Review of Political Violence: The Nigerian Experience of Youth in Political Violence

Mohammed Umar Bashir[1], Kamsiah Bt. Ali[2], Lucy Sebli Siedelson[3]

[1]University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

[2]University Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia

[3]University Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia

Abstract: *There has been much scholarly research all over the world on difference aspects of political violence such as on causes, sponsors, effects and etc. Violence may have various effects on human on elections and democracy as a system of government. But despites the numerous researches other research are still going on about political violence but yet there is no single literature that explains all patterns of political violence. As such there are persistence acts of political violence in developing countries like Africa and Nigeria in particular. It was against this background this paper using secondary data reviewed the existing literatures on political violence and explains the experience of youth involvement into political violence as a dynamic pattern of political violence in Nigeria. This paper also concludes that no literature on political violence that explains all patterns of political violence due to how it varies from society to society base on the levels of their economic and social developments. As such each needs to be studied independently with the view to understand their patterns. Furthermore, the paper recommends that other studies should be conducted to investigate the factors influencing youth into the acts political violence.*

Keywords: Political violence, Youth and Nigerian experience

1. Introduction

There has been much scholarly research all over the world on difference aspects of political violence such as on causes, sponsors, effects and etc. Violence may have various effects on human on elections and democracy as a system of government. But despites the numerous researches other research are still going on about political violence but yet there is no single literature that explains all patterns of political violence as such there are persistence acts of political violence in developing countries like Africa and Nigeria in particular. This could means there are other aspect of political violence that are yet to be explore or could be as a results of the continues changing patterns of political violence. It is at this background that this paper intends to review the existing literatures on political violence with the view to understand the dynamism of political violence as well explaining the experience the involvement of youth into political violence.

2. Methodology

This paper implored the method of content analysis in other words this paper reviewed the existing secondary data from journals books and Newspapers on political violence. The review is meant to understand the differences in literatures on political violence from difference societies, whether it's could explains the reasons why no single literature that explains all patterns of political violence in various societies.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Concepts of Youth

The word 'youth' has been defined in difference ways by various scholars and organizations. The United Nation children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2000) defines youth as those between the ages of 15 to 25 years old. While 'youth' according to (UNESCO, 2014), can be best understood as a period of transition from awareness of childhood to adulthoods that is independence as members of a community. Youth is a fluid category than fixed age group. However, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment. Therefore, 'youth' is often defined as a person between the ages where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. This latter age limit has been increasing, as higher levels of unemployment and the cost for household put many young people into a prolong period of dependency (UNESCO, 2014)

Scholars also argued that age based definitions have not been consistent across cultures or time and thus it is more accurate to focus on the social processes in the transition of childhood to adult independence for defining youth (UNESCO, 2014).
But in Nigeria, the Nigerian population commission defined young adult as person between the ages of 18-24 who also has the legal right to vote as adult. While, the 2009 second national policy document of the federal republic of Nigeria, defined youth as both male and female between the ages of 18-35 years old. Therefore, the definition of D' Almeida will be adopted for the purpose of this studies as it captured the age groups of the *Kalare* youth who are involved in political violence in Gombe state.

3.1.1   Concepts of Political Violence

Political violence refers to all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors - including competing political groups as well as incumbent- or its policies (Gurr, 1970; Zimmermann, 2011). While, (Ayang-Nyongo, 1993; Diouf, 1995; Nzogola- Ntalaja, & Lee, 1997), further elaborated that for violence to be political, there must be an intention to change the political process. Thus, the state feels threaten and resorts to aggression to protect itself; this amount to state violence which is a variant of political violence (Fashina, 1989). Furthermore, (Fashina, 1989; Garver, 1977), agreed that political violence means the use of force, usually but not necessarily, physical force, in order to harm or destroy human beings or non human objects, with the intention of preserving or altering political institution, system, government or policies. An act may account as an act of violence, both when used to maintain an existing arrangement and when used to change it.

Where the state instead of being a means of executing the will of the people, becomes a representative of selfish, ethnic and narrow interest and inevitably, becomes coercive machinery to (Dukur, 1991). Particularly when the concept of the state does not seems to reflect the true indigenous value of the citizens. As such the people will not understand the sanctified institution of the state, nor would they have any commitment to it. Furthermore, if the socio economic formations of a state lack an organic relation with the traditions of the people, in such a way that will create a polity expressing the aspiration of the people than that government will lack the majority supports. In other words, it is a situation where the state is not fair to its people and it has denied the citizens to look for their rights through the use of other government machinery such as, the police and army in order to manipulate the public resources for their own selfish interest undermining the needs and aspiration of the general public. Such a state may one day experience a violent reaction by its citizen as a resistance to its violence.

3.1.2   Reviews of Political Violence

Political violence is a global phenomenon although its dynamics differs from one nation to another. A renowned theorist on the role of youth in political violence, Goldstone, argues that youth have been key actors in political violence right from the English Revolution to the Revolutions of 1848, and that the existence of uneducated or unemployed youth may likely be easily co-opted into political violence such as "youth bulge" has historically been associated with a lot of political crisis (Goldstone 1991, 2001)**.** According to Glenn, (2011), America like other nations has a long history of political violence – a dark river of brutality, even savagery that runs through the entire national experience. The American traditional political violence goes back as far as the colonial era, when Nathaniel Becon and sizable number of Virginians rose up in armed rebellion against the royal governor of the colony in 1676. Other armed uprising taken place against colonial authority in New York and Maryland in the late 17th Century (Ibid).

Furthermore, America like Africa has a history of youth violence as far back as in the early 1770"s, when Ethan Allen, the Vermont patriot, led his Green mountain Boys into violent confrontations with New Yorkers over border dispute; while Connecticut Yankees clashed with Pennsylvania for political dominance over the settlements along the Susquehanna River (Ibid). While, Matthew, (1997) in his work on political violence in America, "Civil Strife in the USA", stated that there were about 4381 people that were killed in the United State during the 20th century from political disputes; between 4700 - 5000 people were killed in racial conflicts, while 622 were killed in labour disputes.

Although the experience of political violence in America may differ from that of Africa, but have some similarities. As the political violence in Africa is being traced to the legacy of the colonial era just as the histories of political violence in America has an affiliation with the colonial era (Glenn, 2011). The political system of any nation can be determined by the constitution that governed the nation's electoral process. Elections are known to contribute significantly to the stability of democratic system (Ngaji, 2003).

While, in Latin America the pattern of political violence is such that involved two groups the first is the revolutionary violence group by the oppositions who are advocators of structural change, while the other is known as the conservative's violence by the ruling government that is aimed at maintaining their political system (Calveiro, 2010). However, lack of political and economic opportunity exposed the exclusive governments illegitimacy that gave the oppositions to advance their political aspirations as an alternative by challenging such regimes on the streets (Davis, 2012). As a result of such social movements, the exclusive regimes may also react violently. Hence, the use of political violence by most democratic government with their oppositions as they don't want leave the seat of power as it is also applicable to other countries in the middle east, Asia and Africa. In Egypt, the political violence is such that involved the state apparatus such as, the police, military, and the judiciary, who served as a means of political repression; in the other hand, political violence are also being committed by Non-state actors as indicated by (Mandour, 2014), such as the recurring bombs that have gone off across the country since the overthrow of president Mursi.

While in Egypt, the state apparatus and Non state actors both served as a means of political violence, in Thailand the outburst of violence has multiple factors particularly the Structural factors. These includes the historical concern, religious difference, social and economic marginalization's are some of the sources of local grievances that led to inter ethnic and political crises (Croissant, 2007). These attached reports from both government and nongovernmental organizations, like the human rights organizations in Thailand as it is in African countries like Nigeria. The reports had shown that 1,975 incidence of violence were recorded in Narathiewat, Yala and Pattani in the southern provinces of Thailand particularly between 1993 and 2004. Croissant, further stated that, 573 people were killed and another 542 people were injured involving both civilians and governments security operatives (Ibid). This shows that political violence does not ends within the contesting parties but also affect other innocent citizens as it is seen the case in the above discussions.

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However, political violence in Pakistan has a different patterns as violence are linked to geographical locations, where violence are more in the populous and economically developed the area like Sindh and Punjab. According to the study by (Shapiro, Fair, & Bakhsh, 2012), indicates that violent activities such as assassinations, terrorist attacks and demonstrations are consistent in Punjab and Sindh since 1988. This may be due to how political affairs are coordinated in the urban areas as it is, in African countries as discussed in the previous literatures above.

While, available literatures had shown that both the developed and the developing countries have more or less experienced or still battling with political violence at its initial democratization process. Though the pattern varies from one country to another, but could that means there is no democracy without the experience of political violence. And could that explains why America which is seen as the seed and a model of democracy in the world have the history of political violence like other countries in Africa and Asia. If it is so, then could that also means that political violence is a process of democratisation. For example in Indonesia Bali an Island which was also see as the earthly paradise today, literature had shown that it has records of serious political violence which was rooted to the 1965 Indonesian coup that claimed the lives of 80,000 people or roughly 5 percent of the population died (Robert, C. 1990). The violence also was said to have extended to Java within the same period.

Though, (Jeffrey A Winters, 1997) in a contrary view with Robert, stated that even twenty years before the 1965 Indonesian coup, records had shown that Bali existed more or less in constant state of political violence. Due largely to the political rivalry and war between the princes (Rajas) and the lords which was later followed by final subjugation of the last three Balanise kingdoms between 1906 and 1908 the Politicians are always looking for slight opportunities to instigate violence. Ethnic conflicts seem to be other factors that politicians explore in fomenting violence for their political goals. Now the violence in Indonesia is shows that it was as a result of coup which the main interest was to change the existing leadership, unlike that of Nigeria which is base on regional, religious and party sentiments that has eaten deep into the political systems.

(Wilkinson, 2004) affirmed that, the role of politicians in fomenting political violence is proven for the fact that politician use incentives to foment a situation that can leads to the outbreak of ethnic violence particularly when they know there is political gain involved. Wilkinson, further supported his arguments, by stating that, when there is an outbreak of ethnic violence between the majority and minority ethnic groups, is only when the democratic government see it as in their own political interest that will determined their protection for the minority. In other words the government only pay attention to where they are looking for supporters or already have supporters.

However any political shift by the ruling party to another group be it minority or majority may lead to the feeling of marginalization by the other. Thus in Maluku when President Suharto shifted to the Islamic groups for political supports, while the Muslims are happy, as to a solution to

their marginalization in the past will be found as result. The opposite was the case in the part of the Christians, because of the fear that was generated as a result of the uncertainty of the future and the role of Islam in the new political systems (Bertrand, 2002). Consequently, the political shift created a religious tension between the Christians and the Muslims, as under the authoritarian institutions, little political opportunities can lead to the advancement of either of the group interest. Furthermore, the believed that powerful political and civil service positions as source of material and political protection, further increased the competitions between the religious groups that end up to violence (Van Klinken, 2001).

Looking at the political violence discussed in the preceding paragraph, one will understand that each has its own peculiarities; as level of economic development has been found to be stronger predictors of political violence and that shows there is a strong correlation between democracy and economic developments (Lijphart, 2008; Lipset S M., 1986; Muller, 1985; Sigelman, L. & Simpson, 1977). Thus, due to the poor nature of African countries, had witness an increase in the visibility of ethnic politics and conflict in the 1990's (Berman, 2009).

As a results violence and conflict have become endemic in Africa; this fact is evidence in the massacres in Rwanda, Burundi, the democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia and Algeria, among others. In Kenya, the governments, unwillingness to expand the democratic space for political participation is being challenged by several pro-democracy movements through political action and citizen's campaign at various levels (Ibid). The wave of democratic and political change appears to have led to the identification of democracy in terms of multi party politics.

This drive towards western liberal democracy has given rooms for the polarization of particularistic groupings as party crystallize, mostly on the basis of ethnic and regional interests rather than common ideology or political principles (Dreyton, 1995; Nzogola- Ntalaja, & Lee, 1997). This tendency does not augur well for the unity and stability of African states. As this further the competitiveness of the political system that ends in to violence.

For example in Kenya, violence are fallouts of the unresolved problems of govern and governed; thus, violent has been the sources of threats to the proper resolution of conflict between govern and the governed and among the diverse ethnic groups in the country. Unlike in Nigeria, where violence are mostly based on regional, ethnic, party and individual interests which lead to multiple groups of political thugs. These are coupled with nature of African leaders who always want to use state power and institutions to promote their own interests or those of their ethnic groups (Ayang-Nyongo, 1993; Nzogola- Ntalaja, & Lee, 1997). Hence the use and believed that such can be achieved through intimidation, violence and other forms of terror against both enemies and the perceived enemies. Since building a new democratic society does not seem to be the major concern of Nigerian like other African leaders, whose primary inspiration is to capture and retain state power at all costs (Hyden, G. & Bratton, 1997; Ocheing,

1975; Uwaifo, 2012). These attitudes of African leaders are some of the reasons why politics in Africa are accompanied with violence as it is also maintained by (Ekeh, 1989: P.5) where he stated that:

> Violence has become a prominent part of the political culture of Africa. Indeed he added that, government and violence have become an integrated entity in Africa. In civil politics in Africa, power (as shared property of the governor and the governed) is the thing while violence (flowing from the physical control of the many by few through the use of implements offence), is plentiful.

3.1.3 Political Violence in Nigerian

The history of political violence in Nigeria can be traced to the legacies of the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism in Africa, in which societies were rampaged and ravaged through numerous invasions and invaders (Ngaji, 2003).

Furthermore, (Ngaji, 2003) stated that between 1951 and 1960, the Nigeria state was regionalized into three major groups: the North, the East and the West. These regions were carved out based on cultural and ethnic considerations. However, some ethnic groups within the regions began to dominate the political economy of their respective regions due their numerical strength. This has further given rise to ethnic sentiments and the distinction within the provincial strata became very apparent, thus calumniating to the majority and minority trend.

Ethnicity, he added, was therefore strengthened within the various regions and attempts were made by major groups like Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa to culturally expand to other parts of the country as a way of consolidating their authority. While, Ekeh (1989) elaborated further by saying that, minority ethnic groups whom were able to resist the cultural dominations were denied state largesse. However, later both the minority and the majority groups became unified and subsequent political violence (Ekeh, 1989).

In a different view from that of Ekeh, (Nwosu, 1991) observed that "*political violence associated with election and electoral process in Nigeria, has its roots in the 1959 federal elections designed by the British to facilitate the transitions from colonial rule to independence*". The problem intensified with the 1964 general election. Even before the elections were held, (Nwosu, 1991) averted that it was clear from the extreme positions taken by the then two major alliances of political groups i.e. the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), "*that no matter which one of the two groups won, the results would be strongly contested*" (Ibid).

While Dudley (1973), in explaining political violence according to the regions, he lamented that there was also violence against the oppositions through the use of Political vanguards in the Northern States, where he gave the reasons for the intimidations, harassment and persecution of supporters from the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) by the National People Congress (NPC) as being the ruling governments then. Such trends become a common norm among the politicians to employ party thugs and body

guards, armed with dangerous weapons. Consequently, Dudley (1973) further observed that the violence attitudes by the politicians makes the electoral processes more complex and full political manipulation in the North.

However, in the Western Region's elections of 1964/65 further aggravated the spate of political violence in the country. As such the electoral procedure was blatantly abused, followed by rigging out opposition candidates in the process (Dudley, 1973). Unfortunately, these attitudes had makes it difficult for other civilian government to hand over to another civilian administration due to how they found the tested power and the privileges attached to it (Ibid).

In a related view Yadudu (2008), explained the reason why politics is characterised with violence in Nigeria, where he lamented that politicians, particularly the oppositions believed that, their opponents who are in office will not conduct a free and fair elections. As a result, they do everything possible whether by fair or foul means to retain their offices. Thus, Yadudu (2008) added that political violence is employed to further the cause of perpetuations in office or to unseat an incumbent. Even though, Yadudu's discussion on political violence did not cover the actors in political violence, it has explained some of the reasons why politicians employ violence. This also shows that his study is interested on the politicians and not the actors or argent of political violence. While in his contribution, (Ochoche, 1997: 15) stated that, in true democracy it is believed that, every individual is politically relevant, as votes are the means of which societies used in choosing their leaders. But because of the conflicting inter-play of socio-political interest and other forces have linked elections with fierce battle where all sort of weapons and strategies are utilized. In addition, Ochoche, stated that religious, ethnic sentiments and power of incumbency had also made election to become a do or die affairs leading to massive destruction of lives and properties. However, Ochoche's study could not talk about the involvement of youth in to the act of political violence due to the changing patterns of political violence. Furthermore, youth were not use as argent of political violence as it is now in Nigeria.

Thus, this study is relevant, as it address the area of youth involvement in political violence, where youth were being influenced materially for political violence by the oppositions and the incumbent's political office holders in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this violence activity is always increasing as the quest for political power also increases every transitional period in Nigeria.

3.2 The Nigerian Experience of Youth Political Violence

Violence in Nigerian contrary to violence in other countries or societies it's involved both threat and the actual inflictions of physical injury on individual opponent or perceived groups that may likely hinder the goals attainment of the either of the party of candidate. The year 2003 general elections had witnessed unprecedented increase in the act of political violence where youth were used as agents of political violence all over the country. This has also led to the formations of different groups of political thugs with difference names in almost all the geopolitical regions.

In the North Eastern parts of the country there groups such as "YanKalare" in Gombe state, "Ecomog", in Borno state, "Shunku Boys" in Adamawa state a "Sara Suka" in Bauchi state Lagos we have Oduwa People's Congress (OPC) other group are the "Area Boys", in the Niger Delta region there exist the "Egbesu boys", and in Calabar they have Bakassi Boys (Bashir, 2013; Mbaya, 2013). While in the North western part of the country there are groups like the Yan Daba in Kano (Dan' Asabe, 1991). As results of the emergence of these thugs group so many cases of threats, intimidations and loss of lives were reported by both government and nongovernmental organisations since the year 2003 to date. According to Human Right Watch, 2007, reported that one of the victor political violence perpetrated by the youth in Northern part of Nigeria, lamented that" *during the election i was struck by the Kalare members even when i run for my dear life they continue to stone me* (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Similarly, the International Human Right Commission (IHRC), in it petitions to its office in 2014 on the alleged extra judicial killing in Gombe state between 2003 and 2009, revealed that over 70 cases of political inspired extra judicial murders. According to the (IHRC) reports published in newspapers on the 06 of Jan 2014, and sign by its Nigerian Ambassador that the Kalare thugs harassed, intimidated, assaulted, tortured and brutally murder many innocent citizens in Gombe state. The reports also stated that among the victim was a man who was burnt with his two Sons in his house, a renowned politician and business man Hon Isa Magaji who also contested for house of assembly in 2007 who defected from the PDP to the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) was strangled to death and his body was abandoned in his car in a mysterious circumstance (IHRC, 2014).

Report from the print media further indicate that political thugs vandalised over 13 cars at a PDP rally at the northern senatorial district campaign in Dukku local government of Gombe state few minutes before the end of the campaign when the armed thugs realized that official are not willing to give them their welfare of 50,000 as promised forcing other supporters to run for their dear lives (David, H. 2015).

The involvement of youth into political violence was also demonstrated in the eastern of Nigeria during the 2015 electioneering campaigns where the ruling party PDP in its quest for continuity in power resorted to the use of violence through political thugs and militant groups like, the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and the Movements for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB) in the southern part of Nigeria. Looking at how the oppositions the APC is trying to enthrone the ruling party PDP. Elections in Nigeria had do or dies affairs where political violence through the use of youth becomes the source of winning election. This situation is not the same in the developed countries of the world like America.

While, democracy is more than mere rituals of voting and elections, it is the plurality of opinions, freedom of expression, multi political system, free and universal multiparty elections. It is the Fundamental human rights, rules of law and accountability of the ruler that constitute democracy of a state (De Tocqueville, 1956). These elements seem to be absence in the politics of Africa, and Nigeria in particular, as government in power does not always allow free and fair election for the fear of losing its political power; hence the use of violence and all sort of political harassment and intimidations exist in order to retain its position.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Studies

4.1 Conclusion

This paper concludes that no literature that explains all patterns of political violence due to how they vary from society to society each according to levels of its economic and social developments. Furthermore, this shows that there are many areas of political violence that are yet to be explored in the developing countries like Africa and Nigeria in particular. This is because much attention is given to the victims, sponsors, causes and effects of political violence. While less attention are given to the youth who are actors or agents of political violence.

4.2 Recommendation for future studies

This paper recommends that another study be conducted on the youth as actors in political violence with the view to investigating the factors that influence the youth into the act of political violence in Nigeria, as this area is under studied.

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