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**CONTRADICTIONS IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE DANGEROUS
YOUTH PRECARIAT CLASS IN NIGERIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF A MULTI-
STAKEHOLDER INTERVENTION**

ABSTRACT

There are contradictions located in the Nigerian political economy. In the midst of the grinding poverty and marginalisation suffered by the majority, a tiny elite controls the political and economic levers of the state for the perpetuation of its hegemonic interests. On one hand, while the state role-plays as an indifferent ideological base for all interests within its territory, on the other hand, it seems to provide a stronghold that shelters the interests of the tiny elite or plutonomy. Additionally, members of this class indulge in a panoply of stupefying ostentation, grandeur and waste while the majority leads a precarious existence. Alarming, this gap between the privileged minority and the star-crossed majority has continued to distend, inescapably leading to a dangerous class conflict that may fulfil the Marxian apocalypse of the end of the capitalist or pseudo-capitalist system in the country. The youth precariat class, now a dangerous class, has emerged all over the country vociferously demanding equal access to the resources of the state which up until now have been in the stranglehold of the plutocracy. Situating this study within the Social Conflict Theory, as espoused by Karl Marx and other social conflict ideologues, the conflict between the dominant minority with the dominated majority appears unavoidable and increase Nigeria's fragility if existing contradictions in the Nigerian political economy are sustained. This paper calls for a multi-stakeholder intervention involving government, the public and private sectors, faith organisations, civil society, the media, and the international community to arrest the looming apocalypse that may threaten Nigeria's statehood unless the demands of the youth precariat class are met or their social and economic realities are improved upon.

Keywords: Political Economy, Youth Precariat Class, Multi-Stakeholder Intervention, Social Conflict Theory, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian political economy has continued to embody byzantinely contradictory characteristics that have begun to push the polity towards an escarpment making it seem that it is falling apart at the seams. Political futurologists could interpret the status quo to mean the crystallisation of what some have predicted to be a spin-off of the failed status of the Nigerian state. For these prognosticators, state failure accounts for the increasing insecurity in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. According to them, fragile states create political and security atmospherics that enhance extremism, militancy, insurgency and crime (Devlin-Foltz, 2010; Fragile State Index, 2015). In 2010, twelve of the twenty states labelled by the Failed States Index (FSI) to be exposed to a greater risk of debacle were in Africa. In 2015, these 12 states still possess attributes that lock them down within the Failed-State category. According to the FSI, these states are South Sudan (1), Somalia (2), Central African Republic (3), Sudan (4), Democratic Republic of the Congo (5), Chad (6), Guinea (10), Nigeria (14), Ivory Coast (15), Zimbabwe (16), Guinea-Bissau (17), Burundi (18), Niger (19) and Ethiopia (20) (Fragile State Index, 2015). These “fragile” states have been said to account for much of the continent’s ongoing conflict, instability, and humanitarian catastrophes because they have become fertile grounds for personal insecurity, lawlessness, and armed conflict (Devlin-Foltz, 2010). While this thesis may be faulted as being largely biased because terrorism, armed insurgency and armed conflicts have assumed a global dimension from Europe to the Americas, there may be some truth in the thesis, after all, considering that the states mentioned manifest social and economic dysfunctions that make them soft targets for criminal overlords, terrorist armies and militant ethnic vanguardists.

Some could also argue that the present conditions are unembellished avatars of the exploitative tendencies immanent in the capitalist system where owners of capital and the means of production exercise unbridled control over the proletarian class(es) and the social system in which they operate for the sake of profit maximisation and the perpetuation of their interests. But another argument this may generate is whether Nigeria is truly a capitalist state or is just pseudo capitalist or merely a rentier economy? While Nigeria looks more like a capitalist state or is pseudo capitalist at the very least, the state and its political and economic coxswains have continued to exculpate an unjust system that hegemonises, or prioritises the interests, needs and desires of the plutocrat or the tiny elite over those of a majority that are already weary and

hapless, and whose angst at this inequitable system is gradually giving way to suspicion, growing disenchant and vengeance. In a resource-rich country with a cornucopia of human, mineral and material resources, this growing level of social and economic deprivation suffered by the majority, vis-à-vis the stupefying luxury and ostentation that ruche the lifestyles of the elite against the backcloth of a state that has not shown itself an unbiased umpire, continues to push citizens on the fringes of sanity.

While Nigerians are known to be stoical, Byronic and uncomplaining, for the most part, a youth precariat that has refused to close its eyes to the artificial or anthropogenic-related scarcities or vexing paradoxes that highlight circadian experiences in the Nigerian state have begun to coalesce. This youth precariat has decided to take its destiny in its hands to redraw the prevalent lines of contradictions by fair means or foul and calling for the attention of the political and economic managers of the state to see it as an imperative to rein in their excesses and begin to coxswain the state and its resources in the path of wholesale wealth redistribution in a just and fair manner. Anyone in doubt about the capability of the youth precariat class in Nigeria should consider the rise of the Boko Haram terror merchants and the ebullient and militant ethnic aggressors, whether the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), the Bakassi Boys, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (all from the Southeast), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and now the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), as huge testaments that these armed or protest groups are no longer taking government's insensitivity to their pains, fears and needs sitting down. Those who do not join armed groups or social movements have resorted to pursuing a criminal economy that turns them into nouveau riches overnight. These ones have become kidnapping czars, human trafficking couriers and masterminds, hired political assassins, drug pushers, violent street gangsters, cultists, armed robbers, cybercriminal overlords, oil bunkerers and the nightmare of the Nigerian state (Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim, 2013a; Onifade & Imhonopi, 2013b; Imhonopi & Urim, 2015b).

For many members of the youth precariat class, the ruling class only listens to groups that dare to tear down public infrastructure, bomb oil and gas pipelines, kidnap or kill innocent Nigerians or do both, and that goes violent with their demands, creating immense public rumpus in the process. Therefore, as Imhonopi and Urim (2015b) observed, while some members of the precariat class have declared tacit war on the Nigerian state by engaging in many anti-social

activities, some of the armed groups that operate in the country have been categorical about their intentions to overthrow the Nigerian state violently, a la Boko Haram, MEND and the Niger Delta Avengers.

In this study, authors seek to examine the contradictions ingrained in the political economy in Nigeria and how these have led to the crystallisation of a youth precariat class in the country. Resolving the present challenges, this study argues, will require a multi-stakeholder approach, hence authors' interest to examine the role different actors in Nigeria could play in arresting existing contradictions and reversing the drift towards a fragile or failed state status overrun by armed groups led by a vengeful youth precariat class.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the contradictions ingrained in the political economy in Nigeria;
2. Investigate how the contradictions have led to the crystallisation of a youth precariat class in the country;
3. Identify the roles different actors in Nigeria could play in arresting existing contradictions and reversing the drift towards a fragile or failed state status overrun by armed groups led by a vengeful youth precariat class;
4. Make recommendations that can help Nigeria reintegrate its youth precariat class into mainstream Nigerian society.

METHODOLOGY

This study has adopted the qualitative approach with data collection from secondary sources namely, books, journals, technical reports and online resources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Precariat Class

There is a growing unrest all over the world amidst a new class that is gradually coalescing. The precariat class has been described as a class-in-the-making by one of its leading proponents on the subject (Standing, 2014). Standing believes that it is the first mass class that has

systematically been losing its rights as citizens of modern states. In fact, he calls members of the precariat “denizens” (Standing, 2012). By denizens, Standing argued that members of this class do not share the same range of social, cultural, political and economic rights as other citizens around them. In other words, they are treated as underclass, without rights or privileges which other members of the society lawfully enjoy. The precariat therefore has insecure labour, moving in and out of jobs, earns only money wages and does not enjoy enterprise non-wage benefits or rights-based state benefits. The class also has weaker civil, cultural, social, political and economic rights than others in the pecking order of average income (Standing, 2012). Thus, the precariat is a class with members who consist of the disabled, homeless, migrants, ethnic minorities, millions of women abused in oppressive labour, millions of impoverished youths belonging to lower class families including frustrated educated youths who do not like existing socio-economic conditions before them, poor senior members of society, among others (Imhonopi & Urim, 2015b).

Imhonopi and Urim (2015b) have observed that while the precariat class may not yet be a homogenous group because of the divergent socio-economic and demographic backgrounds that members share, what is patent is that this class poses great danger to the Nigerian society largely because of the simmering rage and frustration of its youth members who mostly have swelled the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) population (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). This NEET population in Nigeria is ballooning and because members of this class may not be engaged in gainful employment, they are deskilled and become unemployable, thus risking being marooned in the labour market for a long time which if not reversed could force some, if not many, of them into the alternative criminal economy with all negative consequences for Nigeria (Urim & Imhonopi, forthcoming). Thus, not reversing the unsuitable and unbearable social and economic conditions of the precariat class is another way of making them soft targets for “...populist sirens onto the political rocks, to rushes of anarchic discord or to support demagogues offering a neo-fascist vision or crazed evangelical message” (Standing 2012, para. 30). It is also another way of sustaining the fragility of the Nigerian state. This class is dangerous, is gradually standing on the fringes of society, and is raging to abolish the conditions of insecurity and inequality that define it (Standing, 2014b).

The Globalism of the Precariat Class

Although a class in the making, and not yet a class by itself, the precariat globally shares similar fears and insecurities, arising from a consciousness of common vulnerability (Standing, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). The precariat is a class of the vulnerable whose lives and identities are constructed in disjointed bits in which they are unable to architect a desirable narrative (Standing, 2011c). The world has continued to witness several uprisings, movements, street protests, armed insurgencies, and even terror activities led by members of the precariat class who feel that society has been unfair and discriminatory towards them, hence pouring their anger on state symbols and representatives, innocent citizens, and those people or things they consider will bring the ruling class to its knees or force it to look at their direction and plight. In the United States and Europe, the Occupy movement which is the international branch of the Occupy Wall Street movement that protests against the social and economic inequalities around the world, was vociferous when it was launched on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan's Financial District. Through the movement, protests spread to over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1,500 cities globally. According to the movement, their angst is...

against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims to fight back against the richest 1% of people that are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future (<http://occupywallst.org/about/>).

The Occupy Wall Street site also writes that it is a leaderless resistance movement with people of many colours, genders and political persuasions. The site states that one thing members have in common is that "We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety of all participants" (<http://occupywallst.org/about/>).

The Occupy movement now has international presence and shares a singularity of purpose which is the reversal of all forms of economic and social inequality with the goal of making

the economic and political relations in all societies less vertically hierarchical and more flatly distributed (Collins, 2011; “Woman dies”, 2011). While local groups may often have specific prime concerns just like Nigeria Occupy Movement in 2012 was initialised to protest the removal of fuel subsidy and to protest government’s insensitivity at the plight of the Nigerian masses, the general objective of these movements has been to compel leaders of thought and the elite members of society whose influence on the financial systems of the world has meant that a minority is disproportionately benefitting and that democracy is undermined with instability trailing most societies of the world to reverse the negative sides of liberal orthodoxies (Dobnik, 2011; The 99% Declaration, 2012; Thompson, 2011).

This is why the Occupy Movement has metamorphosed into an ideological movement in which the world’s masses have recognised that just a minority has continued to dictate the social and economic narratives of their lives, and on top of that uses state apparatuses to subjugate the interest of the people while prioritising its needs and desires and perpetuating its private interests over those of the public.

Thus, a global precariat class is creaming with people from all walks of life who are demanding that transformational changes be carried out in the society in order to equilibrate, to a large extent, the social and economic systems to benefit more people, especially those whose lives have been contorted by the greed, corruption and highhandedness of the political and economic managers of their states and their international allies. While the embers of the Occupy movement seems to be fanning out, there are increasing shards of light in many countries of the world where people are beginning to recognise their role in taming corporate leviathans and its kindred political machineries. Where this has not been possible, a dangerous precariat class has debouched melding into all sorts of monstrosities demanding that the uneven control of resources and its lopsided distribution which favour the ruling classes and their families, friends and sidekicks be restructured for the benefit of all.

This has been seen as some sort of socialism or drift towards Marxian teleology. While this assumption may not be true because these protests, movements and resistance are not certainly led by the proletariat (or workers only) in the sense that Marx had argued was a prerequisite for the overthrow of the capitalist system, it is important to also pontificate that certainly the situation may not be a prognosis of an apocalypse of the capitalist system or the liberal orthodoxy with its doctrines of free market, commodification and profit maximisation. Rather,

this state of affairs is an unambiguous embodiment or outgrowth of the embedded contradictions within the global capitalist system which need to be restructured if the system is to be sustained after all.

The precariat in the developing world particularly with exposure to very irresponsible and irresponsive governments, bad managers of public resources and climates that are both hamstringing as they are frustrating has evolved into dangerous dimensions to resist existing evil orders, policies, policy actions and governments. Most developing countries are now drifting more towards fragility as rebel groups, armed insurgencies, militants, ethnic militias and all kinds of feudal lords with their fiefdoms are emerging within state parties seeking fair means or foul to taste of the national cake which they have been deprived of for too long and to keep some for later consumption when they eventually get hold of it. This national cake unfortunately has been a preserve of a local political machinery supported by a prejudiced state infrastructure which continues to fawn at the whims and caprices of this minority at the detriment of the majority. Not only does it tolerate this class, it also makes sure that its minoritarian interests and needs are preserved and attended to before all else. It becomes a situation where the master and his family must feast on the cake first and when he and whoever he wants are satisfied, the crumbs are now distributed to the servants or denizens. This is why the precariat class in the developing world is more militant, precarious and bileful because it recognises that its taskmasters are cold-hearted, thick-skinned and hardline rulers.

The Youth Precariat Class in Nigeria

According to the United Nations Population Fund, the global youth population between ages 10 and 24 is estimated to be over 1.8 billion people (Edwards, 2015). The UNFPA considers this to be the largest youth population ever and that it has the potential to transform economies for better or worse, depending on the decisions of policy makers (Kedmey, 2014). The UNFPA reckons that the world may never get another chance to have this kind of demographic surge which could be a strong potential for sustainable development in many countries of the world if well harnessed or a recipe for instability unless these young people are empowered and given access to health services, education and jobs (Kedwey, 2014).

Over 75% of these youths are from developing countries, which is about 22% of the world's population. UNFPA considers that in the world's 48 least developed countries, children and

adolescents make up a majority of the population (Edwards, 2015). These adolescents and youths form a quarter of the world's population. This youth population signposts both an expanding workforce and — given the current economic climate — higher rates of unemployment. If the age bracket used in estimating this population size is widened to 35 years or a little higher, that would mean a greater number of the youth make up the population of many developing countries currently.

As at 2011, the African Union stated that Africa was the youngest region because its young people aged between 15 – 24 years accounted for around 20% of its population while in most of its states, those aged under 25 years constituted over 60% of the population (African Union, 2011). According to the AU, there are also roughly 800 million young people in Africa. The population is becoming more youthful and it is being projected that by 2015, 65% of the total African population will be made of youths. This is why the African Union (AU) has sought to take advantage of the following initiatives to engage and empower this huge army of young people on the continent. These initiatives include: *The World Plan of Action for the Youth; The African Youth Charter; The NEPAD Youth Programme; The Millennium Development Goals; The Pan African Youth Union; The National Youth Councils; and The African Youth Decade.*

The AU seeks to empower young Africans by focusing on key areas such as Good Employment; Youth Rights and Leadership; Institutional Representation; Environmental Degradation; Youth with special needs; Access to quality education and training; Globalisation and Migration; and Culture and tradition (African Union, 2011).

In spite of these laudable intentions and initiatives, country-specific figures with regards to youths *Not in Education, Employment or Training* (NEET) continue to scare concerned citizens and development institutions. The youth bulge in Africa has also continued to engage the attention of most governments on the continent which have rolled out one initiative or another to mainstream their youth population into greater economic citizenship and development.

As at Thursday June, 2016, the population of Nigeria was 186,835,365 based on the latest United Nations estimates (Population of Nigeria, 2016). With its large youth population, if calculated at 70% of the entire Nigerian population, between the ages of 10 and 35, is a little over 130 million people. This number is almost close to half the population of the entire West African sub-region, estimated at 362,498,520 people (Western Africa Population, 2016), and

shows in eloquent terms that Nigeria possesses one of the largest concentrations of youth populations in Africa and in Sub-Saharan Africa because of its immense size.

The challenges of mainstreaming its large youth population into economic citizenship and development have been hampered by lack of political will and a governance process that is elitist in all its hues and colours. The situation is further worsened by the byzantine contradictions locked within Nigeria's political economy which have continued to chafe the tension in the country following the accretion of a youth precariat class that has become implacable, restless and is on the fringe of sanity. The conditions of members of this class are worsened by the rising inequality between the 1% wealthy minority and the rest of the population. The politics of avarice, moneybags and an entrenched culture of corruption that has permeated the very life of the nation have all added to the emotional travail faced by this class. This class has become precarious, callous and revolutionary. While some of its members have decided to engage the state in a battle of supremacy, some have joined the criminal underworld to perpetrate crimes and social ills that were hitherto unheard of, un-African and un-Nigerian. Government alone does not have the answer to tame this class and redirect its energies and objectives to nation building and social development. It has become a multi-stakeholder imperative.

Theoretical Background

This study seeks to enhance an understanding of this subject within the Marxist-sculpted Social Conflict theory. This theory was architected by Karl Marx who lived between 1818 and 1883. As a revolutionary socialist, Marx was peeved by the inequalities that characterised social and economic relations in his time. According to Marx, every society is divided between a tiny minority that controls the means of production or wealth, political power and social comforts and a large majority who have few resources and most times whose lives, labour and rights are used to further and feather the needs, desires and interests of the minority. For instance, electoral democracy hides under the guise of majority decision making in the selection of or change of leadership. But in the true sense, it is just a legitimatising tool used by the elite to clinch and hold onto political power ad nauseam.

Social conflict theory therefore is a recognition of the bipolarity in which society is structured which favours an aristocratic minority against a precariat majority whose lives and destiny are controlled by the minority, which in most cases also serves as the ruling or dominant class or

what the Occupy Movement considers as the 1% that controls the 99%. Social conflict theory thus emphasises the existence of social, political, or material inequality of a social group within a broader socio-political system which leads ineluctably to conflict between the controlling class and the controlled classes. Marx, Marxists or neo-Marxists believe that the end of this conflict can be reached when the controlled classes rise against the injustices committed against them by overthrowing the unjust system. However, some other conflict theorists believe and admonish that a peaceful means can be negotiated such that the controlling class would be forced to make more concessions that would benefit the dominated classes.

While Social Conflict theory has been criticised for its materialist and historical interpretation of social relations which opponents consider may not be true in all cases, the theory has become an important grundnorm for the understanding of all revolutionary conflicts that take place within the society and how these can be addressed. Although Marx had advocated a radical social change involving proletarian revolution and freedom from the ruling classes, and this has had brief victories in countries such as Russia, China, Cuba and others, the evil side of capitalism or liberal orthodoxy continues to hunt the world, not least developing nations such as Nigeria.

The youth precariat class in Nigeria is growing and becoming audacious by demanding equal access to the resources, rights and privileges that should be accorded to every Nigerian citizen. While the politico-economic template may no longer favour the socialist ideology, its advocacy for the entrenchment of the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity must not be lost on the ruling class else a bloody revolution may be lurking in the shadows.

Contradictions in the Political Economy and Effects on the Youth Precariat Class in Nigeria

There are embedded contradictions in the political economy in Nigeria which if not addressed could push the youth precariat class deeper into anti-social and violent practices within the country. Already a fragile state by the symptoms it manifests, Nigeria cannot afford uprisings led by its youth precariat class spread all across the length and breadth of the country. Some of these contradictions have been highlighted below:

First, recruitment and selection into decent and strategic positions in the economy have become a preserve of the elite and that of their offspring. This appeal to ascription and rather to competence or meritocracy is not only reducing the quality of organisational or national output in the country but has also continued to recycle the same sets of people in important positions in the country. For example, the Central Bank of Nigeria applied to and got a waiver from the Federal Character Commission to employ 513 people without advertisement as required by law. Between 2013 and 2016, the CBN overshot the waiver it had been given by secretly employing additional 396 people in what it termed “targeted recruitment of specialists/experts without advertising” (Udo, 2016; Ukpong, 2016). Sahara Reporters (2016) was able to get the names of 91 of the beneficiaries that were recruited by the bank using the waiver and most of them were children of the elite. These included the nephew of President Muhammadu Buhari, the son of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Abdulrahman Dambazau, son of the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Ibe Kachukwu, son of the outgoing Inspector-General of Police, IGP Solomon Arase, daughter of former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, daughter of former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ghali Na’aba and many others (Sahara Reporters, 2016). This nepotistic recruitment which leaked to Nigerians was meant to be a secret but it eye-catchingly underlines the elite’s rapacious hold on every aspect of Nigeria. This is happening at a time when most educated and qualified Nigerian graduates cannot find a decent job. While the employment of these privileged scions of the elite is not the problem in itself, the process was flawed, as it denied other Nigerians (who are now being treated as denizens) to have a shot at employment in their country’s Central Bank. This attitude of the elite is stretched to other government institutions, ministries, departments and agencies, and even to the private sector where the ruling class maintains a stranglehold on juicy job positions for its family, friends and apparatchiks, thereby regenerating itself in the system unethically and unfairly. This behaviour by the elite and state institutions which favours the interest of the former and even prioritises it forces the youth precariat class to give up on such an obscene system.

Second, Nigeria has one of the most expensive democratic systems in the democratic family of states. And this system favours the elite and their apparatchiks who are sponsored or propped by the former. Within such a system, breakouts into the system by those whose forebears have never been in government are largely impossible because the process is for moneybags, wealthy godfathers, professional politicians and people who have no business with governance.

The expensiveness of the democratic process which has been adequately discussed in other studies (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012; Imhonopi & Urim, 2015a) has continued to throw up charlatans, comedians, bigots, regionalists, professional politicians and a horde of characters some of whom should be spending their time behind bars for causing Nigeria untold pains, stealing from the treasury, promoting violence and ignoring investments in young Nigerians who are both the hope of the present and the future. In such a system, governance becomes a conduit pipe for the amassment of wealth from the public treasury and politics becomes the portal to a life of ease and luxury. This conundrum hits at the precariat class who see the democratic system as one that protects, promotes and perpetuates the interests, desires and needs of the ruling class.

Third, and a corollary to the above, the political party system in Nigeria does not support excellence, brilliant ideas, nationalist or patriotic fervour but yields to subterranean interests in the form of godfatherism or political demagogues who are the gatekeepers, the regulators, the arbiters and the determiners of the fate of candidates, shape and character of parties, political party manifestoes, and party politics in Nigeria. This process does not allow the rise of young and bright Nigerians to have a chance and voice at determining the political process in the country, leaving the youth precariat on the sidelines where revolutionary fervour is conceived and fertilised.

Even when the party process seems fair, the electoral process goes to the highest bidder. Although electoral outcomes have improved lately, the process is still spattered with a lot of corruption and underhand dealings. This means that when a young Nigerian with ideas even succeeds at getting elected at the primaries, it does not mean he or she can scale the hurdle of winning national elections because the hurdles are high, steep, and prejudiced in nature.

Fifth, another very strong contradiction is the banking system which has fallen into the hands of the elite and provides a safe harbour for stolen public funds, launders money for the corrupt elite and approves gargantuan loan requests to fund spurious, non-existent and non-business projects owned by the elite. Most of such loans have gone bad. In a country where young Nigerians cannot access decent jobs, banks are incapable of providing the needed capital to stimulate entrepreneurship development. Monies allocated for such purposes, even though inadequate, are still cornered by the elite or their fronts or surrogates to run their already lavish businesses. The banks are also criminal at bringing up impossible criteria which youth entrepreneurs cannot meet which therefore means that such monies go to those who should not

have any business with requests for small finance. In this kind of climate, the youth precariat becomes exasperated and disenchanted at such a callous system and design ways to punish the society for such brazen inequality in place.

Sixth, there has been lack of meritocracy in the selection of public leaders which results in poor leadership bereft of ideas. Every political leadership formed in the country reflects and represents the wishes and interests of a strong elite cabal. The people are mere contraptions used to facilitate access to leadership after which they are abandoned until another year of election creeps on the populace when they would return to the local people demanding another round of support for themselves or their candidates or both. This kind of grand deception further pushes the youth precariat class on the fringes, widening the disconnect between the government and young Nigerians.

Seventh, public officials are not only corrupt but corruption has also become official in Nigeria. From public institutions to the private sector, every process that has something to do with the public or the people is tinged with this cancer. And because the political leadership lacks the morality to checkmate the system because it is also corrupt, the system is allowed to suffer downward spiral ad infinitum. This has further brought the people in conflict with the amoral leadership in place, limited the realisation of the development potential of the nation (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013) and further alienated the members of the youth precariat from such a dishonest crop of leaders.

Lastly, government policies seem to favour their families, friends and cronies. Any policy put in place is seen to favour those at the top of social pecking order first before it trickles down to those below. This tradition of government of the 1%, for the 1%, and by the 1% is alienating, frustrating, provocative and pushes the youth precariat into the hands of revolutionary forces and anarchists who may desire to use these youths to topple or replace such an unfavourable governance process (Imhonopi & Urim, 2015b).

THE IMPERATIVE OF A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INTERVENTION

There is no better time for a multi-stakeholder intervention to correct the contradictions that predominate within the political economy in the country than now. This is why this study argues that other stakeholders within the Nigerian must join hands with government and

compel it and existing state institutions to abide by the rule of law and evolve a governance process and leadership that will inspire trust and commitment in the people.

First, government has to become more responsible and responsive to the needs of the citizens. It must evolve policies and programmes that are people-centred, people-driven and even people-authored. There is need for deliberative democracy and participatory leadership where the people become the core of government's focus and form the basis for government's decisions, plans and programmes. Playing the ostrich or throwing a blind eye at the string of injustices that exist in the country will harden the centrifugal forces in place, and further push many members of the precariat into the criminal economy and armed conflict which may spell doom for the Nigerian state. Government needs to improve on its governance processes, be guided by the rule of law in all it does, must rein in erring members, punish the guilty and provide leadership by example. This will send a signal to the rest of the population that the Augean stables are being cleansed and that justice, fairness and equity have returned to the political and leadership process in the country. This will also restore the faith of the youth population in Nigeria and rather than push them away from government, it will draw these youth closer to government and bring out the best and not the worst in them.

Second, there is deep rot in the public sector and the challenge is not that there is rot in that system but that government and public officials are not doing enough to address such rot. (Perhaps with time, Nigerians will know how sincere the new civilian government of President Muhammadu Buhari is regarding his avowed fight against corruption.) The public sector is vital to the policy formulation process in the country, and aids the achievement of government programmes. Without it, government will at best find it difficult if not impossible to implement its programmes or to provide the human resources it requires to prepare, process and package its programmes for the people. Government in tandem with the public sector must begin to improve the ethical conduct of public officials, thus restoring the confidence of the people in public institutions.

Third, the private sector is an important organ in the modern state. It is the arm that generates commerce, funding and creative ideas and innovation which in turn impact the labour market and economy positively. Without a sound, professional, ethically run and managed private sector, the economy and labour market will be comatose. This is why excellence, meritocracy, ethical conduct, professionalism, creativity, innovation, adventurism, bold initiatives and social responsibility programmes, among others should be spun off by this very important economic

actor. One area that the private sector will do well to support the government is to show more social responsibility in critical areas like education, provision of medical facilities, infrastructure and youth-related projects as a way of investing in youths, supporting their dreams, making life easier for them and helping them reach the crest of their goals. This will help to assuage the pains that the youth precariat feel and draw them away from anarchical tendencies or sirens. It will also redound well for the country in terms of having the human assets needed to drive industrial and national output, and having a rich leadership pipeline to draw from anytime the need arises.

Fourth, faith organisations have reorientation roles to play in the Nigerian project. They are supposed to speak the truth to power, guide the youth in the path that is right, speak against any evil practice that takes place in society and encourage young Nigerians to follow the path of hard work, commitment to duty, honour and integrity. As a specialist at moral suasion, faith or religious institutions should avoid encouraging acts or words that polarise the country, set its people against one another and that do not help to bind the wounds of the people. They must continue to play the role of bridges through which the people can reach the ruling class to make their demands, needs and interests known to them.

Fifth, the civil society must also continue to support government by playing complementary roles and taking over projects or services where its members have comparative strengths and advantages. The civil society must also continue to act as the watch dog that keeps government and the ruling class on their toes and that demands excellence in the governance and leadership processes in the country.

Sixth, the media also has all-important roles to play in keeping government on its toes, setting the agenda that will favour citizens, including the precariat class, monitoring and reporting the actions of those in power and making them accountable to the people. The media is an important instrument without which a democratic system cannot survive. Therefore, they must continue to insist that the actions of government and the ruling class abide by the constitution of the land and by the rule of law and whistle up the people when elected and appointed officials of state are derailing. They must continue to discharge their whistle-blower functions without fear or favour and in doing so, they must carry the people along so that those in positions of authority will know that they are always under the radar and will be forced to live up to expectations.

Lastly, Nigeria is a member of the international community and as such whatever happens in the country either for good or bad will spill over to its near and distant neighbours. For example, the Boko Haram terrorism since 2009 has led to the deaths of many Nigerians and non-Nigerians and caused a huge humanitarian crisis which many of Nigeria's neighbours have partly borne. The international community must continue to support efforts by the government of the day to achieve internal security, human and national development and quality leadership. The international community must also continue to demand the best of leadership from the ruling class and the widening of the political and economic spaces to accommodate more Nigerians and not just a select privileged few.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conflict between the privileged class and the not-so privileged classes in Nigeria will continue unabated until certain social, political and economic dysfunctions are corrected. Nigeria cannot afford to increase its fragility by allowing a large segment of the populace to be discriminated against or marginalised by government or its representatives. The contradictions embedded within the political economy in the country are not irreversible and the earlier they are reversed, the better for peace to be restored in the country. Government must continue to play the roles of a bridge builder, a youth empowerment provider and vanguard, an equaliser and enabler, making it possible for all citizens to access state resources, rights and privileges fairly and without favour. Government must also be quick to attend to areas that are found to be discriminatory against citizens and endeavour to create a system that gives citizens the opportunity to voice out when wrongs are committed against them.

Nigeria cannot afford to lose the advantage of the youth demographic bulge it presently has. It must ensure through the government and public institutions that the legitimate needs of its youths in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, housing, income generation, quality of life and security are prioritised and are enshrined as the grundnorm of government's business. Anything outside of these may eventually fast-track the looming cataclysm already on the horizon.

The following proposals have been expressed elsewhere but their timeliness and anticipated utility in taming the youth precariat in the country require some fresh accentuation (Imhonopi & Urim, 2015b).

Government needs to run an accountable, open and transparent leadership built on the fundamentals of fairness, equity and justness in all its rapprochements with the ethnic nationalities that mosaic the Nigerian state.

Widening the entrepreneurial space in order that many more Nigerian graduates and young people interested in building their own businesses can do so should be supported as a matter of urgency. Authors lend their voices with the International Labour Organisation and other well-meaning national and international bodies and individuals canvassing for compulsory payment of a monthly basic income to its precariat class. It is presently being done in India and Brazil and Nigeria can and should spare the monies spent on wasteful sprees to give hope to these youths. Creating a youth bank and supporting this with a special youth fund acting as an angel investment platform can help to provide the needed financing that youth entrepreneurs or gifted and creative Nigerian youths need to have a good chance at life. Government could also consider establishing an Employment Commission focused on attacking youth unemployment in Nigeria. Compulsory free education at the primary and secondary school levels must be sustained or introduced in parts of the country where this has not been done. The improvement and modernisation of the nation's education curricula have become a prerequisite if Nigerian youths must become competitive in a global world that is ever changing. All stakeholders in the Nigerian project, which includes the business sector, civil society, the faith sector, non-governmental development organisations, and wealthy Nigerians, must all support positive initiatives that can move many, if not all, members in the youth precariat class out of their precarity, guaranteeing them a place in mainstream society where they too can enjoy the full benefits of bearing the Nigerian citizenship.

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