Criminal Gangs in Urban Areas: A Threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

Criminal gangs have been the major issue that confronts democratic governance. These gangs have been considered as a source of violence and insecurity at the urban areas and the society at large. For any meaningful development to take place, the society must be crime free. This will pave way for development. Many urban cities are turned into cities of criminal gangs where people are afraid of carrying out their legitimate functions based on the activities of these hoodlums. The insecurity posed by these groups of people make the Urban cites unsafe, as their activities have reached unpreceded levels in many cities in the developing word. Today more than 50% of the world population lives in the cities, and developing countries account for over 90%. This research work has adopted role theory as its theoretical framework in addressing this issue.
Keywords: Criminal gangs and Democratic governance

INTRODUCTION

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

Estimates on the rate of urbanization in Nigeria showed that the proportion of the Nigerian populations living in urban areas increased from 11 percent in 1952 to 31 percent in 1985 and 46 percent in 2002, respectively (Ogun, 2010). It can be deduced from the abovementioned estimates that the crisis of urban violence could affect over 50 percent of the Nigerian populations. As shown in a report from the World Bank (2011), Nigeria's population has increased from 140 million people in 2006 to 154.7 million people in 2011 but its major problems include inadequate infrastructure, corruption and policy instability. Virtually all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria have experienced rapid urbanization due to high rate of population growth in the country. Lacey (1985) recognized the rapid urbanization across different Nigeria's regions, including Aba, Benin, Enugu, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Sapele and Warri in south-eastern Nigeria; Jos, Kaduna, Kano and Zaria in northern Nigeria; and Ibadan and Lagos in south-western Nigeria.

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

There are several studies in this area of research, especially from Western perspectives (Goldmann *et al*, 2011; Grubesic, Mack and Kaylen, 2011; Moran, 2011; Simpson and Arinde, 2011; Spano and Bolland, 2011; Steenbeck and Hipp, 2011; Warner and Burchfield, 2011; Harrnoff-Tavel, 2010; Malesevic, 2010; Warner, Beck and Ohmer, 2010; Cockburn, 2008; Kennedy, 2008). Three cases of urban violence were cited by Harroff-Tavel

(2010). The first case is the 2005 French experience of a wave of violent disturbances which beset the Paris suburbs; it eventually spread to 200 cities in France. The second case is the 2008 experience of armed violence among different gangs in Cape Town, South Africa. The third case is the 2010 Brazilian experience of armed violence between drug gangs and police in Rio de Janeiro. Consistent with the Brazilian experience of urban violence, Penglase (2011) mentioned the July 2010 case of Wesley de Andrade, an 11 year-old boy killed by a stray bullet while at school. The death of Andrade led to protests by students on the downtown beach of Copacabana as well as several days of primetime television coverage and the dismissal of the commander of the local police battalion.

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

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

CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATION

Criminal gang, also called street gang or youth gang, a group of persons, usually youths, who share a common identity and who generally engage in criminal behaviour. In contrast to the criminal behaviour of other youths, the activities of gangs are characterized by some level of organization and continuity over time. There is no consensus on the exact definition of a gang, however, and scholars have debated whether the definition should expressly include involvement in crime. Some gangs, but not all, have strong leadership, formalized rules, and extensive use of common identifying symbols. Many gangs associate themselves with a particular geographic area or type of crime, and some use graffiti as a form of nonverbal communication.

Exactly how a criminal gang or street gang is defined has not found a consensus among the most prudent researchers on the topic. For research purposes, a gang definition is extremely important to define, for operational uses, for cross disciplinary work and for comparative analysis. Cities, states and countries all have differing views on what a gang is, and for the prosecution of gang members, the state of California derived the below definition in 1988.

A criminal street gang is defined as any organization, association or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, which (1) has continuity of purpose, (2) seeks a group identity, and (3) has members who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity. (Reference section 186.22(f) of the California Penal Code).

What's unique about the definition above is that it is NOT defining the term "gang" or "street gang" but rather the State is defining "criminal street gang" and then using the same term "criminal" in the definition. The definition is awkwardly written, vague, redundant and offers an extremely simplified view of a gang. Because of this, any youth who participates in a gang can be labeled as a "criminal" regardless of their individual activity or role. Prosecutors have been able to use the flaw in the definition to their benefit by applying gang-related "enhancements" that can transform a simple misdemeanor offense into a felony which carry heavier penalties, including prison time.

In California court, gangs are always called "criminal street gangs" because of the statutory definition and young people who have brief, temporary experiences with gangs, can get the unfortunate situation of getting arrested for an offense that then gets enhance to a gang related offense, regardless of whether or not gangs played any role in the offense. It's extremely prejudicial for a prosecutor to tell a jury that "Johnny" is part of a "criminal street gangs," and it becomes virtually impossible for a gang member to receive a fair trial. One of the first gang definitions was published in Frederic Thrasher's 1927 study of gangs in Chicago in The Gang and in it he defined a gang as:

The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneous, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory

(Thrasher 1927: 57).
   …who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity or control over a particular territory or type of enterprise (Spano 2011).
   …an organization of young people usually between their early teens and early twenties, which has a group name, claims a territory or neighborhood as its own, meets with its members on a regular basis, and has recognizable leadership (UN 1999).
   …group of associating individuals which has an identifiable leadership and organizational structure, either claims a territory in the community, or exercises control over an illegal enterprise; and engages collectively or as individuals in acts of violence or serious criminal behavior (Penglase).
   … Group whose members meet together with some regularity, over time, on the basis of group-defined criteria of membership and group-determined organizational structure, usually with some sense of territoriality (Jim Short 1990),   ...group of individuals with a common ethnic and/or geographic identity that collectively and/or individually regularly engage in a variety of activities, legal or illegal that claim to be the dominant group in their locale, exercising territoriality either fixed or fluid and that engage in at least one rivalry and/or competition with another organization (Alex Alonso 1999).
A gang is a group of people who make money from criminal enterprises, and South King County has its share of gang activity. Common crimes associated with gang activity include auto theft, burglaries, drugs and prostitution. Gang wars also lead to gun violence in public settings. A thread among gang-related activity is that most offenders live outside of the communities where the youth commit their crimes.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The culture of a democratic governance moves beyond the mere procedures of democracy and the establishment of democratic institutions. It involves promoting the sustainability of democracy which includes an enduring capacity for: the separation of powers and independence of the branches of government; the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law; the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and, the transparency and accountability of a responsible civil service, functioning at both the national and local levels.
A state which identifies with the culture of democratic governance is one which welcomes a wide scope of political participation embracing a pluralistic system of political parties, a vibrant civil society and media. Further, strong democratic institutions promote and integrate women and minorities in all levels of the Government and society as a whole. Also, a state which embodies the culture of democratic governance is one which protects the rights and dignity of children. Therefore, the promotion of the culture of democratic governance involves an integrated approach to sustainable governance for and by all the people of Timor-Leste.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The major attempt to understand the cause of criminal gang in urban areas has been a major problem faced scholars over time. Criminal gang in urban area by its nature is naturally beyond any causation. In this research work, we considered the role theory as it framework of analysis
The theoretical perspective that best addresses behavior of this type is role theory (Biddle, 1979, 1986; Heiss, 1981; Turner, 1990). Role theory holds that a substantial proportion of observable, day-to-day social behavior is simply persons carrying out their roles, much as actors carry out their roles on the stage or ballplayers perform theirs on the field.
Propositions in role theory: The following propositions are central to the role theory perspective;
   1. People spend much of their lives participating as members of groups and organizations.
   2. Within these groups, people occupy distinct positions (fullback, advertising executive, police sergeant and the like).
   3. Each of these positions entails a role, which is a set of functions performed by the person for the group. A person's role is defined by expectations (held by other group members) that specify how he or she should perform.
   4. Groups often formalize these expectations as norms, which are rules specifying how a person should behave, what rewards will result for performance and what punishment will result for non-performance.
   5. Individuals usually carry out their roles and perform in accordance with the prevailing norms. In other words, people are primarily conformists; they try to meet expectations held by others.
   6. Group members check each individual's performance to determine whether it conforms to the group's norms. If an individual meets the role expectations held by others, then he or she will receive rewards in some form (acceptance, approval, money and so on). If he or she fails to perform as expected, however, then group members may embarrass, punish or even expel that individual from the group. The anticipation that others will apply sanctions ensures performance as expected.

IMPACT OF ROLE THEORY

Role theory implies that if we (as analysts) have information about the role expectations for a specified position,

we can then predict a significant portion of the behavior of the person occupying that position. According to role theory, to change a person's behavior, it is necessary to change or redefine his or her role. This might be done by changing the roles expectations held by others with respect to that person or by shifting that person into an entirely different role (Allen &Van de Vliert, 1982). For example, if the football coach shifted Craig from fullback to tight end, Craig's behavior would change to match the role demands of his new position. Craig himself may experience some strain while adjusting to the new role, but hi behavior will change.

Role theory maintains that a person's role determines not only behavior but also beliefs and attitudes. In other words, individuals bring their attitudes into congruence with the expectations that defines their roles. A change in role should lead to a change in attitude. One illustration of this effect appears in classic study of factory workers by Lieberman (1965). In the initial stage of this study, researchers measured the attitudes of workers toward union and management policies in a mid western home appliance factory. During the following year, a number of these workers changed roles. Some were promoted to the position of foreman, a managerial role; others were elected to the position of shop steward, a union role.

About a year after the initial measurement, the workers' attitudes were reassessed. The attitudes of workers who had become foremen or shop stewards were compared to those of the workers who had not changed roles. The recently promoted foremen expressed more positive attitudes than the non-changers towards the company's management and the company's incentive system, which paid workers in proportion to what they produced. In contrast, the recently elected shop stewards expressed more positive attitudes than the non-changers towards the union and favoured incentive system based on seniority, not productivity. The most efficient explanation of these results is that the workers' attitudes shifted to fit their new roles, as predicted by the. In general, the roles that people occupy not only channel their behavior but also shape their attitudes. Roles can influence the values that people hold and affect the direction of their personal growth and development.

Limitations of Role Theory

Despite its usefulness, role theory has difficulty explaining certain kinds of social behavior. Foremost among these is deviant behavior, which is any behavior that violates or contravenes the norms defining a given role. Most forms of deviant behavior, whether simply a refusal to perform as expected or something more serious like the commission of a crime, disrupt interpersonal relations. Deviant behavior poses a challenge to role theory because it contradicts the assumption that people are essentially conformist – deviant behavior violates the demands of roles. Of course, a certain amount of deviant behavior can be explained by the fact that people are sometimes ignorant of norms. Deviance may also result whenever people face conflicting or incompatible expectations from several other people (Mile, 1977). In general, however, deviant behavior is an unexplained and problematic exception from the standpoint of role theory. Even critics of the role theory acknowledge that a substantial portion of all social behavior can be explained as conformity to established role expectations. But role theory does not and cannot explain how role expectations came to be what they are in the first place. Nor does it explain when and how role expectations change. Without accomplishing these tasks, role theory can provide only a partial explanation of social behavior.

Dimensions of Urban Violence in Nigeria

It is widely acceptable that an urban area is a relatively large and dense permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous peoples (Perchonock, 1994). This description shows some features with far-reaching implications for urban violence and its escalation. In his description of violence and humanitarian actions in urban areas, Harroff-Tavel (2010) distinguished urban violence from violence that is purely criminal. He mentioned different forms of urban violence including social and political uprising, hunger riots, identity-based violence among ethnic or religious groups, clashes between territorial gangs, terrorism and acts of xenophobic violence directed against migrants. However, urban violence has intertwined with different forms of violence in urban areas. This situation was described by Harroff-Tavel (2010: 347): Armed urban violence between groups that are generally considered as criminal (drug dealers, territorial gangs, mafia-type groups, etc.), or between those groups and government forces or private militias, raises some complex legal (and political) problems. This is particularly the case when that fighting is between groups engaged in a collective confrontation of major intensity, which testifies to a high degree of organization.

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

Different waves of urban violence have occurred in Nigeria since the advent of colonialism by the British government. Resistance to colonialism in the Nigerian cities constitutes the bedrock of urban violence exemplified with different records of mass unrest and riots including the 1929 riots in Aba, the 1945 general

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

The major causes of the war include ethnic rivalry, corruption, political instability and agitation for resource control. The end of the war laid the foundation for the emergence of a new social class who made huge profits from supplying arms and ammunition to warriors in violence-prone areas (Bamgbose, 2009; Odoemene, 2008; Erinosho, 2007; Obi, 2006; Adejumobi, 2005). Some vicissitudes of urban violence in Nigeria between 1960 and 1998 have been summarized by Falola (1998). His views are highlighted as follows: When the country won its independence in 1960, the most destabilizing factor was ethnicity […] the 1993 election of a civilian president was complicated by conflicts between Muslim and Christian candidates […] But the most notable crisis occurred in 1978 in Zaria […] In 1980, the Maitatsine crisis claimed thousands of lives […] On the last day of October 1982, eight large churches were burned in the prominent city of Kano[…] A major riot in Kaduna that same year claimed at least four hundred lives. In 1984, violence sparked by Muslims in Yola and Jimeta killed approximately seven hundred people (including policemen) and left nearly six thousand people homeless […] At Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, Palm Sunday turned disastrous as Christians clashed with Muslims, leading to the destruction of three churches. In the south, at the University of Ibadan, Muslims set fire to a sculpture of Jesus in front of the Chapel of Resurrection […] In 1991, the religious crisis in Bauchi state reached the breaking point, leading to numerous deaths and massive destruction. In the same year, Kano and Katsina witnessed a series of riots. In 1992, large-scale violence returned to Kaduna state, with severe clashes in Zangon-Kataf, Kaduna, and Zaria […] In May and June 1995, a new crisis erupted in Kano […]. In May 1996, eight people lost their lives when the police clashed with a group of Muslim students. (Falola, 1998: 2-4)

About 50 episodes of urban violence, which culminated in the death of over 10,000 persons and internal displacement of over 300, 000 people, were recorded in Nigeria between 1999 and 2003 (USAID, 2005). Over 51,000 people were displaced during the 2006 religious violence in northern Nigeria (IRIN News, 2006). Estimates on the 2007 violence in northern Nigeria showed that 29 persons died; 12 churches were destroyed; 90 people were injured, and 3,500 people were displaced (US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2008). More recently, violent clashes involving various militant groups and the Nigerian government's Joint Task Force (JTF) escalated between 2004 and 2009. It was reported that militant activities resulted in over 92 attacks on oil companies in 2008, and as a result, over 1,000 people were killed, and crude oil exports declined to 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in March 2009, down from 2.6 million bpd in 2006 (International Crisis Group, 2009). The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) declared an "oil war" which led to repeated attacks on oil companies and death of several people in the Niger Delta cities including Warri, Yenagoa and Port Harcourt. The MEND later declared a unilateral ceasefire but revoked it on 30 January 2009, following the JTF"s attack on the camps of some militants. In reprisal, militants attacked a civilian helicopter in the Niger Delta on 25 February 2009 through a General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), which seriously wounded at least one passenger and forced the local Aero Contractor-operated Sikorsky to make an emergency landing (International Crisis Group, 2009). Another fresh violent conflict erupted in Jos from 28 to 29 November 2008; this resulted in the death of over 700 persons and destruction of properties worth millions of naira. In July 2009, over 600 deaths were recorded in a series of attacks associated with "Boko Haram" violence in Bauchi and its environs (Adinoyi, 2009; Balogun, 2009; Eya, 2009). Most of the cases of urban violence in Nigeria can be attributed to crisis of governance, given different perspectives on the issue. Urban violence has become pronounced in different cities in each of the six geo political zones in Nigeria. Specific instances of urban violence in northern Nigeria include ethno-religious violence in Kano, Kaduna, Zaria and Maiduguri. The instances of urban violence in northern Nigeria were buttressed by Adesoji (2010: 97) with the following examples: These include the Kano metropolitan riot of October 1982, the Ilorin riot of March 1986 […] the Kafanchan/Kaduna/Zaria/ Funtua religious riots of March 1987, the Kaduna Polytechnic riot of March 1988, the acrimonious, nationwide debate on Sharia (Islamic law) at the Constituent Assembly in October/November 1988, the Bayero University crisis of 1989, the Bauchi/Katsina riots of March/April 1991, the Kano riot of October 1991, the Zangon-Kataf riot of May 1992, the Kano civil disturbance of December 1991.

Focusing on the waves of urban violence in central Nigeria, Kendhammer (2010) observed that Jos has become the site of repeated deadly ethnic riots since the democratic transition in 1999. The riots in Jos resulted in the deaths of 3000 people between 2001, 2004 and even 2013; such riots have been described as religious, ethnic, or between "settlers" and "indigenous" populations. Several instances of urban violence equally occurred in eastern Nigeria in the fourth republic, especially through the activities of the Bakassi Boys in Aba, Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Onitsha. Similarly, the OPC has contributed to waves of urban violence in western Nigeria, particularly

in Lagos and Ibadan. In southern Nigeria, several cases of urban violence were recorded in Warri and Port Harcout during militant attacks on multinational companies in the area.

The Nigerian experience of urban violence resonates with Malesevic's (2010) discourse on the continuity of the trauma of war. Citing the intellectual contributions of classical sociologists such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber, Malesevic (2010) mentioned the major reflections of the collective violence in the 19th and 20th centuries. Additional cases of urban violence in the Nigerian cities show some instances of urban violence associated with political party conflicts, which have characterized the Nigerian fourth republic since 1999, a period that marked the beginning of the fourth republic. It is noteworthy that the third republic, which would have commenced on 1st October 1993, was aborted by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. The second republic was terminated on 31st December 1983 via a military coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari, whereas the first republic lasted for five years (1st October 1960 – 15th January 1966) due to military coups. It can be observed that both the military and democratic rulers in Nigeria have been accused of arbitrary governance by different groups of people in the Nigerian cities. Those groups have promoted different forms of urban violence as a counterforce against arbitrary governance in Nigeria. Thus, the discourse on urban violence in Nigeria can be extended beyond the cases of political party conflicts.

A review of the socio political situation in Nigeria by Kendhammer (2010) suggests that the effect of party politics on ethnicity has been paradoxical, indicating the fact that policies designed to end ethnic outbidding and the ethnicization of party politics have resulted in higher levels of ethnic violence. An implication of a practice among members of the PDP was highlighted in a way by Kendhammer (2010: 48). The Peoples'Democratic Party (PDP) succeeds as a multi-ethnic coalition on the basis of informal bargains and accommodations. The practice of zoning', which distributes the spoils of office according to an ethnic formula, produces incentives for local elites to embark upon ethnic violence or ethnic mobilisation as a way of advancing the interests of their local constituencies. The proliferation of urban violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has also been traced to the Nigerian crisis of governance: Violent conflicts have persisted in the Niger Delta communities of Nigeria despite efforts by successive governments and international organisations to broker peace in the region […] One of the major factors contributing to the lack of peace in the region is the pervasive perception by local communities of the Nigerian government's inability to satisfy their basic human needs. As an example, approximately 96 per cent of all government revenue comes from the Niger Delta region. However, many of these communities are still poor and do not feel they are receiving a fair share of the resources in their territory. (Akinwale, 2008: 8).

Some other factors contributing to violence in the region include collusion between foreign investors and local elites; poverty and ignorance; the rise in youth militancy; structural barriers, and divergent interests of state elites and local leaders. The Nigerian experience of violence is analogous to situations in many African societies where: Violent conflicts continue to undermine human security; they pose a major threat in many parts of the continent. Analysis of civil strife in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi, reveals that war and violent conflict have retarded development; conflict has had pernicious societal effects, including extensive damage and loss of human life, infrastructure and natural resources. (Institute for Security Studies, 2008: iv)

CRIMINAL GANGS IN URBAN AREAS: A THREAT TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE THE NIGERIAN SCENE

The above mentioned consequences of urban violence require further elaboration since the issues raised thereon can be situated within the ambit of experience of different groups in the Nigerian cities. The Nigerian crisis of governance has been aggravated by urban violence, before, during and after elections. Nigeria has not been able to recover from the damage to the 12th June 1993 presidential election, given the abrogation of the third republic and the riots that erupted from it. Elections conducted in the fourth republic were tainted by acrimony and confrontations over alleged malpractices such as rigging of elections. Falola and Genova (2009) argued that the 19th April 2007 presidential election was blatantly dysfunctional, given the violence and voting irregularities that characterised it. The 2007 and 2011 presidential election in Nigeria has actually brought more urban violence as the activities of boko haram has drastically increase. The recent killing of police personnel at Lakyo village in Nasarawa state, 9th July2013 River State house Assemble political crisis which should be seen as a state of anarchy, Factions of Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF), past killings in the northern part of country and the Monday 29th July, 2013 bombing in Kano State where 45 persons were reported dead, has seriously poses a threat to our democracy.

Conclusions and recommendations

The causes of urban violence in Nigeria are a combination of poverty and persistent inequality in wealth distribution together with the establishment of liberal democracy that saw all hopes of modifying and narrowing the gap between rich and poor frustrated. While in previous decades "the majority of those politically excluded were workers fighting to be granted the status of citizens, nowadays, the majority of the socially excluded are the unemployed or those employed in precarious jobs who concentrate their energies on trying to survive (Jerome,

2004). The political equality which democracy established has not led to an end of economic inequality.

The authoritarian legacies that survive after the arrival of democracy, such as the working practices, habits and uses of the security forces and the institutional weakness of the state, accentuate the inability of governments to resolve conflicts and prevent violence. Yet this incapacity to provide citizens with security does not mean that Nigerian state is a failed state, nor does it call into question its essence as a state, not even in those examples where the homicide rate is very high or where organized crime like urban violence pose particular threats. While it may be true that the state does not guarantee security, it can be considered as a state where the rule of law is discontinuous, where part of the territory or the functions of the state are threatened with a certain degree of success by armed groups. But the other capacities of the state remain intact and in working order and the national territory are free from the threat of violence; thus the state continues to function internally and internationally as state.

This is the case of Nigeria. It has demonstrated that state can survive historic processes like these and that ultimately a state can only be strengthened by the reconstruction of its institutions. Violence can form part of a historical process of state formation; however, urban violence and the cases presented here are not clearly related to the formation of states since violence is not accompanied by successfully articulated political, economic or social demands. In other words, if the main cause of urban violence is the combination of poverty and an unequal distribution of wealth, it could be said that, ultimately, violence is a demand for the transformation of social relations, the social contract and the state. However, in practice this type of violence weakens the state since it does not intend to transform and transcend an inefficient state, but instead is a weapon used for short term gain and to guarantee survival. In the case of organized crime and drug trafficking, both produce sufficient violence to weaken the state. Not even when they play an administrative role by providing help in the shanty towns or poor neighborhoods can they be considered to have replaced the state, because their ultimate objective is the illegal reproduction of wealth.

Despite these considerations, nobody can fail to recognize those illegal groups, the street gangs, often help to integrate young people, creating an identity for them which neither the state nor their families have been able to provide. The social exclusion, drugs, police persecution, widespread discrimination and wealth which surround these young people leave them without any sense of value for their own lives, a disregard widely shared by the rest of society and the state towards them. Institutional strengthening is crucial: not only the strengthening and the democratization of the state's repressive apparatus, but also of those institutions which form part of the lives of these marginalized populations through education, training and prevention programmes. As institutional strengthening programmes are costly and lengthy; in the short term local initiatives should be promoted. Regional organizations, donor governments, the European Union and international bodies should include the fight against violence in their agendas, identifying it as a key factor in aiding the strengthening of institutions. The vicious circle of social exclusion poverty disenfranchisement and violence, which weakens the state and holds back development, can be broken in this way.

The key to resolving urban violence is to reintegrate young people by strengthening institutions, creating consensus and increasing the resources dedicated to Education, training, prevention and security. As has been highlighted here, local programmes can be successful. Local governments have to reach cross party consensus in relation to prevention and security policies in order to ensure that changes in the electoral fortunes of one party do not lead to a wider negative effect for the issue of urban violence. Two types of programmes would seem to be the most appropriate: those which restrict the carrying of weapons and alcohol consumption, and training and prevention programmes backed up by help in accessing the labor Market through job centers, trade apprenticeships, improvement of neighborhoods and communities. Adapting the education system to the skills demanded by the labor market is also worth serious consideration. Another kind of programme aimed at the wider population should emphasize the causes and consequences of social differences and seek to decriminalize poverty and build a consensus on the need to modify social structures for the benefit of all. For all the self-exclusion the higher earners in society try to bring about, the poverty, marginalization and fear that form part of the landscape beyond the locked gates of their private neighborhoods do not change. One of the threats which the normalization of violence brings is that it inevitably leads to an increase in authoritarianism and the abuse of power by the security forces, affecting the quality of life of all in the long term (Chizea and Iyare, 2006)

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