

Accountability and Good Governance: Options for Youth Violence in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The main thrust of this paper is an attempt to examine how accountability and good governance one of the features of any democratic politics should be imbibed and demonstrated by Nigerian political leaders in curbing youth violence in Nigeria. Although, several remedies have been proposed and tried to deal with the problem, the issues have not only remained since the nation state regained her independence, but has in recent times since 1999 assumed a frightening dimension as evident in recent youth violent clashes, threats, attacks on lives and properties and increase fear in several parts of the country. Yet while, it is true that youth violence and insecurity are inevitable in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria; and while it is true that such violent do have some functional consequences, their disruptive effects need to be curbed if peace and development are to be attained. Thus the focus of the paper is to drive home the points that through accountability and good governance all forms of youth violence which is presently tilting the nation-state towards disintegration and state failure can be tamed as noted in some Scandinavian nations of the world. To drive home, the analyses and to propel further academic work on this topic, some elucidative subthemes are examined in the main aspect of the paper.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic politics is always globally ingrained with certain minimum principles. These rules include: participation and inclusiveness, responsiveness and accountability, transparency and good governance, regular free and fair elections, freedom and respect for human rights, the observance of rule of law, among others. Where these principles or rules are generally observed, one can pronounce such a government constituted as democratic. Conversely, where they are observed in the breach, an analyst has no option but to consider the regime in such a policy as undemocratic, regardless of whether or not the government in power is able to meet or satisfy the welfare needs. It is, however, improbable that such a regime that is more likely to deploy a greater proportion of the resources of the country to solidifying how to curb opposition to its authoritarian rule could still be left with enough of such resources to simultaneously meet the welfare needs of the people that, statutorily, should have been the basis for the institution of the regime in the first instance. Actually, meeting the welfare needs of the citizenry is an important amalgam in the field of political philosophy.

It may also be pertinent to stress that; it may not be possible to meet the afore-mentioned principles in equal measures within a polity or even across polities. However, one can still stress that what is required, as the principles are in themselves regarded as the irreducible minimum, is for regimes to keep on striving to improve on their records of observance and practice of the principles (Yaqub 2001:17). This suggestion is based on the important fact of life that there is always a room for improvement. This paper is using the principles of accountability and good governance to examine the contemporary democratic politics in Nigeria as options for youth violence in Nigeria. By this priority, it is not being suggested that there is a hierarchy among the principles. The work is thus structured as follows: section one looked at conceptual explanations of accountability, good governance and youth violence. The second section deals with a critical analysis of accountability and good governance in Nigeria while the third section.

1.1. Conceptual Explanations of Accountability, Good Governance and Youth Violence

Accountability is a phenomenon. It is also a process, as well as ideology. It becomes the easiest way to submit to authority. An apprentice-trader renders account to his employer: He is in tune with accountability; an accountant is obliged to throw open her financial records. Every leader ought to know that he should give account of his tenure-the financial transactions, the court rulings, the

economic policies, the projects erected, and every action taken at one time or the other. Accountability means the consciousness and expressions of responsibility of a leader to a follower (Michael 1997: 352). This phenomenon reclines within and protrudes without, with good measure of caution and fairness. Accountability enthrones the past, investigates the present, and discovers the future. Accountability is a process or the avenue by which governments in particular can be made limited entities: they cannot act or rule in absolute or arbitrary terms nor do they have unlimited powers except in a dictatorship or totalitarian regime. A government that is accountable is a government that rules constitutionally, observes procedures, and is subject or is prepared to be subject to some checks and balances (Amuso 2006:20). An accountable government is one that is, all things being equal, free from corrupt practices, is likely to do battle with the menace of corruption, and there are equally the odd chances that such constituted authority will be transparent. Finally, a government that is accountable is likely to be one that has instituted good governance.

Good governance refers to a polity which defines a government, a state or people. Good governance stands for acceptable government and desirable leadership. These two terms have not become negotiable: First, there must be a government; second, the said government must necessarily be acceptable by the populace. Good governance entails the elaborate using of available human and natural resources for the satisfaction of the needs of our society (Onyeka 2001:25). Governance also encompasses the procedures for carrying out the activities of government. In this regard, one is trying to find out whose responsibility it is to carry out specific activities of government. For instance, the executive branch does not have the power to appropriate or authorize funds for running the government in a democracy, even though it is the one that is expected to prepare an appropriation bill for the consideration of the legislative arm, with a view to enacting same into law. Similarly, although it is the responsibility of the judiciary to interpret the law that has been enacted by the legislature, it does not behoove the former to dabble into law making beyond, in infrequent cases, suggesting the review of certain extant laws, through the exercise of constitutional review powers granted it by the constitution. On the whole, governance is the totality of the process of constituting a government as well as administering a political community. It is the umbilical cord that links the governor and the governed (Yaqub 2006:10).

The concept of governance is usually prefixed with the adjectival word “good”. Why do we have to qualify it? Basically, it has to be so qualified because history has shown that the end of any state as well as the means of attaining that end are not generally shared or understood in the same manner by all. A political community is so diverse and conflictive for one to think that everyone has the same frame of mind or the same frame of action as to what is the purpose of state and the direction it should take or be taken to. From the philosophers of antiquity such as Plato and Aristotle as well as those of the modern era such as Mill and Bentham, it is generally argued that the state is not only the organ where the citizenry can actualize themselves, but more importantly, the end of such state is the maximization of their welfare.

Anything that derogates from the security and happiness that the state can guarantee in the prescription of Locke (mentioned in Ogundiran 2012), calls for rebellion against the sovereign. Not only has this sublime end of state (i.e. of meeting the welfare needs of the governed) been contested through history and in many countries, in the chequered as well as short history of Nigeria, the people have been buffeted by regimes that merely came to advance their selfish and inordinate ambitions, not the advancement of their welfare. It is therefore not only imperative to educate the people on what should be the ultimate responsibility for a governance system, we should be sure of what we want. In other words, given our country’s experience and the lessons of history, the country and its people should not only desire to have but must actually have good governance. Ogundiran, (2012)

Violence is inherent in every social formation regardless of the nature of its political forces and levels of development. Generally known as the ‘problem of order’ or the ‘Hobbesian Problem.’ Violence continues to enjoy a high degree of attention in social thought. (Arendt. 1972. Zimmerman.1983. Fanon (2010). Daltung2000, Gidden, 2000, Miller 1999 and Apter 1996). This has however generated more intellectual confusion than clarity, particularly over the meaning, causes, nature possibilities and social utility of violence. Nonetheless, there is a fair consensus that violence emanates from a conflict of interests in social life. Itself an inescapable and inseparable aspect of the human condition (Dougherty 1999).

In this paper however, three distinct sub-themes are relevant namely: the causes, the character, and the utility of violence. No doubt violence springs from a variety of causes, each of which may be useful to

explain varying political realities. Ivo K. Feierabend (2000), et'al (2001) has contended that political turmoil is usually the consequence of social discontent. In this light, one possible cause of violence could be aggression arising from frustration a theory popularized by Segurd (2011). Political violence could also breakout as a result of mal-functioning within a social structure (the systematic hypothesis), or a fallout of clashes among dominant groups in a society (group conflict hypothesis).

As we argue below, youth violence in contemporary Nigeria is best understood within the frustration aggression-violence mode. The main source of frustration among the Nigerian youth is unemployment and politics of exclusion by the political elites. Gurr perceives a relationship between the perception of frustration deprivation and the intensity of reaction. As he states: 'Mild deprivation will push more across the threshold, very intense deprivation is likely to galvanize large segments of a political community into action' (2011). In Nigeria the sense of deprivation has been arguably more intense among the Delta and Igbo ethnic groups in the South-South and South-Eastern parts of Nigeria, where much the wealth of Nigeria seems to come from.

Beyond the problem of causes, another difficulty revolves around the definition of violence itself. Salmi (1997) captured this problem very well when he noted that most people think of violence in a narrow context equating it with images of war, murders or riots. Yet violence comes in many more forms the range of phenomenon that could be induced under this label is quite intensive. If one accepts the notions that any act that threatens a person's physical or psychological integrity is a form of violence then one needs to consider that occurrences as diverse as racism, pollution or poverty can be symptoms of violent situation (p.16).

To adopt this expanded definition of violence would produce an illuminatingly different understanding of the Obasanjo/Atiku democratic governance. It is arguable that the entire democratic governance of Obasanjo took place under an atmosphere of repressive violence, especially as certain critical social forces were effectively excluded from the administration. Infact, Salmi (1997) definition of repressive violence could be taken as a theoretical rendering of the political habits of the Obasanjo's government. According to Salmi: Repressive violence corresponds to the deprivation of basic rights other than the right to survive and protection from injury... Repressive violence relates to three groups of fundamental rights: civil, political and social rights... political rights refer to the degree to which citizens can participate democratically in the political life of their region or country. (Right to vote, hold elections, freedom to meet and form associations or parties, freedom of speech and opinion, and freedom of the press among others). With respect to social rights, one of the most usual forms of repressive violence is that which prevents people from creating or belonging to a trade union, or from going on strike other industrial action (pp 20-21).

It should be stated that Obasanjo's administration became remarkable for its clampdown on trade unions, and opposition parties. The Odi and Zaki-Biam episodes were good examples during the Obasanjo regime. Our understanding of violence during the administration of Obasanjo was the use of coercive powers of the state to stifle popular will and jeopardizes the rule of law. First, Nwokedil's (1994:12) characterization of political violence as partly, the 'use of force by...the power incumbent to depend the status quo at all cost'. In this characterization, the destruction of the Odi and Zaki-Biam communities were acts of violence intended to deal with popular forces with such undisguised asperity.

Other considerations that are also pertinent in this section involve the relationship between the democratic government and upsurge of youth violence. To get to the heart of the matter: Are democratic government necessarily produce youth violence or militia groups? At the moment, the African experience predisposes one to answer in affirmative, since most African countries have experienced comprehensive social convulsions as the direct or indirect fallout of democratic governance. In most of the African states, the governments by virtue of their monopoly of the instruments of violence and groups in civil society, partly out of frustration and partly in reaction to the repressive measures of the political authorities have participated in an orgy of violence. (Nwokedi, 1994:15). Violence has tended to be most prominent (only) in states where democracy has been subverted, or has collapsed, a control usually exercised to the detriment of opposition groups.

The point being emphasized here is simply that most of these democratic governments in Africa have been characterized by violence because the democracy practiced lacks some values which must be imbibed if the democratic system is to run smoothly. A democratic polity therefore must gradually build on its own culture and these include, among others:

1. Rule by the majority which is at the same time sensitive interests of the minority.
2. Tolerance of divergent views as the spill of the democratic process. This includes the tolerance of different views within the polity and the larger society,
3. Commitment to upholding the constitution as a supreme guide of operation of the democratic polity. Even in countries such as Britain with no written constitution, traditional processes and its institutions guide political authors,
4. Acceptance of the rules of the game of politics and being bound by these. Thus winners and losers see politics as a 'game not a battle' in which one or the other political party would win. Winner should be gracious in victory, while losers should be gallant in defeat-knowing that there are other chance for winning; and
5. Commitment by the political elite to be sensitive and responsive to the people who elected them (Elaigwu, 2005:135).

However, be that as it may, the institutional framework for their operation differs from one country to the other. It is also possible to identify some of the salient characteristics of democracy. Among these characteristics in the *locus of authority* in a democratic polity. Authority emanates from the people. Any authority that doesn't emanate from the consent of the people is not democratic. Moreover, democratic polity must be based on the rule of law. Law cannot be arbitrary the democratic polity must be legitimate. One of these is that the leader has the right to rule and that he must rule rightly.

In addition to these, is the fourth, the element of choice. The people should have the right to effect changes in the leadership or the government of their country, given available alternate leadership. In some countries the plebiscitarian system is used, while in some others, other mechanisms for providing choice are used. Choice here includes such value as freedom of association, movement, thought, expression, and others as defined by the polity.

Lastly, there must be accountability. Leaders must be held responsible for their actions as representatives of the people who are entrusted with power to achieve particular ends. They are expected to account for the mandate given to them (Elaigwu, 2005:134). Having conceptualized accountability, violence and good governance, it is now pertinent to conceptualize youth.

Youths have been variously described as assets, future leaders, blessings to families and above all, as a national resource (Okpeh, 2005:365). However, at the level of identifying who really the youths are, there appears to be a lingering ambiguity emanating from the fact of defining them either as children young men, those at the threshold of adulthood or, in fact, all of the above. While our concern here is not to dwell much on this polemic, it is should be stated that, generally speaking the word youth is synonymous with being young. Thus, a youth is a young person, someone in the early stage of life after childhood but before adulthood. This raises the question of when childhood ends and when adulthood begins. To the Nigerian context, the 1999 constitution (and in fact previous constitutions) defines a child as anyone between the ages of zero and 18 (Constitution, 1999:20). Does it mean that we start counting who a youth is from the age of 19? Definitely, there are critical over lapping dimensions in the definition of childhood, youth and adulthood. In fact, such definitions as those given by Drefus, (1992), Tamino (1991) Isamah (1996), Onibokun (1998), and Okpeh (2005) largely corroborate the argument that the definition of youth is mainly contextual and to some extent arbitrary. Hence there are different definitions of youth in various communities and countries of the world.

However, for the purpose of this paper, we have chosen to adopt the definition of Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy of 1999, which stipulates that a youth is any person between the ages of 12 and 35, who is passing through mental and physical developmental processes in preparation to face the challenges of adulthood (Federal Government of Nigeria. 1999:1). Youth policy statements of previous years range between 6 and 30 years. We have chosen the 1999 statement because of its historical, legal and contemporary relevance. From the angle of the upper limit, since the Nation's independence in 1960, it takes up to an average of 30 to 35 years for one to attain the status of a full adult with access to a comprehensive list of rights in both private and public life (Makwemoisa, 2002: 138). Thus, it is not until 35 that people are generally conceived of as being fully independent.

More importantly, however we have chosen the 1999 definition because the phenomenon of youth activities and violence in the country in the last decade are mostly associated with people in the age

bracket of 12 and 25. This assertion derives largely from field observation and personal interaction with youth activists and persons who participate in violent activities. Also in concrete terms, as is illustrated in the paper, the adopted age bracket exists in contemporary Nigeria as a somewhat monolithic block in respect of the exclusion from socio-economic and political rights and privileges as well as in respect of scared identities, activism and violence.

It is against this background that before we begin to analyze the causes of these youths violence in Nigeria in the last decade. It is worthwhile to assess how were Nigeria youths through the historical periods of as to understand dearly the factors that have changed their behaviors in the contemporary Nigeria.

1.2. Critical Analysis of Accountability and Good Governance in Nigeria

On May 29th, 1999, the country restored civil democratic rule with the swearing in of constitutional governments at the federal, 'state and the local government levels. Unfortunately, since that time till today the democratic system, including the structures meant to consolidate it, have undergone or experienced some stress. The factor responsible for this state of affairs may not be unconnected to the fact that we have, as a political community, stayed for too long under different military regimes whose common denominator was, to a large extent, their lack of democracy, accountability and good governance. The abuse of these time-honoured principles of governance was actually legendary and its negative impact on the country's politics unfortunately; but, apparently, is what is going to endure for a long time. The signals that are already manifesting indicate that it is also going to take a long time for the country to get out of the quagmire.

In the first place, the argument in the pro-democracy circles, that the military controlled transition process that eventuated in the formation of the Fourth Republic was not a perfect transition, appears to be assuming a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was not only faulted by the groups as well as others who genuinely felt that the transition process did not provide a level playing field for every political actor, but that it was military-centered. Hence, it was undemocratic all the same (World Bank 2000:20). For instance, the registration exercise carried out before the parties were registered was a parody of how democratic politics and equity were to be handled. The entire exercise was as much unconstitutional. This was in the sense that, in the first instance the rules were generally perceived to have been doctored as they were, for example, revised to eventually allow the Alliance for Democracy-one of the political associates seeking the registration to do so. The military authorities then could argue that they were motivated by real political, given the volatile nature of the country's politics following the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections in 1993. Of course, the unintended consequences of the policy of allowing a political association that did not appear to merit such registration was the ethnic slant that emerged in the politics of the Fourth Republic. In other words, the Yoruba ethnic group became ensconced in the "politics of separate identity" to such an extent that when compromises were reached by a section of the political class to shop for the presidential candidate for the eventual ruling party- the PDP -from the South West, the gesture did not cut any ice among the leading political elite of the Yoruba nation.

A major matter of concern to the issues of accountability and good governance is the kind of governance system that has itself been instituted since the return to democracy. If one may ask: how much accountability and good governance have we all along enjoyed since May 1999? We would like to look at this question by referring to the "governance code of conduct" handed down by the president-elect (at that time) Obasanjo on the eve of his inauguration in the quotation above to all elected officials under the auspices of the PDP. (One must, in parenthesis, stress that the "code" was equally relevant to all the elected officials in the other political parties). In general, it is all agreed that after many years of a return to democratic rule it is unfortunate that Nigerians are not anywhere near the realization of the ideals of accountability and good governance, which are the natural accompaniments of democratic rule. The emerging problem of governance (the non-institutionalization of the norms of accountability and good governance) appears to cut across all levels of government: federal, state and local government. We actually, have a situation in which many of the leaders, serving as chief executives, still behave as if Nigerians are yet to shrug off military dictatorship. For example, almost all of them tend to insist that they must have the first and final pronouncements in matters of policy (Odoh, 2005: 35). Of course, there could be variations in terms of the extent to which a particular chief executive would allow his deputy and, by extension, the cabinet to have an input in policy making and implementation. Generally, in most of the states and

especially at the local government level, the degree of centralization of decision-making and implementation is to such an extent that when the chief executive is not around nobody can take a decision on even routine matters. Certainly, in such a governance system, it is not democracy that is being practiced but autocracy or at, best, oligarchy.

One of the criteria in which to assess accountability and good governance in a democratic system is the way and manner in which elections are conducted. Certainly, ill-conducted elections cannot produce accountable governments. In 2003, long before the commencement of the election proper, rival politicians within and between parties engaged in practices which undermined the chances of a peaceful and well-run election (Olaniyi 2004:10). Politicians maintained large number of youth for protection and for open intimidation, public scuffles and violence. Reports of political assassinations also dominated the political atmosphere. Prominent politicians like Chief Bola Ige in Oyo State, Chief Harry Marshal in Rivers State, the PDP Chairman in Kwara and Delta States as well as the President of the Nigerian Bar Association in Anambra State Mr. Barnabas Igwe, were all assassinated in the count down to the election (News watch, 2003:33). A government that is ushered in by this multiple killings cannot be accountable not to talk of having an aura of good governance. On the whole, the assessment of the 2003 elections reflected malpractice all over. In states like Rivers and Ogun, the votes cast were more than the voters registered. In the language of Okon (2005:34) “the Nigeria April 2003 general elections were characterized by violence, thuggery and politically motivated assassinations.” And in the opinion of the National Democratic Institutes’ observer delegation, the irregularities committed by officials, activists and supporters of the major political parties severely limited and even denied in some parts of the country the ability of Nigerians to express their franchise during both the National Assembly and the Presidential elections (Umar et al 2004:109). Even the EU election monitors returned a verdict of large scale irregularities in the elections. No wonder the wrangling, lack of accountability and good governance that accompanied the government that emerged from these elections.

Like the 2003 elections, the 2007 ballot witnessed various dimensions of malpractice. Accusing fingers in this regard pointed to the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo. Accusations were rife that he was manipulating the electoral environment in favor of his party, the PDP (Crisis Group Report, 2007). INEC was also accused of incompetence, non-transparency and partiality in favor of the PDP, by other political parties and the press (Crisis Group Report, 2007). The Commission relying on the indictment by an Administrative Panel of Inquiry disqualified Atiku Abubakar, the Vice President and a formidable contestant for the office of the President against the PDP. Even unproven allegations by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were applied by INEC in the disqualification of formidable candidates in various states. As for the political parties, the hallmark of electoral malpractice was the primary elections. In several states of the Federation, primary elections were not held. In Adatnawa States the PDP merely submitted names to INEC without duly conducting a State congress. In the states where primary elections were held, this was done in contravention of the rules and regulations guiding such elections. In Imo and Rivers states, for instance, the names of the actual winners of the primary elections were not submitted to INEC for the actual poll in April. The 2007 elections also introduced a new dimension to electoral malpractice. Unlike in the past where security forces were employed by the ruling party on actual election days, this time around, they were used to carry out a campaign of harassment and intimidation of the opposition before the election period (Crisis Group Report, 2007). And when the polling days (April 14 and 21) arrived, malpractice became the order of the day. Either officials arrived late or voting never happened. No doubt we already had “Etteagate” scandal where N628 million naira was earmarked for the renovation of a house and the deposing of some governors by the electoral tribunal panel as the truth emerges. We hope that the truth will continue to emerge in subsequent governments so that we can have a government given to accountability and good governance.

1.3. Youth and Leadership in Nigeria: A Reflection on the Pre-colonial and Colonial Periods

Studies have shown that in every human society, youths have been described as assets, future leaders, blessings to families and above all (including Nigeria) as a national resource. During the pre-colonial time youths were accorded social and political recognition in the society. Thus, through the age-structure, young men and women were usually organized into social groups and given specific duties. Among the Idoma society. For Example, although elders by virtue of their age, had a prerogative on deliberative policy-making but the actual execution of such policies depended largely on the youths,

who were the real back bone of the village constabulary (Okpeh, 2002: 521), Thus, the energy and the physical defense of society in times of war.

In the economic sphere too, the youths were not left out as most of the economic activities, mainly as agrarian society. Thus, difficult tasks such as bush clearing, digging, weeding, fishing, hunting, livestock grazing, etc. This shows that in most Nigerian societies during the pre-colonial period relied heavily on their young men and women for their survival. According to Okpeh, O. Okpeh (2005:365) this recognition of the importance of the youths was greatly hinged on the moral responsibility of elders towards their youths. Okpeh's view above receives support from Gana (2002:65) who states that: Elders made sure that youths were properly trained culturally and in the skills necessary for them to fulfill their roles. In particular elders always wished them well because when the youths are well the community is well.

This rural duty of society to youths during the pre-colonial period consequently imbued the latter with a great sense of vision and patriotism in the collective task of developing the community (Okpeh, 2005:365). This also made the youths feel cared for by the elders, who were the real custodians of the values of the society. This symbiotic existence between the elders and the youths created and guaranteed peace and stability in the society.

However, during the colonial period these special position and privilege that the youths enjoyed in the past would appear to have been destroyed with the incorporation of the Nigerian economy into the colonial capitalist economy. For example, the entrenchment of capitalist values through the monetization of the economy and society of Nigeria uprooted many of them from their traditional settings. Thus being dislodged from their respective societies, Nigerian youths became vulnerable to the imperialist interest of the British. The need to pay colonial taxes and the great quest for money greatly forced many of the youths to migrate to the emerging urban centers in the country where they were confronted with the new realities that completely changed their world views (Okpeh, 2005:366).

It should be stated here that even in these urban centers where they migrated in search of the Golden Fleece. Things were not easy as they had grapple with the vagaries of a particularly herculean existence that made morality a mere past time. This was the beginning of the youth's problems in Nigeria (Ahmed, 2000). Many Nigerians including youths were also exploited as conscripted soldiers in the colonial army and were made to fight in the First and Second (European) World Wars in North Africa, Europe and Asia. This situation among others, later led to anti-colonial protests, which culminated in the struggles for political independence in Nigeria.

In fact, during this period, many Nigeria youths both at home and abroad made quality contribution that may demand mentioning here. West African Students' Union (formed in 1925, by Ladipo Solanke, a Nigerian from Abeokuta, the popular Nigerian youth formed in 1938 by the late Nigerian president Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe). His Progressive Union.(Formed in 1940). The Idoma Hope Rising Union (formed in 1940). The Zikist Movement formed in 1946 and many others (Okpeh, 2005:367). These Youth Movements Consolidated their pro-active stance and mobilized the Nigerians from the strangle hold of the British colonial government in 1960.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to content that ever since the independence in 1960, Nigerian youths have continued to demonstrate their patriotic commitments to the Nation irrespective of the dynamics of the crises in our polity. Few of these contributions of the Nigerian youths stand out clearly in the following areas: Nigerian students in 1962 were the ones that consciously stood against the Anglo-Nigerian Pact which would have allowed the British to station their soldiers permanently on the Nigerian soil despite our independence (Okpeh, 2005:369). Many Nigerian youths died in great numbers fighting in defense of the country's unity during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. Also under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Nigerian graduate have continued to give their patriotic service to the nation in various capacities since 1973.

From the foregoing, it has been stated that the Nigerian youth's right from the pre-colonial time to the contemporary period have greatly contributed to the sustenance and corporate existence of this great nation. But even these contributions, Nigerian youths have had to contend with a lot of problems that have been shown are responsible for the contemporary youth violence in our polity, particularly since the inception of the democratic government in 1999. Put differently, the contemporary youth violence in Nigeria is the logical consequences of the inherent contradictions in the political economy of the Nigerian state. It is to these contradictions in the political economy of Nigeria that have culminated into youth violence in Nigeria that we now turn to in the succeeding section.

1.4. Youth violence in Nigeria 1999- to Date: Issues, Problems and Prospects

In recent times, Nigeria has been witnessing series of bloody crises and wanton destruction of lives and property associated with ethnic, religious, and political disagreements. News of Nigerian youths involved in bloodletting at the slightest provocation has become a daily occurrence in the Nigerian media. In the last two decades, the culture of violence seems to be engulfing the nation. An ever-increasing population of unemployed and homeless youths is taking to violence murder and witchcraft and some other violent practices are becoming the order of the day in Nigerian home video films, thus driving more and more jobless youths into this satanic exercise. All these developments are aborting government's efforts at bringing development (Makwemoisa, 2002:147).

As can be deduced from the above statement alluded to Dr. Catharine Acholonu, Former Special Assistant (Arts and Culture) to the President Obasanjo, youth violence in Nigeria can be attributed to the failure of the nation's socio-political, economic and cultural structures. As we have demonstrated from the preceding analysis. Before the advent of colonialism, youths were considered part of society and were given responsibilities which they discharged diligently and with all sense of purpose and honesty. During this period, society invested on its youths, knowing full well that in the future they would be the ones to. The younger generations therefore had a sense of belonging and in facts were regarded as a very important segment of society. But in recent times, the youths are being excluded from the nation's resources distribution and the history-making process.

Thus, they intrude on the political stage as trouble-makers. This is a form of identity politics and often positive expression youths want to be 'citizen' not 'youth' (Colloquium, 1999:8) 'Youth activism and violence is due to the exclusion they suffer, but also more importantly, they are an assertion of their citizenship of the Nigerian state. The later indicates that they possess a sense of commitment to Nigeria as a viable national project directing that they are 'dealers in hope' (Makwemoisa, 2002:148), whose present actions must be intellectually explored in order to properly and deliberately structure their energies into such channels that would be of immediate and long-term benefits both to them and to the larger society.

Political violence has been part of the political picture from a few years after independence, but the democratization process, or rather the multi-party system, seems to open up 'the market' for militias. Every political leader of any importance needs his bodyguards. The militias are not only formed by the political leaders, but the actions and initiatives are coming from below, because the young are aware of how they can explore the situation. Some young men talk about the situation in 1993 just around the time of the June 12 when the elections acclaimed to have been won by M.K.O. Abiola was annulled.

After the annulment of elections in Nigeria in 1993 by the military junta, the young men were very frustrated, disappointed and felt that they had been deprived of a great opportunity that would have bettered their conditions.

The frightening aspect of this situation was that some states and government parastatals were handed out to some of these young men (bandits). The guns provided these young men with power and food thus, by the beginning of 1999, banditry had increased although it was difficult to distinguish 'ordinary' banditry from the violence caused by the military and police. Many of the young men in the various ethnic militias have been recruited into the emergent political parties as part of boosting their dastard strength to melt out wickedness against their opponents. Few examples of this militia that were increasingly typical at the beginning of 1999 were Odua People's Congress (OPC) and MASSOB (i.e. Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (Haegwu, 2005:136). In 2000, the situation seemed to be worsening. The politicians and the military had not been able to retrieve the weapons that had been handled out so freely before the elections of 1999 proper were held. Presently since 2012, the Nigerian-nation has confronted with the problem of 'Boko Haram insurgent in the northern part remanding for an Islamic state by use of force.

Again, it is interesting to note that ethnicity and the clan system are used as strategy in order to compete for political power. The ethnic problem is closely connected to the lack of economic development. There are very few jobs outside the civil service, and even those with jobs have not been regularly paid during these fifteen years of enthronement of democratic government in Nigeria. However, it is instructive to note that the government later increased the salaries of workers, but the continuous devaluation of Naira against other world currencies, meant that the workers had to suffer

because of low-purchasing power, as prices of goods and services tripled. People became even more dependent on their ethnic networks and patron-client relationship than before 1999. Jobless young men and women are left with their families as the only source of security and sustenance. During the first eight years, the economic performance of the state enterprises was extremely poor and they never functioned as a source of employment for the down trodden youths in the urban centers. There was much talk about commercialization and privatization of public utilities, e.g. NEPA, NITEL, NPA, NTA, NNPC, etc. but nothing tangible seemed to be working. For example, the former Minister of Mines and Power-late Bola IGE tried to give an impression of miracle, especially in NEPA (PHCN) but money was just sunk in that conduct pipe without concrete dividends.

Thus, owing to increasing poverty during this last decade, ethnic conflicts degenerated among Nigerians. The young people have to look for their survival within the enclaves of ethnicity. They are used by the politicians while at the same time promoting their own interests. There is an intense struggle over resources, particularly in the Niger Delta region, and it seems to groups outside the ruling group as if only members of that group get promoted and find jobs. This is one of the factors that gave rise the proliferation of ethnic militias leading to several violence in several parts of the country. It is important to 'specify what the groups are fighting over... and why ethnic lines of conflict are important. It may be as Patrick (2009) puts it, that, ethnic variable does not exist except for the purpose of sharing power and/or national cake.

It is against this backdrop, that many scholars have linked youth violence to exclusion. This could be exclusion from the labor market, decent housing and community services with ethnic or migrant connotations (Rogger, 1997). Visible growth of mass consumption among rich minorities clearly intensifies the sense of exclusion among other groups, even if the poverty rate does not increase. Exclusion from childhood thus manifests in various ways.

The worsening economy of the country in the last quarter of the last century let loose a lot of atrocities from the youths who found it harder than ever to hope with the harsh and crippling environment. Armed robbers took over streets and offices, robbing at random and maiming and killing their victims. Many young men broke families' ties to join gangs in neighborhood far away from their homes. In some southern Nigerian cities, these street ganisters are popularly referred to as *Area boys*, in Lagos. (Adisa, 1994). In the Northern parts, they are called *Yan daba* (also known as the *yan tauri*) Gangs of unemployed youths in Kano State. They reject their poor conditions and status, in society and take solace in criminal and violence activities. They are always available for hire by unscrupulous politicians who set out to cause religious, political and ethnic violence in specific and strategic parts of the state (Albert, 2000).

Also, with the evaluation of globalization, more people are becoming permanently superfluous and irrelevant. Globalization has given a new dimension to populace increase especially in Africa, by positively correlating it with poverty, accelerating environmental degradation while simultaneously giving credence to technological innovations and divorcing productive capacity from labor needs. Again, the youth are one of the worst victims of the system and a major result of such threat to existence is the gradual dislocation from culture heritage and an existential struggle on the margins of a 'strange' social system (Makwemoisa, 2002).

Again, the collapse of social services and the high level commercialization of education have barred many young people from formal education. Thus, the unemployed youths without, university education and the numerous graduates who lack prospects for employment have been able to develop a versatile coping strategy of identity transformation both at the level of consciousness and their attempt to find a space in the new political dispensation (Tajgel, 2001). Violence has been a common feature of this copying mechanism.

2. CONCLUSION

The Nigerian state since the enthronement of democratic government in 1999 is close to anarchy and she has appeared to have no real power of defending the rights of the citizens or of protecting them against robberies and other kinds of banditry largely perpetrated by the youths. From all indications, it looks as if a new a political structure has emerged in the country as a result of the youth violence. These young men would appear initially to have been completely excluded socially and politically now have become a political force and a very dangerous one, difficult if not impossible to control. Some of these youths organized themselves into numerous militia groups operate more or less on their

own in both city and county side with almost impunity. Even though, the politicians manipulate these youths but the youths are liberating them and use the politicians for their own interest. What has happened in many Nigerian urban centers lately is that politicians orchestrate some crimes in order to blame one another. In fact, the polity has become a space for violence and crime. As a result, the destruction of lives and property has been enormous because of the ravaging and looting inflicted on the Nigerian citizens by these youths militias.

It is said that democracy, we count heads and not break them. The counting of heads signifies political maturity and the existence of democratic behavior. It is the expression of a behavior that shows the importance of each head to the stability and sustenance of the political community. Democracy, therefore, emphasizes inclusion, and not exclusion. It values all opinions, no matter how absurd they may appear to be the breaking of heads through the prevalence of youth violence connotes the absence of good democratic governance and this trend should be reversed if our nascent democratic must survive. Having said all these, what should be a way forward?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having looked at accountability and good governance as options for youth violence in Nigeria, we make the following suggestions:

- Our political leaders should not see political offices as a place to accumulate wealth for themselves and their families. With this mindset, they are bound to siphon cash meant for the development of the society immediately they get a political office.
- There should be workshops on accountability and good governance on frequent basis for the political leaders while in office to keep on conscientizing them on the issue.
- Political offices should be made less lucrative so as not to entice money conscious politicians.
- Our political leaders should have the welfare of the people in mind first before other things.
- Our elections should be conducted in a way that is transparent and fair so that people-desired candidates will emerge winners. Election is the foundation of every democracy and if wrongly conducted, there will be no way for good governance and accountability.
- Immunity clause for some of our political leaders should be removed so that they will know that they can be questioned on the issues of accountability and good governance even while in office.
- A multi-dimensional process emphasizing equal participation, change of attitudes and socio-economic development should be evolved. The government and all stakeholders can do a much better job of improving youth existence by acknowledging the collective nature of the nationwide responsibility of challenging the cultural influences and socio-economic conditions that foster violence and crime.
- All stakeholders must initiate alternative strategies that will address the cultural and socio economic conditions which promote and normalize violence behavior.
- All governments at all levels must embark on various projects and procedures and that would bridge the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged.
- Adequate jobs should be provided by actively and aggressively exploiting the creative energies of the youths.
- Government should also actively encourage the establishment of industries in rural areas so as to reduce the level of rural urban drift. Government should invest in the educational development of the youth through which the value of the nation's cultural heritage could be inculcated into the youths to ward off the negative traits of the globalizing world.

Finally, our leaders should rule with the fear of God knowing full well that even if they escape giving account here on earth, they cannot escape giving account to God.

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