

AFRICAN IDEOLOGIES AND INTRA-ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Africa, there are records of violence between countries for example, Nigeria and Cameroun on the Bakasi tuzzle, violence are observable among individuals, communities, villages, families and soon. The problem that bothers this study is those violence acts that happen within an ethnic group. These violence acts in most cases present themselves in form of wars. Among the Igbo ethnic circle, the Ezillo people and Mgbo people between 2017 and 2018 destroyed lives and properties on issues affecting land. In Anambra State between 1999 and 2002, it was Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba and numerous others within Nigeria. The aim of this research is to advocate for utilization of some African ideologies in human lives to avoid intra-ethnic violence. The idea of 'Oguadimma', 'Udoka' et cetera should come into play. The research uses historical research method, but data collected were analyzed with sociological style of analysis. The data were collected from primary and secondary materials. The paper recommends that children should be disconnected from viewing any type of display of violent acts either electronical and physical, forums should be created to inculcate good cultural values to the young and old etc.

Keywords: African Ideologies, Intra-ethnic violence and Nigeria

Introduction:

Nigeria like some other countries in the world generally and Africa in Particular experience violence in different forms and nature. In discussing violence, it should be noted that violence must not be concluded with the infliction of physical injuries on victims. Violence attack can come in its spiritual form, or on the social interaction platform. In Nigeria, violence could be said to happen between ethnic groups on the basis of their cultural or religious gaps. Today, a critical look at the relationships between individual groups or people in the same ethnic group informs us that even within ethnic group members, states, local government areas, communities, villages, and families there are pockets of violence arising from land boundaries, ancestral enmity, ill actions against family members, community members, village members etc. In the face of all

these abnormalities, the question now is how did Africa perceive violence? What are the present African ideologies and their relationship with the current rate of violence atleast within ethnic group interactions. Mr. Ejikemeuwa Obinna (personal communication, 7 May 2019) states that for the Africans, conflicts, violence and discrimination tendencies are traditionally seen as devil's act of destruction, curses from the gods, lack of progressive thought, signs of pre-maturity of the mind, and lack of understanding. In regard to these African ideologies on conflicts and violence, the Africans generally and Nigeria in particular addresses violence at its communal or intra-ethnic level with attention to the aforementioned negative circumstances.

Today, less attention is paid at the intra-ethnic stage of violence or conflicts. Much attentions are given to inter-ethnic conflicts and violence, inter-state violence or conflicts and international violence or conflicts.

Intra-ethnic violence can arise from land dispute, religious differences, cultural differences, political dissatisfaction, economic control e.g management of natural or mineral resources deposit, misconception or malpractices of social interactions and so on. In these intra ethnic violence, a whole lot of lives and properties are destroyed. In many cases it triggers lasting enmity duo to irreparable injuries inflicted on relations, et cetera. Suspicion of such injuries has made people for example, the Igbo of the South-East to always apply such adages like "*Oguadimma*"-warring does not pay positively, "*Udoka*"- peace is greater, and so on.

The research employs historical research method. Information used in the study were gotten from both primary and secondary sources basically; oral interviews, textbooks, journals, internet, dictionary, etc. The research recommends among other things that children should be disconnected from viewing any type of display of violence or conflict acts either electronically or physically, forums should be created to inculcate good cultural values to the young and old. Data gotten were analysed with descriptive and historical method of data analysis.

Clarification of Concepts

Terms that call for clarification in this study include: Africa, African ideology, intra-ethnic, violence and Nigeria. Africa according Mac Donald (2019) is an evocative on that conjures up different images for different people. For some, it is

an ivory-tusked elephant standing before the snow-capped peaks of Mount Kilimanjaro: For others, it is a mirage shimmering on the horizon of the arid Sahara Desert. It is also a powerful word-one that speaks of adventures and exploration, corruption and poverty, freedom mystery. For 1.2 billion people, the word "Africa is also synonymous with the word "home"..." The Roman theory according to MacDonald states that the word "Africa" came from the Romans, who named the land they discovered on the opposite side of the Mediterranean after a Berber tribe living in the Carthage area (now modern-day Tunisia. This explanation gives an overview of what different people perceive Africa to be. Africa is one of the continents in world. Africa has people of dark and light skins. Let us use map to display the geographical site and position of Africa.

Nigeria on the other hand, has been generally believed to be coined by Flora Shaw, a British journalist, on 8th day of January 1897. Flora Shaw later married the then British colonial administrator by name Lord Fredrick Lugard. She took the name Nigeria in connection with Niger River running through the country. Aguh (2016) points that Nigeria was named after the River Niger derived from a native term "Ni Gir" (meaning River Gir). The name is often misinterpreted as derived from the latin word "niger" meaning black, a reference to the dark complexion of the inhabitants of the region. Aguh continued that Flora Shaw combined the words "Niger" (the country's longest river) and "Area" to get the word "Nigeria". The adjectival form being "Nigerian" referring to people from the River Niger Area. Let us have a look at the geographical map of Nigeria.

Map



The Lexico Oxford dictionary explains Nigeria thus:

A country on the coast of West Africa; population 182,200,000 (estimated 2015). Languages, English (official), Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba; and others. Capital Abuja. The site of highly developed kingdoms in middle ages, the area came under British influence during 19th Century and was made into a single colony in 1914. Independence came in 1960 and the state became a federal republic in 1963, remaining member of the commonwealth. Oil was discovered in the 1960's and 1970's, since when Nigeria has emerged as one of the world's major exporters.

Nigeria is a very large country in terms of landscape, languages, cultures, ethnicity, and even resources, both human, natural and material resources. Nigeria is endowed with so many natural gifts including good weather and climate and divergent vegetations. Generally speaking, Nigeria is recognized globally as Giant of Africa.

African ideology could be seen as the central notion. Africans have certain circumstances. Hard work has remained the traditional conception of African as basic economic way of surviving in life. Mr. Gabriel Agumba (personal communication 22 May, 2020) states that he had gone round at least countries like Ghana, Mali, Ivory Coast, Benin Republic, Niger, Cameroun, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and so on, and discovers that Africans believe in hard working and peaceful co-existence with one another. Historically, Africans frown at unfair treatments. African ideology focuses much more on nature than artificial. African ideology or ideas on violence appear to be complete rejection of violence, though they are security conscious at their own level. The idea that conflict or violence is bad, does not mean that they do not challenge violence when it comes. It is the challenge or revenge at violence that had created room for both intra-ethnic, and inter-ethnic conflict or violence in Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular.

Violence and intra-ethnic on the other hand are parts of the terms that demand explanations. Violence has been defined by Summers (2001) as behaviour that is intended to hurt other people physically. In Nigeria, it appears there are intentions or inhabited behaviour in certain people or circumstances that violence has remained a common reaction or response. Violence cuts across religion, culture, ethnicity, property, individuals, government, politics, organization, family, and so on. The interest of this paper is on violence at intra-ethnic levels. At this level of violence, it appears in most cases, that it is the

communities within an ethnic circle that engage themselves in violence or conflicts. Lynch (2014) emphasizing on Nigeria has examined that the first form of violence is communal violence, illustrated by current events taking place in Nigeria. While every country has its own definition of communal violence, one definition used by the Kenyan government according to Lynch states that; “Communal violence is defined as that violence that occurs between different communities who identify themselves based on religion, tribes, languages, sect, race and others”. In reference to this the particular violence this study intends to clarify is violence that is similar to the Kenyan definition of violence. This type of violence can arise among individuals, communities, etc within an ethnic group due to issues affecting religion, culture, politics, properties, mineral and natural resources, etc. these factors will be discussed more in the subsequent parts of this study.

Intra-ethnic on the other hand is being defined by Summers as; inside; within e.g. intra departmental-within a department. Therefore, intra deals with what happens or occurs within a particular circle or entity. Ethnicity on the other side of the coin, has been explained by Okafor and Adama (2018:58) when they stress on the view of Schemerhorn in Igbo and Anugwom that; “it is a collectivity within a large society having real or putative ancestry memories of shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood”. Nigeria has numerous ethnic groups. These ethnic groups share historical and putative ancestral origin. In some cases, an ethnic group in Nigeria does not settle in one particular geographical settlement. For example, the Gwari settle in Nasarawa, Kaduna, Niger, Kogi States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Among the aboriginals of this ethnic groups they might not share the same religious views, struggle communally for property or resources like land, etc. These differences in opinions, quest for property and resource control can generate the type of violence meant here as intra-ethnic violence. In a nut shell, intra-ethnicity in this work, refers to whatever happens within or inside or among a group of people that share the same putative ancestry history, in relation to a cultural origin and ethnic identity.

Factors Responsible for Intra-Ethnic Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country. This gives rise to divergent languages, belief patterns, world-views and different bodily appearance and physiques. These combinations are not-harmonized among Nigerians in general and ethnic origins

in particular. The inability to achieve this harmony has a lot of factors militating against mutual relationships among ethnic members. These factors will be taken one after the other as follow:

Religion as a factor has caused much injuries on the country's human and material resources. Nigeria as one of the countries in Africa, had African traditional religion as her indigenous religion even before the advent of Islam and Christianity, there were occasionally pockets of unfriendly religious interactions or relationship. Achebe (1958) highlights such interaction when an individual's god of a community member was tampered with. Their opposing reactions in "things fall apart", connotes a possible inter-personal conflict or violence. Currently, the coming of Islam and Christianity has ignited the flame of conflict and violence not only on inter-ethnic settings but also on intra-ethnic settings. In Numa Kochu, Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) documented an attack where a pregnant woman and many children died. The Numa Kochu is dominated by Christian community comprised of those of the Mada ethnic group. Alanamu (2005) and Odey (1999) record that in 2001, there was religious clash between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi State, which began on June 19 and ended on July 4 in which over 100 persons died. "Also, from May 22 and 23, Kaduna was again brought to its knee when Muslims and Christians clashed. Over 300 lives were lost" (Olukor Ede 2002:8). In Kano there was an uprising of 1980 that left about 6,000 people dead and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. Olupoma (1992) and Rowley (2014) stress that it was the intervention of the army and air force that calmed down the 11 days riots from religious disturbances. In this crisis an estimated 3000 people died in the clash between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State. Between 2010 and 2018, there were serious killings in the same Kaduna State at the Southern Part of the State.

These violence that occurred out of religious circumstances are not mainly developing on the basis of ethnic differences. Some of them are reflected on religious backgrounds. People within a specific ethnic group, also inflict injuries, cause deaths, and destroy properties of their fellow brothers and sisters from the same ethnic group, simply because they do not share the same religious orientations and belief systems. Religion as one of the factors responsible for intra-ethnic violence is motivated by the following sub-factors: Religious fanaticism or religious bigotry, religious intolerance, and poverty, selfishness

among adherents, poor education and low literacy level of the religious adherents among other things.

Land property and resource control is one of the factors responsible for intra-ethnic violence. Dunmoye (2003) in Oji et al (2014) points that, conflicts in the middle belt zone of Nigeria have connection with land scarcity and boundary disputes. In Ebonyi State according to Oji et al (2014), the Akaeze and Osso Edda Ogazaraonweya conflicts of 2003, and Aguleri-Umuleri- Umuoba Anam conflicts are connected to land disputes. Inter-communal conflicts among the Ugwuoba people in Oji River Local Government of Enugu State, Onitsha-Obosi conflicts in the 1980s, are all linked to land and resource control. The internal conflicts and violence at Ibagwa-Nike, Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Urum and Achala Communities clash and so on, are basically motivated by problem of land and other allocation and distribution. Mr. Monday Ugwu (Personal communication, 4 January, 2013) revealed that there had been crises among the Ibagwa Nike people principally on the problem of land allocation and sales. He added that the community has two factions where some join the Traditional Ruler and others formed their own front with the then town union executive members. This land and resource control issues in Ibagwa Nike community had claimed numerous lives and properties. These conflicts claimed numerous lives and properties within the same Ibagwa-Nike community, an integral of Igbo ethnic group.

Culture / tradition is also one of the factors that cause intra-ethnic violence. On issue of culture and tradition as a factor that contributed to the conflict between Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo, Oji, et al (2014:519) continue that:

The Ezillo attributes the denigration of their cultural and traditional heritage by the Ezza as some of the causes of the dispute between them. This include: flouting of new yam festival rules-bringing new yam in to Ezillo market by the Ezzas before the cultural rites of new yam in Ezillo, looting of the people`s artifacts and antiquities, killing of fish in sacred ponds and rivers, desecration of the chieftaincy institution as evident in the beating of the traditional ruler of Ezillo, Eze Chima Onyibe and his wife in 2008. In 1992, the Ezillo people also alleged that the Ezza people seized Nwafor Isimkpuma market and renamed it Eke-Ezza...

What is said about cultural and traditional observances as one of the causes of intra-ethnic violence is applied to uncountable communities within ethnic groups in Nigeria. With more emphases on Igboland, killing python in Abatete community had created serious conflict and violence between the community members and their fellow Igbo visitors. In Inyi environs, killing of tortoise had constituted some violence and lasting hostility among them and their fellow Igbo neighbours. In other parts of the nation, similar phenomena have triggered violence and can still cause more, if culture and tradition of people are not respected. Nigerian nation and her numerous ethnic groups uphold the culture and tradition of masquerading. But the way the exercise is being observed in one community of a particular ethnic setting can differ from the other. According to Mr. Boniface Okafor (personal communication, 20 September, 2018), he lamented that in Ezeagu Local Government of Enugu State, violation or abuse of masquerading exercise had caused lives and properties among the Oghe people and Umuaji Aguobu-Owa Umuaji-Mgbagbu-Owa communities within 1990s and 2009 respectively. Culture and tradition are viable factor.

Political factors can aggravate intra-ethnic violence. An example is the Ife-Modakeke crisis Olayiwola and Okorie (2010) and Babajimi (2003) share similiar view when they stress that it was then observed that the relationship between the Ifes and the Oyo refugees (Modakeke) was at first very cordial to an extent that Ife Chiefs threw their doors open to more Oyo refugees because they are good allies in moments of warfare and in farm work. Both Ife and Oyo refugees (Modakeke) are all extracts of Yoruba nation or ethnicity who teamed up to fight other Yoruba extracts like the Ijesa.

At a time conflict/violence arose between these two Yoruba clans/formation due to political domineering interest. Albert (2001:38) observed, while investigating the reason for an outburst of conflict between the Ife and Modakeke unveils that; “when the Modakeke were accepted at Ile-Ife in a separate settlement by the king Abewela, the Ifes started regretting such action. This was because they lost political and economic dominance over Modakekes”. This ill feeling made the Ife to struggle for political control, thereby causing some conflicts between them and the Modakeke. In Nigeria today, intra-ethnic violence in so many areas arise because of the feeling of political oppressions. Even in the case of Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflicts, there are a lot of political factors involved. One side in some cases might be occupying political position so frequently that others have not

gone at all or had gone on a very rare frequency, and this can develop serious violent actions especially during elections.

Other unpleasant social interactions posed by historical records of indigene and settlers identity contribute to intra-ethnic violence. Historically, migration to various communities within an ethnic identity was very common in Nigeria. Apart from the slave trade and slavery from Africa to the Western world, people in the distant past, were not very good in travelling to far countries to settle for livelihood. Circumstances made people to migrate to relatively close communities for a better sustainable development. Migration to and from Africa has become a common place. Migration is not too new among Africans. The people were not well exposed to travelling to far distant countries. Their inability to travel very far could be as a result of some impediments most especially lack of sophisticated means of transportation, barter economy, and other communication weaknesses (Okafor, 2019:87). In some communities, there are always historical records that certain kindred or clan migrated from a different community within the ethnic group to another, and become settlers with the indigenes of the host communities.

In most cases, this trace of origin and identity constitute misunderstanding among the two groups. Indigenes try to restrict the settler`s involvement in some cultural or community activities. In a situation whereby the settlers oppose such conditions or restrictions in course of time, it can metamorphose into to violence that involves killings and destructions. In regard to this, Mr Aniako Emengini (personal communication, 8 November, 2012) explained that in his community Aguobu-Owa, there is a village that is claimed to have migrated from their clan`s ancestral home, and was allocated a portion of land for settlement. At a time, they protested against certain restrictions against them, but the neighbouring villages intervened. Afterwards the matter was resolved once and for all, yet most of the restrictions still remain. In fact, issues associated with indigenes and migrated settlers also contribute to a large extent in provocation of intra-ethnic violence in Nigeria. Having examined intra-ethnic violence and its causes in Nigeria, let us briefly highlight African people`s ideologies and strategies in tackling intra-ethnic violence

African Ideologies and strategies in Resolving Intra-Ethnic Violence/Conflicts

On the religious realm, Africans traditionally believe in their traditional religion. When the foreign religions came into the continent, Africans happened to be in a confused state just because these religions were very busy demolishing their own indigenous religious objects in the course of accomplishing their missionary assignments. They opposed the missionary enterprises like every other persons could do, with time some were converted to both Christianity and Islam. Some still hold the traditional religion firmly. The African man's idea of religion remains that his brother's religious beliefs and dogma will be a source of conflict, war or violence to his relationship with his brother. For the Igbo, they will say "*Egbe belu, Ugo belu, Nke si ibe ya ebena nku kwa ya*" meaning live and let live".

On issues affecting religion, the constitution of Nigeria honours freedom of worship/religion. The traditional African society fashions her traditional institutions with the traditional rulers, the traditional title holders, elders, traditional priests and so on as constituent bodies to resolve such matters. Africans believe that issues of this nature should be handled at community level or neighboring community leader can be involved depending on the degree of the conflicts and violence. Mrs. Abiodun Adekunle Maryann (personal communication 5 January, 2018) buttressed that her husband had been involved in conflict and peace resolution as a recognized elder in their community in Osun State that yielded good results. For Africans, religious conflicts or violence within an ethnic group are mostly treated without the involvement of government or external bodies from far related communities. On land property and resource control, traditionally, the people tried to construct family, village, and community wall and heap boundaries with the red mud soil. This has helped to a large extent in controlling and curbing land disputes. They also tried to tackle issues relating to other resource control by managing ownership and control of certain properties and resources attached to members of the society according to their gender, age, and position in the society. But in situations whereby conflict or violence burst, traditional covenant appears to be most efficacious. An example is the conflict and its associated violent action that happened between Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba Anam communities of Anambra East Local Government Areas in Anambra State, Nigeria. Okwueze and Kanu (2003:97-98) elaborate on the efficacy of such traditional covenant with emphasis on the warring Aguleri, Umuleri, and Umuoba-Anam thus:

In the course of research for this work, a tripe was undertaken by the authors to Umuleri and Aguleri communities to find out how the magic

was wrought. The covenant that took place is called in the local language “*Iko Mmee*” which means removing of the blood shed. Mr. Geoffrey Chukwuemeka Igweadiani a prominent Umuleri indigene stated that “*Iko Mmee*” means “traditional reconciliation”. It is a sort of cleansing to appease the gods”. Ven.E.E Meoba, the Archdeacon of Obosi Archdeaconry of the Anglican Diocese on the Niger from Aguleri described “*Iko Mmee*” as a ceremony performed to appease the gods in order to assuage them for the blood shed during a crisis”. It involved a very simple ceremony of eating, drinking together and embracing each other. It is believed that the gods would go after anybody that goes against the letters of the covenant.

Throughout Africa, and Nigeria in particular, there are similar traditional measures through which violence and violence provoked on the ground of problems affecting abuse of culture and traditions, indigene and settlers identity, political marginalization to mention only but a few. There are cases that can traditionally need raising fresh green leaves at the warring scene by the intervening group, family, village, community/communities. Some might demand for oath-taking, pledges, and vows to the gods in the presence of human beings who are witnesses to the crisis. In a nutshell, Africans and Nigerians have their indigenous ideologies that can withstand any form of war or violence at least within independent ethnic group`s communities.

Moreover African continent does not perceive anything that can cause harm to one`s neighbor as a funny scenario. In this modern Nigeria, community clashes that need immediate intervention of higher fire arms are mostly overtaken by the government to settle the conflicting communities. During the reign of Gov. Peter Odili, there were clashes in Bori land, between Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Council area. The then Governor, Peter Odili set up commissions that will secure lasting peace between the warring parties. He appointed two high court judges, Justice Bannet Ugbari and Justice Chukwunye Uriri to chair the respective commissions. While one of the commission will focus on the events that took place in Bori town, the other will concentrate on investigating clashes in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni council area (cultural survival 2018). After achieving this lasting peace with the inauguration of these two commissions, at the end of Gov. Peter Odili`s administration, there persisted pockets of clashes among the people. On Saturday 9th March, 2009 grudges and nursed aggression among the people

were pronounced during the state election poll where 8 people were killed. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by its president Mr Fegalo Nsuke lamented that the experience of the Ogoni people during the past elections showed that Ogonis were marked for the worst in Nigeria (UNPO 15 March 2019). The truth is that community clashes especially within an ethnic group are better resolved traditionally than otherwise.

Recommendations

To prevent intra-ethnic violence, this research work recommends that:

1. Communities should try as much as possible to jointly revisit boundaries / demarcation in definite intervals so that the young ones will always know their communities' boundaries.
2. People should always be mindful of other people culture especially in the course of interactions, because one adage says "do like Romans when you are in Rome".
3. Political power and distribution of infrastructure should not be lopsided. It should be enshrined into Nigeria constitution rather than political party constitutions
4. Freedom of religion and worship should always be preached by officiating priests of at least the three major religions in Nigeria
5. Traditional dialogue should always be applied in community matters. This is because the community members or indigenes and settlers will understand themselves better within themselves and their neighbors than involving government powers, security agencies etc who are much more interested in enriching themselves more than helping issues.

Conclusion

Violence and conflict are too dangerous brother. Africans have the idea of managing them in a more so less expensive ways. The intervention or invitation of government and its agencies always cause more economic hardship and stress, time wasting and so on. Land and resource control, politics, culture and tradition have been found in this study as the major causes of waste of human and material resources in the country.

More so, the country focuses more on inter ethnic violence more than intra-ethnic violence without knowing that the two must be given equal attention. The moment the government and the civil society show serious concern to intra-ethnic violence, it will reduce the increase in inter-ethnic and other violence.

There is unbecoming negligence on the traditional means of peace keeping, they should be aborted in the people's mindset. Serious and pragmatic attention should be paid to African traditional means of keeping peace.

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Interview

1. Mrs. Abiodun Adekunle Maryann, 63yrs, Osun State, trader, 5/1/18
2. Mr. Gabriel Agumba, 54yrs, Imo State, Civil Servant, 22/5/2020
3. Mr. Monday Ugwu , 47yrs, Enugu State, Civil Servant, 4/1/2013
4. Mr. Boniface Okafor, 73yrs, Anambra State, Carpenter, 20/9/2018
5. Mr Aniako Emengini, 80yrs, Ebonyi State Blacksmith, 8/11/2012