

# THE 'UNDER CARPET SWEEPING' SYNDROME OF URBAN VIOLENCE MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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## ABSTRACT

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The developing countries have peculiar challenges which are related to the modality of managing violence and related matters. It is the duty of the state to secure the lives and property of the citizens promptly. What is usually obtained in many developing countries is micromanagement and jettisoning of important security matters. Therefore, the syndrome obtained when urgent security issues are abandoned or partially executed and when major aspects of curbing violence is jettisoned and the minor part is politically magnified, then essentialities of the germane issues is the 'under-carpet sweeping' syndrome. A time of relapse may ensue when under carpet syndromes becomes unbearable. The repercussion will be a wide spread violence or at the magnitude of civil war. The research question spotlight is what are the effects of organised abandonments of potential security threats on safety and development in most developing and some developed countries. The notion of relative deprivation theory is used to justify organised abandonments of major issues in the democratic regimes. Afrobarometer database is analysed to deduce the state of (in) security in five countries across Africa. The recommendation posited is that governments should allow best practice and prompt action on security matters. Conclusion is premised on the fact that when security matters are treated with levity and salient issues are swept under-carpet, violence will multiply in the country.

**Keywords:** Crime; democracy; development; leadership; relative deprivation and violence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Urban violence has its way of occurring and reoccurring in every political system. In fact, every government of the world have faced different forms of violence with different magnitude in their respective polity at a point in time. In modest terms many governments are still facing challenges of urban violence in countries across the world (Akinwale and Aderinto, 2012; Auyero and Berti, 2015; Moser and McIlwaine, 2014; Aluko, 2017). It is important to note that most developed countries have more serious urban violence

embattling their states than the developing states. The developed nations of the world had been able to curb the menace effectively without much stress or serious break-down of law and order.

Urban violence constitutes various violations of order in urban or semi urban areas which constitutes to a serious social problem. Urban violence is often centred upon the transgressions of the urban settings, norms and conducts which makes lives difficult. Generally, it is framed and interpreted as criminal violence. Within this context, it includes state failure or the inability of state representatives to provide security to the lives and properties of the citizens regardless of their geographical locations (urban, semi urban or rural locations). Urban violence includes physical and psychological harm, intentional fatalities, assault and sexual violence and as well an indirect manifestation that negatively affect other aspects of livelihoods, social relations and wellbeing of an individual such as corruption and money laundry (Aluko, 2018a; 2019a; 2020a).

The situation of messy scenario of lingered political, social, economic and institutional violence persist in the cases of most developing states of the world in recent times and much more in Africa. This is due to the fact that serious and potential violence generating issues are stylishly avoided. If they are eventually handled, they are grossly-poorly handled and at the worse sensitive issues are swept under the carpet so as to achieve imaginary and temporary peace.

Political smile and pretence form the order of the day in most polity in African states where major political and violence-sensitive matters are practically avoided and the remains is a white-washed sepulchre in the public and mass media over the palliative temporal measures adopted by the political administrators in curbing minor violence but leaving out the potential and major ones (Auyero et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Muggah, 2014; McIlwaine, 2014; Aluko, 2016). Sensitive issues in Africa and developing polities like culture, religion, resource control, education level, poverty rate, political representation and general ethnicity constitute the most frontline issues that constitute the major urban violence in Africa.

The political management of these highly sensitive issues is simply short circuited by settling the head of the major stakeholders in form of patronage and prebender strategies which include the diversion of public resources for private use (Moser and McIlwaine, 2014; Reid-Henry and Sending, 2014; Rendón, 2014; Aluko, 2020b). The strategies of prebender politics (the diversion of public resources for private use) and patronage politics works very well to curb violence that might erupt immediately in the polity so it tactically postpones it to the future. The implication of these tactics is that potential violence issues are swept under the carpet, the carpet will be over bluffed-up after a time and this illness will eventually lead to catastrophe and total breakdown of law and order in the polity.

The under carpet sweeping of issues that constitute urban violence in Africa is a continuous, regular and administrative trend which had become the bottle neck in most polity. The eventual unveiling of the carpet is the manifestation of the political, economic and social realities in the polity which normally degenerates into violence and break-down of law and order in the state. On the contrary view, the developed states are also faced with these same political, social, economic and institutional challenges but they simply take the bull by the horn cleanly so as to prevent the backward politics of urban violence (Muggah and Savage, 2012; Humphrey, 2013; Muggah, 2012; Watts, 2013; Le Bas, 2013).

This paper unveils the reason why urban violence is persistent and will remain persistent for a long time in many developing states across the globe and especially in Africa. Therefore, the research question is what are the effects of organised abandonments of potential security threats on safety and development in most developing and some developed countries? The theoretical framework of deprivation theory is used to explain the reason why violence keeps erupting in Africa and most developing economies of the world. The methodology adopted compares five African states based on geographical location and democratic experience so as to see the peoples' perception of safety and government's effort in curbing violence in their respective states.

This work recommended mainly an effective tackling of potential identifiable sources of violence in the polity right on time regardless of the initial pain which it may accrue to the state believing that it may accrue more if ill-handled. The conclusion is premised on the fact that all nations of the world have different levels of urban violence but the level and manner of handling either mitigate its aftermath or aggravate it.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Under carpet-sweeping principles, practices and syndromes

The under carpet-sweeping phenomenon is an act of covering up an action which should have been given a public spectrum and debate. It is an act of making people look less on government's affairs because 'the more they look, the less they see and understand'. It brings about the system of stage-managing government actions so as to deceive the people from the plain truth (Aremu and Aluko, 2017; Aluko, 2019a). This is to

achieve a state of neglect in the public domain of what should have been done for another time so as to reduce the public criticism impact.

The under carpet-sweeping principles and practices rely on the power of the government to confuse the people on their actions and intentions by covering up the truth from the public domain. The public may know a little of the truth but not the whole truth about the government business, profits and expenditures. Another cogent principle is the stage-managing of the press and medium of mass communication. This prevents the mass media from broadcasting about the ills and mishap deeds of the government but rather the good deeds and in many situations over report what the government has done without in-depth analysis of how it was done, when it was done, where it was done and why it was done.

This principle encompasses the use of instrument of fear on the masses and oppositions to government. The under carpet-sweeping strive when people are intimidated by the government by the use of force and state security agents. This will prevent most people from asking questions and reacting in the public by demanding explanations from the government. The use of political propaganda and endless promises without corresponding actions by the government is another principle. This involves the government's endless promises to give the people a good and befit able living standard but will end up doing it only for their loyalists, friends and families at the expense of the whole country.

The syndromes of under carpet-sweeping practices are numerous. A foremost syndrome is that the government will be labelled as corrupt and non-transparent in its deeds. Another syndrome of backdoor politics is that it will give rise to ethnic bigotry; religious chauvinism in the distribution of public goods will be pervasive. It will also result into patron-client politics. A patron-client politics involves the giving or taking of bribes and kickbacks for performing government services to be delivered to the people (Aluko, 2019b). Prebendal politics which involves the diversion of government fund to private uses and the use of public offices for private benefits at the expense of the general public will also be a syndrome in governments that engaged in under carpet-sweeping politics.

Patrimonial politics is another syndrome which thrives and become more pervasive in under carpet-sweeping politics. This is a situation where a few families will lay claim to the entire public chief and top offices so as to continue to cover up some deeds and to remain politically relevant. This practices of under carpet-sweeping in many climes also breeds political assassinations of perceived informants, top secret cover-ups, militarization of politics, the promotion of the use of gangs to foment violence, urban violence and civil upheaval so as to undercover some mishaps and makes the public focus their attentions on other things other than demand on government's accountability (Aluko, 2018b).

## 2.2 Deprivation theory

The theory of deprivation as applied in this work implies deprivation due to unequal distribution of political social and economical largess. The theory does not claim that in all social groups one will find consensus in values—rather it considers some of the consequences of situations where there is no consensus. Where people do not agree on values, relative deprivation can also be noticed. The theory came out of a need to understand the motivations behind the social activist movements of the 1960's. It seeks to give answers to questions like; what is the impetus that motivates an individual to agitate for a change in his life?

The theory posits that (collective) action stems from individuals' psychological reactions to the gap between expected circumstances and actual ones. The gap becomes apparent when they perceive themselves to be in a relatively unjust position vis-à-vis another person or group to which they might reasonably compare themselves (Tougas and Beaton, 2002). For instance, an individual might expect to have access to higher education for a variety of reasons; he is of the right age, he is obviously very bright, and he has prepared himself by studying at home. Other obvious fact that degenerate to urban violence and agitation is maybe one does not have the access that one might be expecting and then perceive himself to have been relatively deprived compared to people of his age.

Alam (2013) and Saleh (2013) also noted that the key to understanding the feeling of deprivation is a matter of which of these characters are comparing themselves with. Why do they think they deserve better than what they have? Who is their point of comparison? What choices do they think they should have opened to them? Relative deprivation theorists have suggested that perhaps it is not Ego Relative Deprivation (ERD) that motivates individuals, but rather perceptions of group, or collective relative deprivation (CRD). CRD occurs when the individual feels that his or her group has been deprived. This is a major reason why violence eruption in Africa and most developing economies is prominent and regular. Various groups and interests in the state might bear neglect and deprivation for a while but after some times the marginal propensity and the elastic limit of the various groups to bear the marginalization becomes exceeded therefore agitations, protest and violence inevitably ensues.

In developing countries, a major reason for protest and several agitations is because the government is not utilising the right tool to satisfy the yearning of the citizens. The rule of law which should be the yardstick

of operations in public and private offices has been sidetracked. Patrimonial politics is utilised to circumvent the right of the citizens to be utilised by a single or few people. The distribution of goods and service are channelled through backdoor so as to enrich a few people and impoverish the masses. Instead of equitable distribution of public resources so as to reduce the extent of urban violence, redundancy and selective appeasement of some people are resulted into. These divide and rule tactics 'only sweep under the carpet' or postpone the likelihood of violence in the community and not effectively prevent it.

In such divide and rule tactics, relative deprivation of the people through ethnicity and religion becomes a tool for under carpet sweeping of perceived violent issues. Whenever ethnicity and religion sentiments are factor into the control of violence, the systematic procedures that must be followed in other to control the menace will be jettison in favour of a group. Ethnicity leads to ethnic bigotry where an individual serves the purpose of an ethnic group as opposed to the others. This as well breeds religious chauvinism leading to group segregation from an inclusive policy formulation and actions. The excluded group interest might not be taken into action further leading into future potential crises.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted uncovers the perception of people in five Africa states based on geographical location and democratic experience so as to find out the effects of organised abandonments of potential security threats on safety and development in most developing and some developed country. The countries include Nigeria is selected in West Africa, South Africa is selected in Southern Africa, Egypt is selected in North Africa while Tanzania and Kenya are selected in East Africa. The peoples' perceptions are measured on how government had handled violent conflicts in various states and how often they felt their lives and properties are unsafe in their neighbourhood. The data from Afrobarometer Data (2018a and 2018b) database is utilised, analysed and interpreted. About two thousand four hundred samples per country were collected through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentage and graphical illustrations are used to analyse the result

### 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A cogent question that this work carefully analyses is how the government of the selected countries have fared in the resolution and management of violent conflicts in their respective polities. This is to justify the fact that violent conflict emanates from organise abandonment of the government which is caused by poor policy execution and procrastination of issues that have potential violent traits. This is usually done by under carpet sweeping of such cogent issues in the polity and its usual aftermath is urban violence. This in turn has an encompassing effect on the socio-political, economic, institutional and psychological well-being of the people.

The following questions are therefore asked the respective populace of the selected African states so as to ascertain the reality of under carpet-sweeping of potential violent issues in their countries. The questions are also meant to confirm the repercussion of the under carpet-sweeping. These include: How had the government resolved violent conflict in their respective states? How often do you feel unsafe walking in neighbourhood due to security issues in the country?

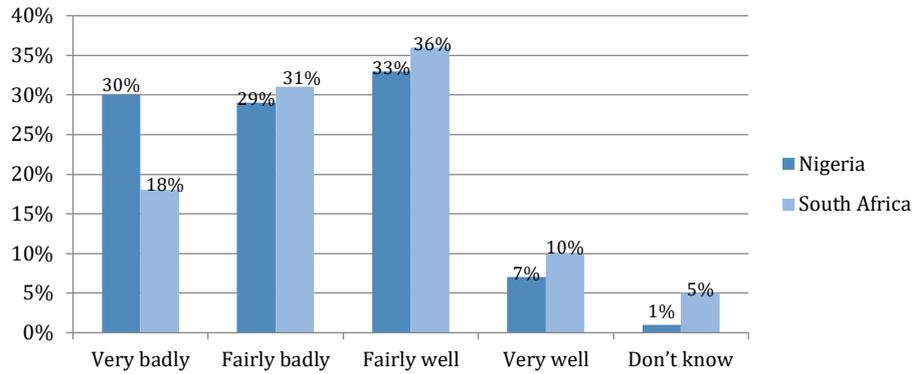
#### 4.1 How government had resolved violent conflict?

**Table 1:** Violent Conflict Resolved by Government per Country

Parameters	Nigeria	South Africa	Kenya	Tanzania	Egypt
Very badly	30%	18%	25%	15%	47%
Fairly badly	29%	31%	19%	25%	36%
Fairly well	33%	36%	44%	47%	10%
Very well	7%	10%	7%	12%	1%
Don't know	1%	5%	4%	1%	6%

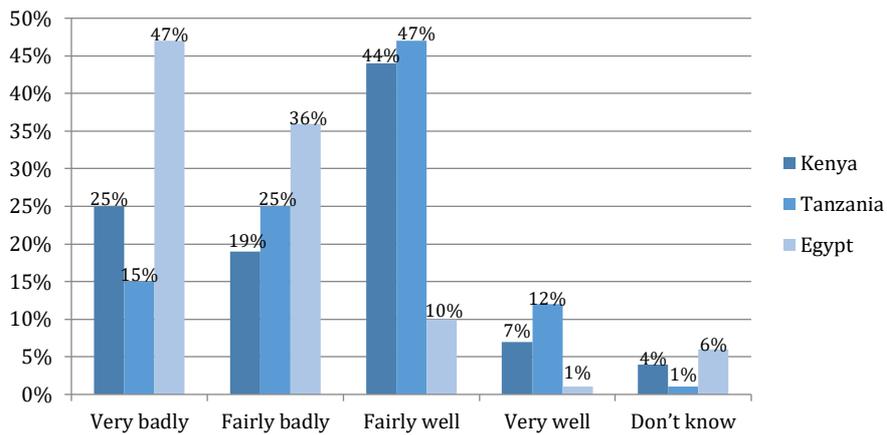
Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018a)

**How had Government Resolved Violent Conflict?**



**Figure 1:** Violent Conflict Resolved by Government per Country  
Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018a)

**How had Government Resolved Violent Conflict?**



**Figure 2:** Violent Conflict Resolved by Government per Country  
Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018a)

From the Figure 1, it is evident that fifty-nine percent (59%) of the West Africa country Nigerian perceived that how violent conflict are resolved in the country is badly handled while forty percent (40%) believed that it is well enough to be reckoned with. This infers that violence resolution in Nigeria is not effectively managed. However, forty-nine percent (49%) of the South Africans perceived that violent conflict resolution in their country is badly handled while forty-six percent (46%) considered it to be well handled. This infers that violence resolution in South Africa is slightly effective.

Moreover, in Figure 2, forty-four percent (44%) of the East African country of Kenya perceived that violent conflict resolution in their country is badly handled while fifty-one percent (51%) considered it to be well handled. This infers that violence resolution in Kenya is slightly effective. The situation of violent conflict resolution in the North Africa country Egypt takes a total turn around as eighty-three percent (83%) perceived that how violent conflict are resolved in the country is badly handled while eleven percent (11%) an insignificant minority sees the handling of violence as well managed in the country. The situation in Tanzania a state in Africa shows that forty-percent (40%) of the population perceived that violent conflict management had been bad so far while fifty nine percent (59%) which is a significant proportion of the populace submitted that violence had been effectively managed in the country.

However, by inference, the management of violent conflict in Nigeria can be judged to be ineffective and falls to the category of states that covers up vital security issues which have the capability of escalating to violent conflict with mere sentiments and unmeritorious manner. Instead of meticulous analysis of the future eventualities, invaluable potential violent issues are under carpet swept which makes the polity to constantly remain unsafe in some cases to live in. The case of South Africa is in a balance of an unhealthy summary. The state's handling of violent conflict is simply fair in most cases and in few cases they are worse. Therefore, it makes the polity to be in an undecided state. An element of under carpet sweeping of vital conflict issues is slightly evident. The polity is mostly divided between the good policy and bad execution which makes the next policy a potential spot to settle the dilemma.

Furthermore, the inference drawn in Kenya and Tanzania cases shows a slightly deviant from the status quo in West and South African states. The management of violent conflict is not too effective and well managed but a little more democratic (Wegenast and Beck, 2020). This is slightly evident in the handling of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group in a more democratic manner than the West Africa counterpart handling of Boko Haram and Hamas in North Africa which had been politicized in handling. This shows that good policy and purposive execution in other to suppress the protraction of violence. A little or none of under carpet sweeping of issues is mostly evident. Notwithstanding this, Egypt a North Africa state has an extreme case of bad violent conflict management. This shows a great deal of breakdown of law and order in the polity. The most evident pointer is the fact that basic conflict issues were lightly handled and largely swept under the carpet which escalated into violent conflicts within the polity.

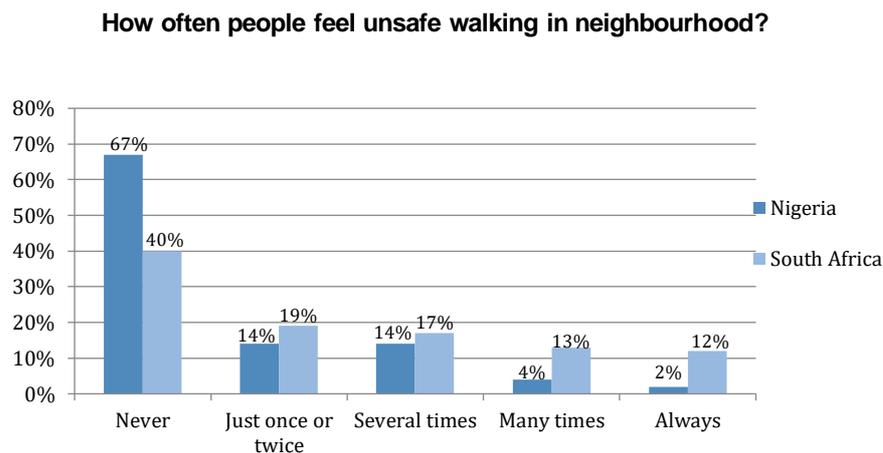
Another question that this work carefully analyses is how often the people of the selected countries feel safe or unsafe walking in their respective neighbourhoods. This is to confirm the resultant effect of urban violence on the polity and to justify the fact that violent conflict has an encompassing effect on the socio-political, economic, institutional and psychological well-being of the people.

#### 4.2 How often people feel unsafe walking in neighbourhood?

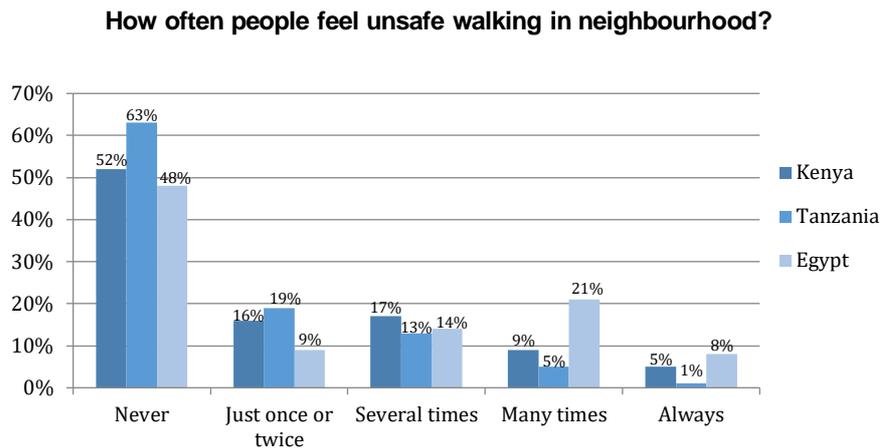
**Table 2:** Safety in the Neighbourhood per Country

Parameters	Nigeria	South Africa	Kenya	Egypt	Tanzania
Never	67%	40%	52%	48%	63%
Just once or twice	14%	19%	16%	9%	19%
Several times	14%	17%	17%	14%	13%
Many times	4%	13%	9%	21%	5%
Always	2%	12%	5%	8%	1%

Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018b)



**Figure 3:** Safety in the Neighbourhood per Country  
Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018b)



**Figure 4:** Safety in the Neighbourhood per Country  
Source: Afrobarometer Data (2018b)

From the Figure 3, it is evident that sixty-seven percent (67%) of the citizens of the West Africa country Nigerian perceived that they have never felt unsafe in the country while about thirty four percent (34%) perceived that they are not all that safe in their respective neighbourhood. This infers that despite the level of violence in Nigeria, a large number of the citizen believe that they are safe within the country. However, forty percent (40%) of the South Africans perceived that they have never felt unsafe in the country while about sixty percent (60%) perceived that they are not all that safe in their respective neighbourhood. This infers that the level of violence in South Africa had made a large number of the citizen to believe that they are safe within the country.

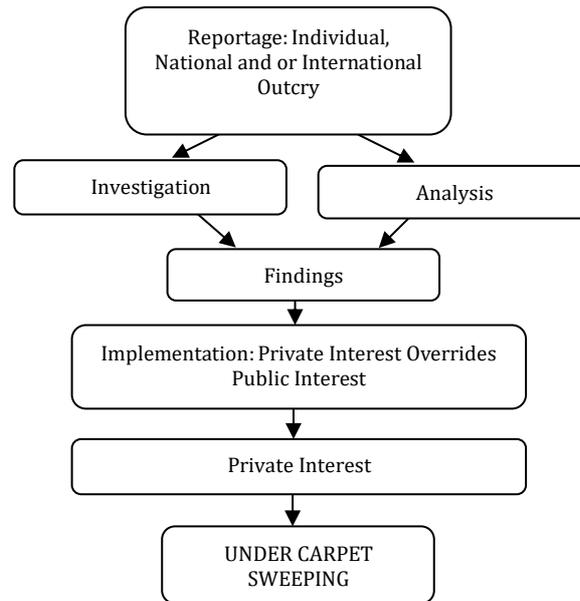
Moreover, in Figure 4, fifty-two percent (52%) of the East African country Kenya perceived that they have never felt unsafe in the country while about forty-seven percent (47%) perceived that they are not all that safe in their respective neighbourhood. This infers that the level of violence in Kenya had made a significant number of the citizen to believe that they are unsafe within the country despite the government's response in handling such issues. The situation of the level of safety in the North Africa country Egypt takes a typical outlook like that of Kenya as forty-eight percent (48%) perceived that they have never felt unsafe in the country while forty-two percent (42%) perceived that they are not all that safe in their respective neighbourhood. This infers that the level of violent conflict in Egypt had made a significant number of the citizen to believe that they are unsafe within the country.

The situation in Tanzania, a country in Africa, shows that sixty-three percent (63%) of the population perceived that they have never felt unsafe in the country while about thirty-seven percent (37%) perceived that they are not all that safe in their respective neighbourhood. This infers that the level of violent conflict in Tanzania had made a less significant number of the citizen to believe that they are unsafe within the country.

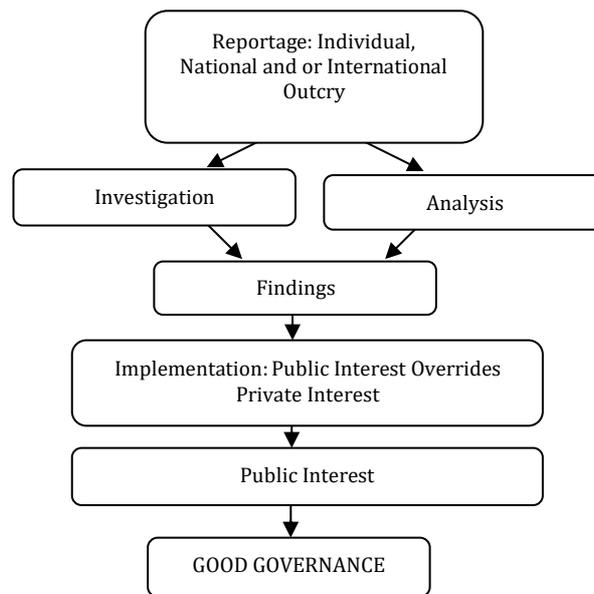
However, by inference, the level of safety in Nigeria can be adjudged to be in a moderate level despite the emergence of violent crimes that befell the polity of late. However, the level of insecurity is on the increase (Aluko, 2020a). The case of South Africa is in a typical unhealthy balance. The state's handling of violent conflict is simply fair in most cases and in few cases they are worse. The handling of xenophobic attacks by the government has made the country to be a harbinger of reappraisal attacks on different nationals resulting into fissure in the international relations (Hickel, 2014; Aluko and Ogunnubi, 2018). Therefore, whenever there is an element of frequent backdoor politics and under carpet sweeping of vital conflict issues in a country, it makes the polity to be relatively unsafe and in an insecure state. Such a country will have divided political agenda, high level of civil disobediences and mistrust in government agenda. The mistrust will give rise to bad execution of good policy and makes every government actions a potential spot of violence (van Weezel, 2020).

Furthermore, the inference drawn in Kenya and Tanzania cases are slightly similar to the status quo in West African state. The management of violent conflict is slightly ineffective and not well managed. The level of safety within the state is not in a clear balanced with the result measured in the management of violence especially in the case of Kenya (Snodgrass and Achieng, 2019; Klaus, 2020). The findings confirm that a little of under carpet sweeping of security threatening issues is evident in Egypt a North Africa state. The case however has a similar trend with that of her South Africa counterpart. The level of safety as perceived by the citizens is relatively low. This confirms a great deal of breakdown of law and order in the polity (Pratt and Rezk, 2019; Cook, 2020). The most evident pointer confirms as a cause is the fact that basic conflict issues were lightly handled and largely swept under the carpet which leads to violent conflicts within the polity.

### 4.3 Model of under carpet sweeping and good governance



**Figure 5:** Model of Under Carpet Sweeping Syndrome



**Figure 6:** Model of Good Governance

These are the processes of interference in the due course of justice, rule of law and peace finding missions. Figure 5 reveals that issues of national and international interests are swept under the carpet whenever there is interference in the process of reportage, investigation and analysis of a social menace. The two main interferences are the public interference and the private interference.

Aluko (2020b) revealed that the private interference operated through backdoor politics and it is characterised with bad, selfish, egocentric and parochial interest which may emanate during the processes of investigation, analysis and presentation of the findings proceeding from a societal menace. The public interference is the good, objective, collectivist interference that encompasses the wishes of the general masses on the societal menaces that is been reported, investigated and analysed.

Whenever the private interest which may be from a few individuals, government personnel or an international agency prevails over the public interest in the investigation and presentation of findings as well as in the execution process of reported findings of a societal mishap, the end result will be a classic case of under carpet sweeping syndrome of the report in favour of the few individual or organization (Kalu, 2017;

Aluko, 2018b; Mills, 2018). This will promote more mishaps, urban violence, crises and illicit behaviours in the community.

However, from the Figure 6, when public interest which may be from the collective will of citizens, international community support and general opinion polls prevail over the private interest in the investigation and presentation of findings as well as in the execution process of the reported findings of a societal mishap, the end result will be a classic case of good governance (Dibua, 2017; Garcia-Zamor, 2019). This will be in the interest of the general public other than in favour of the few individual. This will promote peace, tranquillity, progress, growth and development in the community.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This work considers the repercussions of when urgent security issues are abandoned, if eventually done, but partially executed in the polity. The under carpet sweeping terminology is conceived to show why violence eventually erupts in states. This is premised on the fact that a time will come when beneath the carpet will be full, burgs out and disallows a proper walk over, then the terror postponed will suddenly unleashed on the polity and major urban violence will ensue.

The research question spotlight is why there are organised abandonments of potential security challenges left improperly treated in most developing and some developed polities. This question is then answered by adopting the Afrobarometer database research. This revealed that the government had fared relatively fair in the management of violent conflict in the five selected states in Africa. Also, it is further justified by seeing the level of safety of the people of the community in their respective abodes. The notion of deprivation theory is used to justify organised abandonments of major issues in the democratic regimes.

Specifically, the study reveals that government had not fared well in the handling of violent conflict in Nigeria but the people still feel safe within the country. This is not so for South Africa as the people perceived unsafe within the polity despite government improved management of violent conflict. However, in the states of Kenya and Tanzania, the perception of the people to government's handling of violent conflict is relatively fair while the level of their perceived safety is also relatively stable. The case is deviant in the case of Egypt as the perception of the populace on both the government's handling of violent conflict is poor and the level of safety is in the community is also very weak.

It is therefore recommended that the government at all levels should make a recirculation of policies that had been proven to work in curbing urban violence in most countries with slight modifications or no modification. This is usually basic amenities providing policies for the deprived populace in both the suburb and the urban areas.

The habit of abandonment of potentially conflict issue such as revenue derivation formula, federal character principles implementations, state creation and boundary adjustment among others cogent issues should be checked in the polity for proper coordination by both government agencies and the general populace. These issues should be treated specifically involving all necessary stakeholders and not to be procrastinated.

The under carpet sweeping syndrome and mere postponement of cogent and sensitive security issues should be avoided. A critical projection to the future of any eventualities should be tabled and analyses by relevant professionals and security experts at every stage of development of the country so as prevent a state of collapse polity.

Agencies that monitor security issues in the state should be well equipped so as to be able to curtail the growth and trend of modern violence in the community. The art of better equipping also requires a better remuneration so as not to compromise to the highest bidder between the government and the political demagogues.

The key recommendation posited is that governments should allow best practice and prompt action on security matters so as to curtail the trend and dimensions of urban violence in the country. Nevertheless, conflict cannot be totally eradicated in human endeavours but it can be best reduced to a possible minimal level if prompt actions are taken on economic, political and security matters in the country and under carpet-sweeping syndromes, principles and practices are curtailed.

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