the 12th June 1993 presidential election, given the abrogation of the third republic and the riots that erupted from it. Elections conducted in the fourth republic were tainted by acrimony and confrontations over alleged malpractices such as rigging of elections. Falola and Genova (2009) argued that the 19th April 2007 presidential election was blatantly dysfunctional, given the violence and voting irregularities that characterised it.

**Causes of Urban Violence**

Based on their observation of urban-based African Americans, scholars (Goldmann *et al.*, 2011) have established a linkage between prevalence of urban violence and poverty, indicating a high magnitude of exposure to the trauma of urban violence in economically disadvantaged urban areas. Poveda (2011) analyzed some determinants and implications of urban violence in seven major Colombian cities. It was shown that urban violence in Columbian cities was driven by several factors including low level of education, poverty, inequality and inadequate opportunities for career development in the labor market. Poveda’s (2011) analysis indicated that urban violence generated negative effects on social and economic development of Colombian cities.

In their longitudinal study of the interaction between poverty, gang membership and urban violence, Spano and Bolland (2011) discovered a significant amount of overlap between gang membership, exposure to violence, and violent behavior. The issue of drug trade has attracted attention in the discourse on urban violence in Brazil. Regarding the issue, Ewell (2010: 265) noted that:

*Drug trade and drug-related violence have taken over the cities, even the most developed ones. It is a violence that affects all social and economic levels of society, adding death and fear to the already impoverished and destitute within Latin America.*
The problem of urban violence in sub-Saharan Africa has been linked with lack of a positive relationship between urbanization and growth in the region (Annez, Buckley and Kalarickal, 2010). For Peiterse (2010), urban violence in Africa is a consequence of colonialism and exploitation as well as marked inequalities that characterize the African contemporary cities. Breetzke (2010) linked urban violence in Tshwane, South Africa to a number of factors including high levels of social disorganization, deprivation and disaffection among youths as well as the rapid immigration of people from neighboring African countries into South Africa. Ndikumana (2010) observed a resurgence of ethnic violence in Burundi, contextualizing it within widespread poverty, the spread of HIV-AIDS, and other problems including mass unemployment and inadequate infrastructure (Meagher, 2010).

All the factors identified as causes of urban violence can be regarded as symptoms of the crisis of governance, which has made the problem of urban violence uncontrollable in Nigeria. In his analysis of the dynamics of sociopolitical situation in Nigeria, Kendhammer (2010: 50) noted that:

_Thirty years of institutional reforms in Nigeria have produced the desired result at the elite level (cooperation in large, multiethnic parties) but have done little (and in many cases, have exacerbated) to the problem of sectarian violence at the local level._

The Nigerian experience of urban violence is analogous to instances of urban violence in many African countries. Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced 11 civil wars in 48 countries, in addition to chronic upheaval in the Central African Republic and Somalia (Moyo, 2009). The aforementioned cases of civil wars are part of the problems that beset African cities.

**Consequences of Urban Violence**

Urban violence constitutes a cause and consequence of colonialism, and it was instrumental to decolonization in Africa. The nexus between urban violence, colonialism and decolonization has been examined by Wilmot (1994: 185):

_Historically, violence was the means used to impose colonial domination on the peoples of Africa. Does this imply as Fanon argues that decolonization is necessarily a violent phenomenon? If it is not, what role does violence play in the process? Colonisation was imposed and maintained by violence to further the interests of colonial powers. Historically it was the threat of violence, or its actual use, which forced the colonial powers to decolonize. There is, therefore a direct relationship between violence and decolonization._

The connection between urban violence and decolonization appears to have promoted culture of violence in Africa. Unfortunately, Africa remains at the periphery despite
several efforts and social movements aimed at ensuring unity and development of the continent. This situation became worse during the era of military intervention in politics. That era was a watershed in the history of urban violence in Nigeria. It was during that period that Nigeria was plunged into a three-year civil war (1967-1970) followed by much ethno-religious violence and civil unrest. Nigeria’s success story of amalgamation of diverse groups in 1914 has radically shifted from a platform for peaceful coexistence to an arena of violence and gradual disintegration (Akinwale, 2009). Nigeria has witnessed a resurgence of violent conflicts that resulted in wanton death of several people and destruction of many properties since its political independence from Britain in 1960 (Albert, 2001).

Urban violence has resulted in mass destruction of lives and property in Nigeria like the situation in other violence-prone countries such as Guinea Bissau, Kenya and South Africa. The struggle for political independence in Guinea Bissau resulted in a war, which lasted for over a decade with colossal wastage of human and non-human resources. The Mau-Mau movement which fuelled urban violence in Kenya was also brutal as it unleashed irreversible loss of lives and property on the country at independence. Apartheid in South Africa attracted resistance from the majority of the marginalized South Africans, a situation that resulted in mass destruction of lives and properties as well as imprisonment of Nelson Mandela for 27 years.

Unlike the above situations, the struggle for political independence in Nigeria was relatively peaceful although some persons and properties were destroyed during the Aba riots of 1929 and Kano Riot of 1953 (Wilmot, 1994). Nigeria has however suffered from wanton destruction of persons and properties following its attainment of political independence from Britain. A major consequence of unprecedented history of urban violence in Nigeria is the gruesome image of Nigeria within local and international communities. For instance, the US Department of State (2008) has warned Americans of the risks in Nigeria, stating that over 44 foreigners in multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta have been kidnapped from off-shore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds, and public roadways since January 2008.

It specifically directed their attention to violence in Lagos and the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. The above warning is not an aberration given the fact that the monumental records of urban violence in Nigeria are not hidden; many investors have refused to establish industries in the country despite the Nigerian government’s repeated efforts at wooing them. The economy of violence in the context of the lingering political crises and youths’ metamorphosis from political thuggery to militancy can be adduced to the prevailing situation in Nigeria.

Babawale (2006) opined that electoral violence has robbed Nigeria’s politics of productive content, kept the people permanently divided, and the country perpetually underdeveloped. The overall implication of urban violence in Nigeria is the elongation of underdevelopment and perpetual backwardness of the country in the global community. While Nigeria has not been able to provide basic infrastructure, some American and
Eurasian countries have formed a cartel in the monopoly of science and technology as well as financial systems, access to natural resources and armaments.

The rising profiles of urban violence could adversely affect attempts made by some developed countries to assist Nigeria and other African countries. Kebonang (2007) reported that adherence to principles of good governance, liberal economic reforms, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the protection of intellectual property rights, and political pluralism is a major requirement for inclusion in the Africa’s Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which was enacted by the American government in May 2000 to enhance development of African countries. Several countries, such as Angola, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Togo, and Zimbabwe were deemed to fall short of the stipulated criteria and have been excluded from benefiting under the AGOA agreement. The limitations of foreign assistance have however been identified:

Although attempts by the EU and the USA to help Africa’s development are commendable, they do not go far enough. Both the EU and the USA should liberalise markets that matter to Africa, so that efficient producers can compete fairly. Once this happens, they can expect African governments to make strides in good governance, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. By abolishing agricultural subsidies, and providing unrestricted market access for African products, the EU and USA would create the conditions for African countries to attract investment and generate the kind of revenue that would enable them to pursue their development agendas. (Kebonang, 2007: 102)

Theoretical Basis to Urban Violence in Nigeria

Considering the issues that have been raised in several sections of this paper, the manifestations of urban violence in Nigeria can be justified from different theories including Ecological Theory, Social Disorganization Theory, Social Control Theory and Frustration and Aggression Theory. In their evaluation of urban violence in Cincinnati, Ohio, scholars recognized the relevance of a combination of theoretical approaches (Grubesic, Mack and Kaylen, 2011). They provided a comparative analysis of three different modeling approaches for exploring structural theories of violence, thereby showing the relevance of a synthesis of perspectives on a given issue like urban violence in Nigeria.

Concepts in Ecological Theory are relevant for an analysis of urban violence in Nigeria, especially when viewed from the implications of a number of factors including environmental conditions, population growth, family structure, residential segregation, and government policies. As shown by Kennedy (2008), the Ecological Theory is useful in explaining human vulnerability to urban violence from multiple contexts including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem deals with primary groups such as the family which may determine a propensity of an individual’s
level of involvement in urban violence. The mesosystem and the exosystem refer to larger groups such as the school, religious organizations and the workplace. The culture of urban violence may be reinforced or discouraged within the larger groups. Urban violence may be reinforced by different ecological factors such as discrimination, ignorance and unemployment. The Ecological Theory suggests that experience in different contexts would affect human actions in each context. This implies that an experience of domestic violence could enhance agglomeration of urban violence. A practical application of the Ecological Theory is shown in the following example:

_African American youths living in urban contexts appear to be disproportionately likely to experience cumulative violence in their communities [...] These seemingly higher rates of exposure to multiple types of violence can be attributed, in part, to structural issues facing African Americans living in urban settings, including residential segregation, with its concentrated levels of extreme poverty, limited resources and collective efficacy, and isolation from conventional opportunities; and chronic unemployment (Kennedy, 2008: 27)_

The above example can be extended through a synopsis of the Nigerian recent experience of urban violence, which resulted from sudden removal of subsidy on the prices of petrol. The sudden removal of subsidy on the price of petrol was largely condemned by different groups of people in the Nigerian society through the mass protests and general strike, which were highly effective for two weeks (1st – 16th January 2012). With the removal of subsidy, the price of a litre of petrol increased from ₦65.00 to ₦141.00. The Nigerian government claimed that the removal of subsidy was necessary to ensure development of infrastructure, proving that government would divert the subsidy on the price of petrol to finance capital projects such as road, electricity, water, health facilities and so on. It was argued that the Nigerian government had been expending a subsidy of ₦79.00 on every litre of petrol and that the daily crude oil demand in Nigeria was 300,000 barrels per day. It was also mentioned that Nigeria produced 2.5 million barrels of crude oil daily but only 12% of the crude oil could be refined locally, hence the need to export the Nigerian crude oil for refining. The Nigerian government also assured her citizens that the savings from subsidy removal would be effectively managed through the establishment of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE). The argument of the Nigerian government negates the principle of social justice, given that the removal of subsidy may aggravate the pitiable socio-economic situation in Nigeria, considering many years of neglect and social exclusion of the public in the provision of social services. This observation has been justified in a recent study by Annez, Buckley and Kalarickal (2010: 223):

_Cutting subsidies is not the panacea it appears to be in the world of “urban bias.” In fact, the opposite policy response—increased subsidies to the poor in cities—will, in many cases, be welfare enhancing. [...] Ideally, this approach will yield a more nuanced sense of the factors in_
African urbanization that have implications for policy which have so far been neglected in the policy debate.

Different groups of people in the Nigerian cities have openly expressed disappointment in the way and manner in which Nigeria has been mismanaged since the 1960s, focusing on a number of issues such as sabotage of refineries, corruption, inflation and poor leadership. Based on these issues, the Nigerian public openly expressed dissatisfactions with the Nigerian government. In the course of the mass unrest, which followed the sudden removal of fuel subsidy, the general public largely suffered, as the prices of goods and services suddenly soared. Also, both the private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy were paralyzed for several days. The actual damage to the Nigerian society cannot be fully calculated, although it was estimated that the Nigerian government lost huge amount of money as a result of blockades of roads and closure of offices during the public protests.

Social Disorganization Theory is also applicable to the Nigerian experience of urban violence. The theory of social disorganization focuses on the social structure of urbanization and its implications for the development of urban violence. The theory of social disorganization is based on experience of urban violence in the United States of America, especially in Chicago and other major cities where Shaw and McKay conducted their study on juvenile delinquency. Their study has gained recognition in the USA since 1942 (Alanezi, 2010).

As shown in the theory, social disorganization can be analyzed from different perspectives within a city; four major perspectives identified by Breetzke (2010) include the following: ethnic heterogeneity, socio-economic deprivation, disruptions in the family and residential mobility. The situation in Jos – a city in central Nigeria – partly aligns with fundamental canons of social disorganization theory, given the influence of social change, rapid urbanization and population growth on the security of lives and property in the city. For instance:

The situation in Jos is still so bad that people are careful in choosing what taxis or okada they take. Christians do not feel safe riding on motorcycles driven by Hausa Muslims and vice versa. The residential pattern was drastically altered. Adherents of the two religions began to live in separate areas out of fear of outbreak of another crisis. The Jos main road which demarcates Jos North from Jos South provided a natural border for this division. After crises, most Christians living in Jos North relocated to the south of the state capital across the main road, while many Muslims who were resident in the south relocated to the north. (Aliyu, Kasim and Martin, 2011: 171)

Further analysis of social disorganization theory implies that urban violence can be regarded as a key problem reinforced by several factors including urbanization, modernization and social change (Alanezi, 2010). The relevance of Social Control
Theory is instructive in this context. Social Control Theory provides a framework for an analysis of urban violence. In the light of the framework of social control, it has been argued that people with strong ties with their societies are more likely to ensure social order compared to those who feel alienated from the society (Alanezi, 2010). Different groups in the Nigerian cities have violently expressed feeling of alienation. Several instances of the expression of feeling of alienation can be drawn from the resurgence of urban violence in northern Nigeria, particularly the Nigerian terrorist organization popularly known as Boko Haram, which was clearly described in the writing of Adesoji (2010: 100):

*Boko Haram*” is derived from a combination of the Hausa word boko meaning “book” and the Arabic word haram which is something forbidden, ungodly or sinful. Literally, it means “book is sinful”, but its deeper meaning is that Western education is sinful, sacrilegious or ungodly and should therefore be forbidden. Characteristically, the sect not only opposed but outrightly rejected Western education, Western culture and modern science. [...] Ironically, Yusuf, the sect leader, enjoyed the best that Western technology offered in the form of exotic cars, the latest communication equipment and the best medical services.

Boko Haram has been able to attract membership from different groups of people in the Nigerian society, especially former university lecturers, students, bankers, a former commissioner in Borno State, politicians, drug addicts, vagabonds, and generally lawless people. It is believed that some members of the Boko Haram have been trained in several countries including Afghanistan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, Mauritania and Algeria. This assertion is evidenced by the resemblance between modus operandi of the Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The Boko Haram riots spread across several parts of northern Nigeria - Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno – from 25th July to 30th July 2009. The riots were so deadly that a team of soldiers and the police was deployed to quell the riots. In the process, several members of the group were arrested and their weapons and explosive materials were confiscated. The leader of the Boko Haram – Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf – was captured and killed in the process (Adesoji, 2010). It constitutes a contemporary version of militant groups organised for political and religious purposes in northern Nigeria. The Izala movement emerged in the 1960s, following the assassination of political leaders – Abubakar Tawafa Balewa and Ahmadu Bello – from northern Nigeria. As argued by Falola and Genova (2009), the Izala movement focused on the need to enhance the spread of quality Islam based on Sharia law. According to Adesoji (2010: 103):

*Although the adoption of Sharia by twelve Northern states (beginning in 1999) appeared to pacify some conservative elements within Islam – contrary to Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution, which clearly defines the secularity of the Nigerian state) – its limited application was still condemned by the Boko Haram sect, which criticized the governors for their insincerity and for politicizing Sharia.*
It appears that Boko Haram has been supported by powerful individuals and groups just like other militant Islamic organisations that preceded it. For instance, with support of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, the Izala was led by Mallam Ismai’la Idris. The Izala was an offshoot of an Islamic organization – Jama’atu Nasril Islam – which was established in 1962 by prominent muslim leaders in northern Nigeria. Izala emerged as a militant wing of the Jama’atul Nasril Islam, meaning group for the victory of Islam. Also, the Maitatsine Movement emerged from Muhammadu Marwa’s Islamic organization in the 1970s; it contributed towards the escalation of violence in northern Nigeria in the 1980s.

Like the Boko Haram, members of the Maitatsine developed an unusual ritual of prayer and interpretation of Islamic doctrine. They openly resisted Western values through public disturbances, including stoning of police officers and preaching on the streets without a permit. Their activities culminated in the Maitatsine Riots, which lasted for several days in northern Nigeria in December 1980. In the course of the riots, thousands of Muslims and Christians were killed and valuable property was damaged. The leader of the group – Marwa – was also killed during the riots.

Lessons from different cases of militant organizations in northern Nigeria and elsewhere in the Nigerian cities suggest the inability of the government to ensure adequate social control for the prevention of urban violence in Nigeria. In fact, different groups in the Nigerian cities have continued to experience different waves of urban violence including the Izala riots in the 1970s and the Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s and the Boko Haram uprising since 2009. The violent activities of the organizations and the riots they generated can be attributed to Islamic fundamentalism mixed with political turmoil in Nigeria.

The political significance of the issue of riots has been recognized in literature. Moran (2011) considered the idea of riots a primitive attempt by a socially excluded population to gain visibility in the public and political spheres. Beyond politics, several instances of urban violence resulting from different militant groups in Nigeria can be attributed to a combination of factors such as ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, and poor socio-economic backgrounds. For instance:

The Boko Haram uprising of July 2009 was significant in that it not only set a precedent, but also reinforced the attempts by Islamic conservative elements at imposing a variant of Islamic religious ideology on a secular state. [...] the sect’s blossoming was also aided by the prevailing economic dislocation in Nigerian society, the advent of party politics [...] These internal factors coupled with growing Islamic fundamentalism around the world make a highly volatile Nigerian society prone to violence (Adesoji, 2010: 95)

Therefore, there is urgent need for synthesis of ideas from the Social Disorganization and Social Control Theories in order to provide a suitable strategy for security of lives and
Crisis of Governance and Urban Violence in Nigeria by Akinwale and Aderinto

property in the Nigerian cities. The social control and social disorganization theories can be combined to provide a balanced analysis of the dynamics of urban violence, as indicated in the next paragraph:

Social disorganization theory holds that neighborhoods with greater residential stability, higher socioeconomic status, and more ethnic homogeneity experience less disorder because these neighborhoods have higher social cohesion and exercise more social control. Recent extensions of the theory argue that disorder in turn affects these structural characteristics and mechanisms. (Steenbeek and Hipp, 2011: 833).

Social disorganization theory explains the effects of neighborhood structure and culture on crime and delinquency. Within this perspective, the role of neighborhood informal social control is argued to be an important protective factor against many social problems including urban violence (Warner and Burchfield, 2011). Moreover, the ideas of informal social control have often been translated into policies of community surveillance and the reporting of suspicious behaviors to the police (Warner, Beck and Ohmer, 2010). While these policies may make neighborhoods less attractive to offenders because they create higher certainty levels of recognition, and subsequently arrest, social disorganization theory suggests different policies of crime prevention, focusing on policies that are more closely associated with restorative justice, re-integrative shaming and peacemaking criminology.

A combination of ideas from social control and social disorganization theories can be used to develop a suitable strategy to enhance extant methods of maintaining law and order. This can be done through partnership between the police and community, especially on the issues of neighborhood watch and community oriented policing. The efficacy of such strategy will depend on the level of trust and cooperation between the police and members of community. In Nigeria, however, the levels of trust and cooperation between the police and community are relatively low. Instead, Nigeria has witnessed the development of informal governance based on networks of ethnicity, class and religion. These networks have been used to forge links between dynamic informal organizational systems and formal institutions of government (Meagher, 2010). This situation could aggravate the crisis of governance if it is not properly managed.

Thus, due consideration can be given to social integration for peace building in urban areas. The Brazilian strategy of the management of urban violence can be replicated. Urban violence in Brazil has been addressed through formal and informal approaches. The formal approach is based on the deployment of military police for the control of violence, while the informal approach flows from religious perspectives including spirituality and sacrifice, being used to rehabilitate violent persons on the street.

Peace Making Processes in Nigeria

Africa has notable examples of successful peace-building experiences. A good example is the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is slowly approaching democratic stability
following its 2006 elections. Such peace-building and conflict resolution efforts contribute not only to ending conflicts but also to advancing development and human security more broadly. However, the overlapping boundaries of ethno-religious violence tend to make Nigeria a volatile country. This volatility became more pronounced in the emergence of a new dimension of ethnic militia urban violence, which was outlawed, thereby fuelling police brutality. An assessment of the contradictions between the militia and police relations reflects that the two groups are yet to accept each other as partners in progress. Rather, each in-group usually perceives the other out-group as an enemy, that should be eliminated (Atere & Akinwale, 2006). Confrontations between the militia groups and the police across Nigeria have produced dangerous outcomes, including unfounded allegation, serious enmity, intrigues, threat, witch hunting, slanderous comment, divergent interest, uncooperative attitude, distrust, deception, police brutality and illegal arrest.

Unfortunately, violence has not waned in Nigeria despite its experience of democratic governance at three different periods (1960-1966, 1979-1983, and 1999-2012). Abubakar (2004) observed that electoral frauds have undermined the integrity and credibility of the democratic process and made governance much more difficult in Nigeria. Chances that the Nigerian government could end ethno-religious violence became minimal when the federal military government secretly joined the Organisation of Islamic Countries in 1986 (Falola, 1998). Although the Nigerian constitution states that Nigeria is secular, most Nigerians openly proclaim their religions, and religious intolerance has been the bane of the Nigerian society. Reflection on the extant attitude of government to the cases of urban violence in the Nigerian cities essentially shows the relevance of Durkheim’s concept of social solidarity, Marx’s focus on human capacity for the transformation of the social order and Weber’s postulation on the rationalization of the society (Malesevic, 2010). An appropriate strategy for peacebuilding in the Nigerian cities can be designed from the abovementioned perspectives.

Conclusion

This study has established that urban violence became a counterforce against arbitrary governance since the colonial era, but efforts geared towards its management have not yielded desired results, thereby pointing to the need for the development of alternative dispute resolution mechanism in Nigeria. It has also been established that colonialism and political instability resulted in proliferation of different dimensions of urban violence fuelled by ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism and poor socio-economic backgrounds. Nigeria presently operates in a vicious circle in which crisis of governance fuels urban violence and vice versa. As the political elite continue to battle legitimacy crisis, they are yet to earn leadership credibility that could make them provide sustainable solutions to the lingering syndrome of urban violence in Nigeria. Leaders with a reputation for bad governance and lack of economic transparency cannot promote peaceful coexistence of diverse groups in a violence-prone multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. This situation must be addressed decisively by all the stakeholders of the
Nigerian society to ensure their collective survival. Therefore, the management of urban violence in Nigeria rests on transformation of the contemporary political economy of underdevelopment in the country. Specifically, there is urgent need for fundamental changes in the extant attitude of the Nigerian government to violent groups in the Nigerian cities. Human rights and social justice require priority treatment, hence the need for the Nigerian government to uphold transparency and social accountability in governance.

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Crisis of Governance and Urban Violence in Nigeria by Akinwale and Aderinto


