

VIOLENCE AND YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA, 1999 -2020: INTERROGATING THE ROLE OF ELITES

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Abstract

Violence is not peculiar to Nigeria rather occurs across the globe. More often than not when it occurs, it is driven by youths and undermines the stability, and tranquility needed for national development. There are many factors that could drive youth into restiveness, as its occurrences invoke negative implications both on the youth and the country at large. Many scholars have written extensively on what the potentials, drives and initiatives of youth could mean for nations when streamlined into tangible assets. Similarly, some have extolled on the negative corresponding effects of such huge skills, strengths and other vital qualities when neglected. However, only few have directly examined the corresponding role of elites in the visibly poor conditionings, bad governance, low education, poor investment environment, insecurity and other essential qualities of living that seemingly feed such youth violence for negative ventures despite the opportunities inherent in democratic restoration. This content is descriptive, historical and uses qualitatively analysis of secondary sources of data. The piece sets to examine the role of elites in the downturn actions resulting into youth violence across the nation. It argues that violence in form of protests which got to its peak with the outbreak of EndSars in 2020 staged by youths across the country are premeditated on their perceived deprivations, conditions and marginalization. Finally, it urges



elites and citizens at the helms of authority to put the country first in their dealings if they want the country to benefit at both ends from peace and potentials of youths.

Key words: Elites, Endsars, Restiveness, Protests, Violence, Youths

Introduction

Globally, states are in a state of rupture, fracture and severe challenges in terms of environmental degradation, social eruption, rising insecurity threats, health related pandemic and varying economic doldrums, thereby disrupting certainties, dignified and peaceful life for all. This has become challenging as human societies are composite entities occupied by diverse individuals and groups with varying complexities, needs, aspirations and values either social, economic, religious, political or psychological. Thus, these manifest either at the level of individuals, groups or countries and are more often hashed through human relations. Consequently, human societies are intricately interconnected for the purpose of development - humanly and materially. The human interconnectedness thrives on human existential behaviours either good or bad. However, where such outcomes of the relations or interactions are not good or short changed by few privileged ones at the detriment of rational principle of rule of law, equanimity, justice, dignity, fairness and respect in consideration of corruption, deprivation, economic sabotage, marginalization and discrimination, matters of agitation and protestation become inevitable weapon of defence by victims of such relations either as individuals or states.

It is on this premise that nations go to war and individuals engage in serious conflicts on socio – economic, psychological, cultural and political course. The above could lead into a struggle of the survival of the fittest tantamount to what Hobbesian state of nature connotes as “lives become brutish, short and nasty “as a result of deprivation and manipulation of principles of rule of law



and constitutionality in governing human affairs which often leads to conflicts and eventual violence when such situation is not properly addressed or beyond amenable.

Therefore, violence manifests in different forms as man is intricately in possession of natural instincts that define and bound his actions and response to issues when they occur. It is the situation that appeals to the instincts that will determine which one to be released. Consequently, violence is not a new phenomenon as it is as old as humanity itself. This is because human beings are gregarious, cantankerous and in possession of both good and evil tendencies either to cuddle or swindle others when negotiations fail, making violence inevitable. Besides, violence as enunciated being an old phenomenon like humanity is not peculiar to Africa nay Nigeria. However, the increasing trends of violence among countries in the continent of Africa in the recent time calls for interrogation and deeper insight given the patterns and dimensions it has taken in the modern time.

In a nutshell, violence in these countries comes with morbid fear in the minds of law abiding population particularly youths as to what the future truly hold for them. Hence, it is the fight for the future that has mostly necessitated the need for violence as anchored by youths in Africa.

Tangentially, the recourse and origin of such pattern and nature of violence in Africa as Fanon submitted deserves a deep insight. According to him, violence is a phenomenon fuelled in Africa by colonial violence.¹ Fanon demonstrated further in his scholarly submission how an average African man becomes endeared to violence. According to him: Firstly, the colonised people manifest the aggressiveness which has been deposited in their bones against their own people. Secondly, the colonized person's confrontation with the colonial order placed him /her in a permanent state of tension. Thirdly, Fanon alluded that the colonized native was an oppressed person who's permanent – dream is to become the prosecutor.²



Flowing from the above, it can be deduced that youth violence is one of the visible and active aspects of the overall violence inherited from the European colonial masters who ruled African countries with their whims and caprices enshrined in policy of divide and rule. Again, most of those at the helm of affairs in the newly independent states of Africa have not ruled or governed their people as expected in difference from the colonial order. This is in negation of what restoration of democratic system of Governments connote. Noticeably, the spate of violence in Africa and global demographic patterns since the 1990s has made Africa and its youth at the centre of global debates on youth populations and violence.³

Arising from the above, it becomes clearly understood that the occurrence of violence in different manifestations represented by youths across Nigeria are premeditated on their perceived deprivations, conditions and marginalization by elites who are at the helms of affairs of their countries. According to Ezemenaka “the combination of the process of violence created by social groups, economic systems and political structures threatens human security at every step”.⁴ Consequently, violence among the youth in place like Nigeria have become means of engagement and participation in the system that excludes them, using differing measures so far their marginalization, bad conditions and deprivations ranges on.

It is on this premise that some scholars have argued that youth engaged in diverse forms of violence as a revolt against deprivation. In a nutshell, youths often express their identity and dislikes to the socio – economic and insecurity situations through a rich interplay of ideas about power and marginalization most time through violent strategies to seek accountability from the profiteers. The aim of this study therefore, is to assess the contributory role of elites in youth violence in Nigeria. This is sequel to the rise of violence in the recent time as being reported



across the streets, towns, villages and country despite the promissory note of democracy in Nigeria.

The questions that are imperative to ask are: Why are the Nigerian youths associated with violence? What are the implications on national development? Why has violence become rampant in the recent time? What are the implications of violence on youths? Finally, what are the best strategies to addressing violence pronging the Nigerian state? Providing answers to the above questions may help perhaps to connect the supposedly role of the elites in the overall conditions that fuel violence daily in the recent time. This work is therefore undertaken to give a better insight on the role of elites in the perpetration of violence. This becomes necessary as many scholars have dwelt so much on other conditions that fuel violence with little paying credence to the influential role of elites in the overall polity of the country.

To achieve the goal of the paper, it is divided into different but interrelated sections. Section one deals with the introduction, conception of youths, elites and violence. Section two centres on the literature review .The section three traces origin of violence in the Nigerian state. Section four assesses the motivating factors particularly the elite' role as the cause of violence. Section five identify impacts and pathways towards addressing the conditions of violence in Nigeria. Finally, section six concludes the work and gives recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Youth

The meaning ascribe to youth differs as more of often than not based on several variables adopted by different scholars. Hence, the attempt to conceptualize youth is often view from the prism of diverse scholars. According to Bello, youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness as members of a



community.⁵ The United Nations defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 with all UN statistics.⁶ While agreeing with the above submissions, youth is best understood from the position of their strengths, potentials, innovations and creativities which when well appropriated would bring development to their countries and when neglected would spell doom to the economy and brings social disruptions. In other words, when the youths divert their strengths into something inimical to the growth of a country such as violence, the results may become unpalatable.

Violence: Violence is difficult to ascribe a precise or universally accepted meaning. In the view of Anifowose, violence connotes an illegal and illegitimate acts exhibited by non – government individual and groups.⁷ It is considered an unlawful use or threat of force⁸. Again, violence could take different forms of manifestation: it could be socio-economical, psychological, sectarian, and even political.⁹ Violence is considered as an outburst of bottled neck anger which when unleash may result in uncontrollable destructions of human lives and properties. However, out of the forms of violence, politically induced violence seems to be popular.

Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness implies a situation of agitations driven by issues of deprivation, marginalization and grievances which are mostly led by the youths of a country. It can also be a sincere agitations embark upon by the youths to drive home their rightful desires or materials under contestation or denials by the government, political class or highly placed individuals. According to Elegbeleye, it is a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce the desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths.¹⁰ It therefore mean that violence or restiveness are contestations driven by perceived social exclusion, dissatisfaction and unacceptable activities perpetrated by those at the helm of affairs. While violence and restiveness



may take different course, both are often intertwined and mostly driven by the desire to correct mixed feelings about youth's progress and development. .

Elites

Elites are the ruling class who resonate and dominate the helms of affairs of every country. They are considered as persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.¹¹ Additionally, political elites given their vantage position can effect political, social and economic change in modern societies particularly in developing countries like Africa where institutions are weak. To this end, Vergara seems to have captured the totality of what an elites stand for when he said they supervise the management of government in all manifestations of political power, an act according to him that has undermined effectiveness of the institutional reforms as they persist and reproduce their powers both in political and economic parlance. The elites are also considered as socially superior part of society; a group of persons who by virtue of position or education, exercise much power or influence. It is therefore obvious that economic sabotage of the elites are threats to the collective well – being of the people and could motivate or drive rural banditry in most of the Nigeria's rural communities where there are bottled neck grievances with opportunities for criminals activities.

Literatures on Youth Restiveness and Network of Violence

Ukeje and Iwilade have contended that youth violence is in diverse ways an expression of youth anger in the context of a social and economic system that tends to preclude them.¹² In the work of Tenuche Marietu, *Youth Restiveness and Violence in Nigeria: A Case Study of Youth Unrest in Ebiraland*, alludes that youth in Nigeria are more often in the vanguard of violent conflicts occurring in different parts of the country. The authors



affirms that the abrogation traditional authority of the clans as an instrument of social change contributed tremendously to the reoccurrence of violence. He submits that the main cause of violence in Ebiraland is disconnection in governance process arising from the political structure introduced by colonial rule.¹³ However, the focus of this paper was on youth violence in Ebiraland and discussion of several factors that have possibly responsible for that. In this current study efforts would be made to interrogate the possible connivance of elites in such violence. Similarly, in the work of David and Manu entitled “Democracy, Youth and Violent Conflicts in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic: A Critical Analysis, submits that violent conflicts have remained a characteristic feature of Nigeria’s polity since the restoration of democracy in May 1999. The authors further discuss various manifestations of conflict ranging from ethno –religious, inter –communal, post –election violence and many others.

In the paper, the author argue that Nigeria is a conflict prone society as no geopolitical zone is immune while the youth remain the precursors of over 90% of these violent conflicts and at the same time constituted about 70 % of the population. In their findings, the authors reveal that over 60% of youth lack access to employment and development opportunities will result to the manifestation of violence as a tool to fight their denial. According to them, what makes Nigeria’s case a source of concern is that every – geo – political zone is characterized by entrenched structure of violent conflicts and youths are seen as the principal driving infrastructure and ironically, youth constitute about 70% of Nigeria’s population.¹⁴This work is quite relevant to this current study in so many ways as the subject of discuss still centre on youth. However, while these authors centre their discussion on general causes of youth conflict violence, this current work tends to look at the contributory role of the elite in the network of violence perpetrated by youth population.



Furthermore, in the work of Suleiman, M.A titled “Social exclusion, restiveness and youth violence, attempts was made to assess youth restiveness with specific examples from socially excluded communities across the nation and the challenges it brings to the socio – political and economic system cum the willing foreign investors. The author identifies some youth gangs such as the Yandaba in Kano state, Area boys in Lagos, Kauraye in Katsina, and of course the Niger Delta militants, the Mosob in the east and others across the country.¹⁵ The author argues that when socially excluded youths cannot depend on those institutions designed to protect them, violence becomes an instrument to achieve certain outcomes such as justice, security and economic gains. Although, this paper maybe useful as the thought of the scholar is similar to the focus of the present study, however, efforts will be made to interrogate issues of youth violence deeply more from the angle of the elitist cause than from so many issues raised by the scholar.

Ezeugo, Anthonia E. in her work titled “Failed Leadership Obligations as Praxis: Dramaturgical Perspectives, depicts the nature of leadership in Nigeria. In the assessment of this scholar, the characters of the playwrights are dramatically portrayed in their failure to accomplish required obligations to the proletariat. He affirms that Africa leaders lack sense of fairness, honesty, and justice.¹⁶ As the playwright discerns, there is no difference between literary leaders and politicians who steal ballot papers and rig elections in their bid to remain on top. Ezeugo alludes that in the spheres of life, there are class struggle, exploitation and failed obligation. This work is very useful as the author’s choice of words, focus and theory will help to deepen and sharpen the current paper. While the paper adopts dramatic personae to portray the nature of leadership in Africa nay Nigeria, this present paper interrogate how the positional status of elite has contributed to network of violence anchored by youths.



Ezemenaka K. Emeka in his work titled “Youth Violence and Human Security in Nigeria” observes that the failures of governance and statehood have encouraged the anarchical behaviour breeding the youth violence in Nigeria.¹⁷ According to him, the disruptive state systems and structures that do not guarantee human security threatens the fabric of the nation. Ezemenaka adopts a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative data with theory of relative deprivation to underpin his analysis. In his findings, cultism and ethnic factors were identified as the major drivers of youth violence. The author advocates for effective institution, quality education, economic and security to address youth violence in Nigeria. However, despite the relevance of this work, there are some points of departures. Firstly, in this present study, the research method intends to adopt is qualitative research. Violence as used in this present study will be defined. Also, efforts will be made to interrogate the role of elite in youth violence beyond cultism and ethnic factors.

Ifeanyichukwu, O in his work titled “Political Violence and its socio – economic consequences on the development of Bayelsa State” identifies how desperation and the quest to capture power among politicians as the major factor fueling violent behaviours.¹⁸ He further maintains that violence jeopardises development, social integration, robs people of their psychological and emotional stability and stifles socio – economic development. While this material is relevant to this study, since the area of study is Balyesa State, there is need to replicate similar study in Nigeria as a whole. Consequently, this present study will look into violent as peculiar to the Nigerian State from the prism of youths and connect the possible role of the elites.



Violence and the Nigerian State: A Historical Trajectory

Violence in whatever forms is not a recent phenomenon. Human beings right from time immemorial possess the tendencies to swindle, and manipulate others through inordinate ambitions to corner resources and power to himself or herself at the detriment of others. The basis of social contract as propounded by a scholar like Thomas Hobbes is absolutely to taming the ego and monster in a man to avoid undue recourse to human nature in man from overriding collective benefits of all humans. Hence, violence is as old as humanity itself.

Violence and youth restiveness is as old as Nigeria itself. Nigerian politics for a long time, has always been characterized by violence even during the colonial era when state repression was certain. The Aba women's riot 1929, the general strike of 1945, the Enugu Colliery Strike of 1949 and Kano riots of 1953 all formed important political violence recorded in pre – independence Nigeria.¹⁹ In fact, the electioneering campaigns that ushered in Nigeria's independence witnessed enormous political violence. Therefore, since independence, violence has remained part and parcel of the culture of the people. It was political violence in the then Western Region of Nigeria that contributed to the military coup of 1966.²⁰ In 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003 2007, 2011 general elections were marred by violence.²¹ Similarly, 2015, 2019 and 2023 were elections periods marred by one violence or the others. The participants in all the violence are both the politicians and non-politicians.

The carriers of this plague are (were) usually youths who are strong and perhaps have no stake in the political business of the state.²² Violence has become part of the political culture in Nigeria such that all elections since independence (Nigeria has conducted six general elections since independence in 1960, the elections were held in 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007) are virtually violence ridden. All of these elections were substantially marred by various types of violence associated with



party politics and conduct of elections. The most troubling aspect of this issue is that youths (the future leaders' of the nations) are the main perpetrators and at the same time the victims of electoral violence. At the end, the nation is negatively in for it.²³

The social and economic conditions of the youths include unemployment, poverty, lack of good education and institutional structures, lack of access to modern facilities that make life worth-living. Curiously, politics was meant to serve the people but these youths become disconnected and helpless, and when connected negatively or thinly connected, they become pawns and willing tools in the hands of political power-seeking people. Beyond political violence, there have been several violence induced by socio – economic and religious conditions of the state. The palpable tension that greeted the struggles in the Niger Delta leading to the assemblage of youths into different militia groups, agitating against their deprivations and marginalization in the exploration of the by the Federal Governments and other stakeholders in the oil rich region ofcourse explained better youths restiveness. In response to perceived injustice, the people of the Niger Delta have employed various ways ranging from dialogue, propaganda and lately violence in form of hostage taking, kidnapping of oil multinational workers and pipeline vandalism which led to the Federal Government Declaration of Amnesty for the militants in 2009.²⁴

Although, no nation is violent free but the ravaging nature of youth restiveness and violence in the recent time in Nigeria has impacted negatively on the psyche and indicted the states as the driver of youths agonies and biting socio –economic conditions. The protest of Endsars in November 2020 that resulted into catastrophic violence leading to burning of several police stations and killings of many police officers has adequately explained the pattern and dimension of violence in the modern time in Nigeria. Besides, it has revealed strengths, moral decadence and what



youths of the country are capable to do when their huge skills are not appropriated into a good course.

Role of Elite as Motivating Factor for Youth Violence in Nigeria

There are many factors fueling violence and again violence manifests in different forms. Some scholars have argued that violence either political, economic or socially induced is a reflection of increasing power asymmetries, a backlash against human rights, democratic principles and multilateral governance, decreasing citizen trust and eroding state legitimacy resulting into an unprecedented level of protests and violent conflicts.²⁵ Political violence in Nigeria pivots on struggles between on the one hand, a hugely rich local capitalist elite allied with transnational corporate partners that dominate global accumulation and, on the other hand, a subaltern impoverished majority living largely within non-capitalist and petty commodity production relations.²⁶

Political inequalities and power asymmetries drive and are driven by social and economic inequalities, as elites accumulate influence and power to preserve and perpetuate a system that benefits the few at the expense of the many.²⁷ Ogen has succinctly demonstrated the overbearing and domineering influence and resultant effects elites have in the economy development of a country. According to him, there are several instances where a country's total national income is increasing but very little or none of it finds way into the hands of the poor segment of the population due to the fact that the lion share has been appropriated by the ruling class and its associates thus leading to grossly inadequate expenditures on education, public, health, housing and family welfare in most developing countries.²⁸ This is a more than challenging context for realizing progressive change and has particularly devastating impacts for vulnerable groups such as the youth. It is on this note that this paper intends



to assess the elite based on the following prism as the motivating factor for youth violence in Nigeria.

Character of Elites: The character of elites in African countries are not different from the colonial masters they drove out from the shore of their countries as leaders hardly treat the citizens as subjects. This is inform by the perception of politics as the gateway of success and end all for the current holders of high public office has remained the attitudes responsible for the insecurity in the North.²⁹The godfatherism syndrome of the elites have rubbished the essence of meritocracy in recruitment processes, increases rigging of elections and sustains unwholesome deviations from the known democratic principles. Thus, the character of elites in Africa and Nigeria in particular is one that pays lip service to accountability so far it benefits them, it is one that favours mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy and one that perpetually seeks power no matter the faulty processes it may involve.

Weak Political Institutions: In realizing the positive and negative implications of increase youth population, the Nigerian state over the years put in place several institutional, policy and legal frameworks to ensure youth are knitted and well integrated into the national development. However, many of these institutions only exist in names with little or nothing to show for their mandates. Institutions established for youth empowerment, orientation and development receive annual budgeting but hardly are their impacts commensurate with youth needs. Besides, the institutions are run based on the whims and caprices of the elites either in the economy or political parlance. The overall implication is that these institutions that ought to be measure of control are being used to ferry resources meant for the entire country since they are weak.

Weak Human Capital Development: One of the core fundamentals of democracy is human capital development. This explains why countries in Americas, Europe and Asia are paying



more attention to university education and other programmes targeted at development of their citizenry. On the contrary, African countries' elites are rather keen in pursuit of political positions and primitive accumulation while only paying lip services to university education.³⁰ The incessant ASUU strike in Nigeria and continuous surge of brain drain of lecturers, medical doctors and nurses better explains the disposition towards sustainable human capital development. Youths are roaming about in the streets for lack of jobs and skills and those with skills do not have the enabling environment to actualizing what they learnt.

Politics of Ethnic Marginalization: The drive for indoctrination, emphasizing on identity politics as a political instrument aim at achieving a political goal has remained a reoccurring decimal. This has undoubtedly amplifies the inherent ethno – religious fault – line, gives rise to youth violence.³¹ It is nothing than a subtle way of sustaining the colonial policy of divide and rule. Sequel to this, many unsuspecting youth have engaged in various ethnic and religious clashes on self-interests of a political gladiators rather than the interest of the entire ethnic groups. The elites are quick to use the ethnic divides as a tool to appropriate resources for personal development rather than national development. This has kept the country at a low ebb of development.

Poverty and Unemployment: The enormity of the crises emanated from macroeconomic challenges in the areas of high unemployment rate, high inflation rate, inconsistency of economic policies, poverty and political instability are alarming. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2019 alluded in their Report that poverty and inequality in Nigeria shows that two out of every Nigerians are living below the poverty line. Furthermore, between Q 4 2020 and Q1 2021, the Nigerian unemployment rate hit an all –time high of about 33.3% from the earlier record of 27.1% in 2020. In a nutshell, it is estimated that



the number of unemployed Nigerians is currently at 23,187,389 based on the labour force report published by NBS in March 2021³². The rapid decrease in the number of available jobs and increase in the number of job seekers captures the ugly situation better. Living in poverty increases the likelihood of criminal behaviour and consequently lead to restive situation and condition of poor national security.³³ It is based on the above notion that many scholars agreed that the present insecurity threats facing the country cannot be divorced from the situation of neglect facing the youth.

State of the Economy: Economy is the life wire of any nations and it can only thrive under a peaceful atmosphere. Man is central to the economy and economy is a key in a national security. Therefore, national security is intricately linked with human security. Consequently, the major stumbling block to the implementation of many macroeconomic policies in the developing and low – income economies has been the absence of the political will embedded within the leadership structure. The state of the economy of Nigeria today is nothing but a reflection of bad governance, wastefulness of resources during election, inflation of budgeting and misappropriation of public funds for personal ventures. As a result of the above, couple with blurred vision, pandemic outbreak, and Nigeria economy today to say the least is in doldrums. It is hoped that the momentum of reforms started by the new administration under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will be sustained.

Implications of Youth Violence in Nigeria

Beyond refutation, violence and restiveness are barriers with varying implications for both the country and youths. This is why most developed countries do put in place early action mechanisms to address conditions that may encourage violence. This is why scholars like Lasswell, Kaplan, Zoltschan and Crozier all agreed that the discrepancy between a consciously or unconsciously derived or expected state of affairs and the actual



situation results to an attack on the frustrating agent (the ruling class) in form of revolution. According to Marietu, aggression and violence among the youth is the result of some gaps in their felt needs that are not filled overtime.³⁴ In Nigeria, these needs are numerous ranging from unemployment, under – employment, poverty among others. All these are caused by the failure to adhere strictly to institutional cultures, intolerance of constitutional acts, dissonance to principle of equity, justice and democratic principles and above all weak human development that have robbed the country the opportunities to build a saner environment to attract investors. Besides, it has denied the country the opportunities to appropriate potentials and ingenuities of her youth which are needed for enhanced national development.

The above challenges have undoubtedly fueled insecurity, crime and disturbances as witnessed in the recent times across the country as youth strengths have been divested or streamlined into what will grant them survival in the midst of squalor and obvious deprivation. According to Inokoba & Maliki, youthful age is a delicate phase in human development as the time offers when future choices are to be made.³⁵ Consequently, once their potentials, strengths and innovativeness is not tapped, they divert them to negative and criminal tendencies. This is particular dangerous when the said youths are educated in which we have several numbers of them roaming the streets looking for their daily survival. The ravaging trends of the banditry, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency and host of other criminal activities in the Northern part of the country cannot be divested from sheer several years of neglect of youths of the region.

A youthful population comes with strength, innovativeness and freshness that could be channeled into a dividend for economic and social transformation with the right investment or explode into violent conflict with devastating impact on food security, nutrition and low investment where neglected. Consequently,



where the youths are deprived of the needed enabling environment, empowerment and orientation, they unleash threats as the most volatile, complex, unpredictable, dynamic as well as the vulnerable segment of the population.

It is on this premise that violence is prevalent in streets, towns, communities mostly have youth as the potent mix. This is however strengthened in the recent time by the prevalence of social media which has to a large extent shattered the country's culture of deference. For instance the endsars protest staged by the Nigerian youth against the brutality of SARs explains this better. The overall implication of the above is that violent has led to deaths of many youth. It has jeopardized or sabotaged the economic wire of the country in terms of grounding business, destruction of national monuments and infrastructures. Above all, it has rubbished the peace and stability needed for enhanced national development.

Breaking the Barriers of Youth Violence in Nigeria: Appropriating Strategic Options

Globally, there is a growing consciousness and acceptance of the need to strengthen policies that would ensure that youth are well integrated into national hub of development given their strategic implications in economic development of a nation. Beyond the intellectual and multilateral interventions, the government should align and evolve policies that will mainstream youth into politics and decision making process in Nigeria. This is necessary to decimate violence among youth in Nigeria. Besides, some of these strategic options identified below should be strictly followed to the letter.

Re –Invention of Value Systems: There is need to helping youth to recreating culture of decency, justice, hardworking and commitments. The syndrome of getting rich quick is not only the order of the day in the society but rather it has distorted cultural fabrics of the nation. Some youths have been radicalized and



socialized against the ethical conduct and cultural demands of the society. There is need for value re –orientation on the part of the youths that it is not necessary to destroy the fabrics and edifices of a nation before you develop it. There should be other means to engage those who they perceived are corrupt and destroying the economy of the country rather than destroying national monuments and edifices built by fore fathers.

Principle of Justice and Equity: Human rights values, social justice, equity, fairness and gender equality should be prioritized for young minds to reach their potentials. Nothing promotes violence faster than injustice, abuse of rights and unfair practices. Therefore, elites in the country should endeavour to live a life of justice, equity and fairness worthy of emulation.

Quality and Affordable Education: Education kills ignorance. It takes education to address the challenges of youth that have wrongly socialized and radicalized to join groups they know little or nothing about. In most cases it is such category of people that are always at the forefront of violence. The educational system is faulty as it is still crafted based on the old colonial curriculum. Thus, rather than providing job creators, is till promoting job seekers. Therefore, there is need for the government to invest in skills driven education in different levels of education of youth to develop sets of skills that truly solve real problems in reality to modern conditions.

Provision of Employment: Effective strategies need to be put in place to address the inherent weaknesses in the socio-economic fuelling unemployment. This is necessary as the quality of economic growth is critical to job creation. There is need to bridging the infrastructure deficit, electricity challenges and insecurity to create the enabling environment for investments. Today, insecurity threats has driven many investors away from the country resulting millions loss of jobs and the implications are duly felt in the quest for national stability.



Empowerment: In a bid to achieve national development, youth as the heartbeat of the nation should be allowed the opportunities to undergo genuine empowerment as several ones that exist are not genuinely implemented in a way that can change the. It is true that past and present governments have invested so much in social investment programmes such as N-Power, Conditional Cash Transfer, Trader moni, Farmer moni and many others. However, apart from corruption, these programmes are too skeletal to address the youth challenges. It is therefore necessary for the government at all levels to make comprehensive empowerment programmes across different categories of youth to discourage any forms of violence.

Leadership: The essence of a leader is to effect a positive change in governance and ensure constitutional convergence. A leader in authority must ensure strict adherence to Responsibility to Protect (RTP) and be ready to broaden it. He or she must understand the nexus between peace, security and development. While African countries are filled with bad leaders, good ones are also finding it difficult to succeed because of the nature of followership. There is need to change the narrative of choosing leaders without recruitment processes as leadership entails passing through rudiments, procedures and institutions to firmly grasp the act of governance. Therefore, there is need for leaders that will understand the centrality of youth in an economy and national development and taking steps to prioritize them in policies and plan.

Population Control: Population explosion due to lack of birth and migration controls have overwhelming negative effects on the economy with excess liquidity of people. To say Nigeria is overwhelmed by its population is nothing but the truth. Invariably, such population has brought strains into the available resources and infused strengths into crimes. In China after discovered possible implications of their humongous population, they quickly enact a policy. There is urgent need to appropriate a



policy to decimate the growing population that the country does not have the resources to cater for. Population is an asset when readily planned for and becomes otherwise when is not.

Human Capital Development: Human capital is the stock of knowledge, therefore any nations that need development must invest heavily on their citizens particularly the youth. The human capital development in Nigeria is very low while those that are even developed have left in millions in the growing brain drain surge. There is need to set priorities right in the quest of genuine human capital development. It is not the best to build human capital for developed nations and be left in shambles due to brain drain of the most skillful, vibrant and energetic population needed for the economy.

Building Strong Institutions: Institutions are built by men of value and where they are strong to work effectively, they checkmate excesses of men in power and the general citizenry without any forms of biases or corruption. Therefore, Nigerian Government can do better in revamping existing or creating workable and results driven institutions that can help in the delivery of youth's needs. Today corruption has become a totem of honour which has robbed institutions of their essences. There must be a strong desire to build institutions and allow them to work efficaciously without undue interventions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, discouraging the prevalence of violence in society is attainable so far the youth are well knitted in the politics and decisions that marginalize them. Youths are the heartbeat of every nation and as a result requires highest level of good governance for them to realize their goals and full potentials. Anything short of this, will only endanger the development and cause disruption of the country socially and politically. It is on this premise that this paper made a broad and bold attempt in interrogating how far the elite' role have contributed to youth



violence in the country. Findings have therefore shown that the biting socio-economic conditions that deprived the youth the opportunities of realizing their potentials are created by a few privileged individuals from their vantage positions. Consequently, violence and youth restiveness is understood as a reprisal and bottled neck grievances to express their identity and cope with their socio-economic and insecurity challenges sustained by elites they perceive as profiteers. Thus, it is an interplay to display a rich idea about power through violent strategies to seek accountability and participation. There is no way one will beat a child and expects him or her not to cry. The violent that greeted the *Endsars* saga has despicably revealed what the strength of youths could mean for a country if not streamlined into productive ventures. Therefore, to curb violence behaviours and rising youth restiveness, there is urgent need to change the narratives of poverty, unemployment, culture of nepotism and above socio-economic challenges that have thrown many youths into penury. The youths therefore need to be reoriented by parents and every stakeholder that development does not come ex nihilo but through the honest contributions of all. Hence, the need for them to be patriotic and shun bad acts capable of undermining the future of generations to come. It is by doing all these that a saner and a safer economy and conducive atmosphere can be built for all.



Endnotes

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