Socio-Political Determinants and Violence in Nasarawa State Politics of Nigeria

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Keywords:
Political Violence,
Socio-Political,
Determinant,
Nasarawa State,
Nigeria

Abstract

Violence is always being used as a weapon by some people to realize or achieve certain ends. This article argues that Nigerian socio-political process is characterized by violence such as thuggery, intimidation, molestation and assassination. Against the prevalence of Socio-Political violence, this research examined the determinant factors responsible for the outbreak of socio-political violence in Nasarawa State and Nigeria at large. The researcher used the frustration-aggression theory as its theoretical framework because the frustration aggression theory is used due to its aptness in providing a systematic explanation of the basic variables which this study investigates. Relevant information gathered from primary sources involved the use of structured questionnaire and oral interviews were conducted among the electorate locals. The findings of this paper reveal that; ethno-religious consideration, lack of political will by government in implementing committee recommendations have impacted negatively on the entire electoral process in the fourth Republic in Nasarawa State and by extension Nigeria. Based on these findings it is recommended that there should be more enlightenment campaigns to sensitize Nigerians on the dangers of Socio-political violence.

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Background to the Study

Before Nigerian independence in 1960, Nasarawa State was part of the Northern Region in the three-region structure of 1954. Ethnic sentiments coupled with other factors plunged Nigeria into civil war. Gowon, a young general, barely 34 years of age and from a minority Christian tribe in Plateau State, dismantled the three regions established by the colonial administration in 1967(worldWatchResearch:2016). He created twelve states of the three regions, one of which was the Benue-Plateau state, reducing the influence of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim hegemony over indigenous tribal communities in the Middle Belt region. The 1976 military government of General Murtala Muhammed created 19 states out of the existing 12 federal states and the Nasarawa region became part of Plateau State, a predominantly Christian state.

In 1996, intense military politics led to the creation of more states by General Sani Abacha, and Nasarawa State was carved out of the present-day Plateau State. Nasarawa State shares common boundaries with Benue State to the south, Kogi State to the west, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja to the north-west, Kaduna and Plateau States to the north-east, and Taraba State to the south-east (Nasarawastate.gov.ng:2023). With over 30 ethnic groups in the state, Nasarawa is described as being the melting pot of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The major ethnic groups are Alago, Eggon, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Egbira, Migili, Kantana, Rindere, Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Tiv, Afo, Gade, Nyanpka, Jukun, Mada, Ninzam, Nankere, Bassa, Agatu and Kuler among others (ibid). Nasarawa State has a population of 1,869,377 According to the 2006 National census figures (National Population Commission:2006). Nasarawa State is made up of 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs): Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nasarawa-Eggon, Obi, Toto and Wamba (WorldWatchResearch:2016).

The joy that followed the creation of Nasarawa State was short-lived. A few months after its creation, Nasarawa State was drowned in orgies of violence. Bloody clashes erupted between Igbira and Bassa in Toto LGA over chieftaincy with political undertone (Ugwu, Anthony & Enna: 2015). In the wake of several notable outbreaks of political violence during elections, the topic of political violence has become increasingly important among both scholars and practitioners. Growing interest in the challenges and prospects of political violence has led to an increasing number of publications that examine the causes and consequences of such violence as well as potential policy solutions (Bekoe 2012; Claes 2017; Kovacs & Bjarnesen 2018).

Nasarawa State also has a history of violence surrounding elections. Sporadic outbursts of violence occurred in advance of the Fourth Republic 1999 polls, when Nasarawa was listed among twelve states declared 'hot spots' of potential unrest by the authorities (Daily Trust, 2011). Findings have shown that the Nigerian type of democracy is conditioned by certain environmental factors that tend to water down the democratic principles. Factors like religion, zoning etc. – where citizens especially the politicians or people that control government take into consideration which religion, tribe or from which zone one comes from, these have some effects on even the kind of policies the make

in curtailing political violence. Nasarawa state became a notorious global conflict spot, when news broke that about 74 officers and men of the Nigerian Police, as well as other security agents were killed during an operation in Alakyo village in Lafia Local government area of the state (Enna:2014). This condemnable tragedy, was however: only the climax of unreported killings, invasions, murders, arsons and intense bloody ethnic conflicts between and involving the Eggon, Alago, Tiv, Mighili, Mada, Gwandara, Bassa and Fulani (Enna, 2014, p14).

There has always been a repeated scale of violence and political or religious rift between the Christian and Muslim on the one side and the Eggon ethnic nationalities and Alago, Bassa, Koro (mhigili) on the other side in lafia LGA of Nasarawa state. Cases of Nasarawa Ombatse militia crisis, the indigenous tiv and hausa Fulani crisis, the Nasarawa State house of Assembly impeachment saga where political thugs attack honourable members at plenary amongst others are still fresh in our memory. According to Campbell (2010), this has often resulted to sectarian violence and lack of political stability.

History of Political Violence in Nigeria
The word "violence" defies any precise, commonly, accepted definition. The concept often serves as a catch all for every variety of protest, militancy, coercion, destruction, or muscles flexing which a given observer happens to fear or condemn. (Anifowose 2006:1). Political violence can be defined as any random or organized act of threat to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail, or abuse a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay, or to otherwise influence an electoral process (IFES 2002:3). Political violence in Nigeria could be said to be obscene. In the words of Popoola (2004) the horrifying and distasteful scenario which has characterized the electioneering process in Nigeria since independence in 1960 is that of violence. In a similar assertion, Awonusi (2004) noted that by the dawn of independence, violence had emerged as one of the features of electoral campaigns. The above statements are justified by the fact that all elections in the country so far are marred by one type of violence or another.

Ugoh (2004) also opined that election malpractice and violence have been burning issues in both the developed and developing societies. Their trademark includes riots, thuggery, looting, kidnapping, arson and political assassinations. In a retrospective analysis, Ugoh asserted that even the 1959 elections on the eve of the nation's independence had some reported cases of violent incidents before, during and after the elections. Political parties employed or hired thugs to intimidate their political opponents. Political violence was at its peak before, during and after that 1964 general election. The situation became uncontrollable after the 1965 Western regional election.

The situation in the region which was christened "WETE" could be described as anarchy, a state of lawlessness. The situation came to a climax when the military came in to save the situation. Thus, political violence was one of the main reasons why the military terminated the first republic. The 1979 general election did not go scot free as many people lost their lives across the country before, during and after the exercise.

The 1983 general election witnessed one of the worst political violence in the history of the nation. According to Ugoh, the violence which greeted the election resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and properties. He added that dissatisfaction with the results of the election reflected in the level of protest and violence from all over the country. Intra-ethnic clashes were reported Southeast in which many people lost their lives and property worth millions of naira destroyed. There was also inter-ethnic violence between the Igbo and Kanuri tribes in Borno State when the presidential candidate of a political party was denied entry into the state. In a nutshell, the 1983 general elections were marred by irregularities and violence to the extent that both the local and foreign press criticized the conduct and outcome of the election.

Contributing, Olorode (1987) asserted that there was no doubt that law and order had virtually broken down well before the election of 1983. The situation, he continued, was similar to that of 1965 of Western region election. The situation at that time was thought to be what one can describe to be a state of incipient civil war. That is, the 1983 ruling class was not significantly different from that of 1965. The 1993 election which should have escaped the scourge of violence had the orgy of the hallmark of Nigerian elections following its annulment. According to Popoola (2004) the freest and fairest election in Nigeria took place in 1993, and yet it ended in serious violence when the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida annulled the election. Even in the 1999 election, as observed by Ugoh, the malpractices witnessed were a replica of the 1979/1983 elections. All the political parties were allegedly involved in massive rigging, hiring of thugs and conniving with security agents to perpetrate electoral malpractice, chaos and violence. There was also alleged use of thugs and security agents by the ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to harass opposition party members.

Furthermore, as the elections of 2003 approached, people became apprehensive and anxious because of the past experience. Before the election, replica of the past started to manifest. A number of violent incidents were reported in many parts of the country ranging from assassination to arson, to thuggery, killing of party supporters etc. For instance, Chief Bola Ige, the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice was killed in cold blood on December 23, 2002. His sudden death was not unconnected with the political violence. Other pre- 2003 incident of this nature include, Chief Uche Ogbonnaya an ANPP senatorial candidate in Imo State. Chief Harry Marshal, an ANPP chieftain in Rivers State met his untimely death in his home at Abuja on March 6, 2003. Others include Alhaji Ahman Pategi, PDP chairman in Kwara State.

Mr. Dele Arojo a PDP governorship aspirant in Ogun State and Mr. Theodore Emeka Agwatu, principal secretary to the Imo State Government (Ekiran, 2006). Many political rallies witnessed bloodshed, rioting, arson and chaos. For instance, a political rally in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State left seven people dead while dozens of others were seriously injured. As the election dates drew nearer, more bloodshed was reported across the country. The Punch Newspaper of 16, 2003 reported that there was a fresh outbreak of violence in Nembe, a coastal town in Bayelsa State in which twenty

people lost their lives while many more were missing and other sustained serious injuries. Political violence has been a major road-block to democratic stability in Nasarawa state. Some scholars have made attempt to conceptualize political violence.

Political violence is a sum total of violence that are associated with the political process. It could come from within or outside the country, and manifests in various forms. A summation of the array of definitions in the literature see political violence as the use or threat of physical act or a considerable destructive use of force carried out by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or group of individuals and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage to property, and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances implementation and effects have political significance, that is intended to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangements of a power structure; or directed to a change in the politics, systems, territory of government and hence also directed to changes in the lives of individuals within societies (Honderich, 1989; Anifowose, 1982; see Edigin and Obakhedo, 2010).

In Nasarawa state, elections have been accompanied with election violence since her creation. Just like the incidence that took place few months after her creation that led to the bloody and violent conflict between the Tiv and some ethnic groups in Awe, Keana, and Obi Local Governments of the state, that led to the gruesome beheading of the Sarkin Azara, Alh. Musa Ibrahim on the 12th of June, 2001. This suggests that, electoral violence cuts across different segments of the electoral process commencing from the registration period to post-election period. The Nasarawa state political violence has attracted the attention of the court also, but not with meaningful results. Concerted efforts by both the Federal and state Governments (though well meaning) have been unable to effectively mediate the Nasarawa crises. Two panels of inquiry have been set and the implementation of their findings appears to only ignite further conflicts and violence. There have also been heavy security presence and semi-state of emergency declared by the state government at different times in violence and post violence periods. As institutions formed by political processes, political actors and stakeholders in the state have succeeded in pitching the Federal and state Governments against themselves. In this face of palpable cross-road, it is noteworthy to recall that one of the panels strongly recommended the ADR option and strategies (Nasarawa State Government, 2014).

Theoretical Framework
In order to ensure systematic and logical explanation of the subject matter a theoretical framework is needed to serve as a guide to this research study. In respect of this research the "frustration-aggression theory" was used as its framework. When the frustration-aggression hypothesis was developed, frustration was defined as "an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence" (Dollard et al., 1939). The basic premise was that individuals would become frustrated if they were kept from the satisfactions they expected due to their goal-directed behavior. General support for the notion that frustration leads to aggression has been found. For

example, early studies have provided evidence that frustrating scenarios produce aggressive responses from participants (Buss, 1963). Additionally, studies have found frustration has been demonstrated to elicit anger and verbal aggression from subjects (Kulik & Brown, 1979).

The emotional reaction to frustration can be defined as perceived frustration (Storms & Spector, 1987). Thus, modeling frustration as an emotional reaction spurred from a frustrating event is more appropriate than arguing that a frustrating event directly impacts behavioral reactions. Frustration aggression theory is one of the early aggression theories. It was first proposed by a group of Yale psychologists in 1939. The original theory made two bold claims: (1) aggression always precedes frustration, and (2) frustration always leads to aggression. The original theory has undergone two important revisions: one by Neil Miller in 1941, (Psycholrev 48 (4:337-342, 1941) One by Leonard Becowitz in 1989 (Psychol Bull 106 (1:59, 1989). The adoption of the frustration aggression theory is informed due to its aptness in providing a systematic explanation of the basic variables which this study investigates. It should however, be noted that, the elite theory has been flawed by some scholars has been unnecessarily conspirational and provocative (Sambo, 1999; Olurewene, 2008).

Research Methodology
The research has been conducted predominantly using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data gathering. The qualitative method used extracts evidence through the examination of primary sources, e.g. historical documents, archives, interviews, newspaper reports and written sources. It permits the observation of violent incidents where they happen, and allows flexibility in observing and explaining the violence on the evidence of different actors: victims, security officials, policy makers and opportunists. The qualitative method is supported by using the quantitative approach which is deployed to generate numerical data and statistics from a large sample of the population. Using face-to-face interviews, physical observation and telephone interviews, it is possible for the quantitative method to reconstruct (in measurable data and structured pattern) the number of persons injured or missing in Nasarawa State during the period under review.

Socio-Political Determinants of Conflicts in Nasarawa State
In general, there is a perception that the conduct of the 1999-2019 elections was an improvement on previous electoral cycles (Human Rights Watch, 2019), Compared to the 2003 voters' register, there was an increase of approximately 40% in registered electors in Nasarawa State in 2019 (EU Election, Report: 2019).

A common adage says "there is no smoke without fire", events and things do not just happen. People make things happen. History is a bye product of human behaviour. Some data portraying some socio-political determinants are gotten and explored through the simple percentage method which was mainly utilized for the effective understanding of the study. This research made use of tables for data presentation using simple percentage

technique. The statistical table was used to indicate responses gotten from the field survey carried out as a result of this research, this is because it will be very easy to understand the facts presented in a table form and equally, it avoids unnecessary details and repetitions.

In view of the above, the research made use of data gotten from 395 individuals who responded from the field survey. The statistical table below was used to indicate responses gotten from the field survey carried out as a result of this research, this is because it will be very easy to understand the facts presented in a table form and equally, it avoids unnecessary details and repetitions.

Table 1: Indicating Respondents gender Statues from questionnaires

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	176	70.4
Female	74	29.6
Total	245	100%

Source: Field Survey September, 2023.

In the table above as earlier indicated that a total of two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were distributed and two hundred and forty-five (245) were retrieved. Out of this number 176 constituting (70.4%) of the respondents were male while 74 (29.6%) were females.

Table 2: Indicating Respondents gender Statues from interview

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	75	50
Female	75	50
Total	150	100%

Source: Field Survey September, 2023.

In the table above as earlier indicated that a total of one hundred and fifty (150) individuals were interviewed with questions emanating from the questionnaires with 50 individuals each drawn from (Awe, Lafia and Nasarawa) divided into 25 males and 25 females per Local Government Area. Out of this total number of individuals interviewed 75 (50%) of the respondents were male while 75 (50%) were females. The data gotten above from the field interviewed was 100 percent because it was conducted on one-on-one basis with the various individual's respondent.

So Political violence does not just fall from the sky, there are some underpinning antecedents. From observation and research, Political violence is rooted in the following among others:

Politicians
These are individuals who cannot win election but want to win by all means. Furthermore, election results are changed in favor of a particular political party at the detriment of other parties. This is usually the case when incumbent governments want to retain power by all means. For instance, no incumbent federal government has ever been defeated in any election in Nigeria. The declared results of federal general elections of 1983, 1999, 2003, and 2015 are cases to point. More often than not, supporters of some political parties are denied the exercise of their voting rights by the powers that be at the polling booths. All of the above always lead to electoral violence in Nigeria. Violence is also caused by unpopular politicians who usually employed political violence through paid thugs to turn the table in their favour.

Natural Tendency
Research and experience show that some individuals are naturally prone to violent behaviour due to their upbringing. There is no doubt that individuals who have been exposed to violence from infancy will most likely perfect the culture of violence at a later stage of life. Researchers of human behaviour assert that people who have been exposed to violence will more likely than those who have not been exposed to violence to employ violent strategies to manage conflict either on the micro or macro level.Ugoh(2004;).

Cultural Trait
Some cultures are said to be prone to and committed to the use of violence to maintain or achieve a desired goal. In a similar vein the pattern of child rearing in some societies endorse violence. Most children in such a culture have at one time or another been slapped by either or both parents at least in a minor way. Such action meets the approval of the society and it is not even thought of as violence against the child since it is by the parents (Anderson and Sabatellli, 1999:45). Children with this type of upbringing are a ready tool in the hands of violent god fathers at a later stage of life particularly for political ends.

Political Intolerance
Most political parties in power are intolerant of opposition. They put all necessary and all possible machinery to frustrate opposing parties or even to eliminate them. Ugoh (2004:164) maintains that this is the order of the day in many African countries. To him, the result is one party system. Here in Nigeria, the opposition parties are only vocal without any effectiveness. The ruling party usually intimidates and silence them. For instance, Ugoh recalled that when Chief Obafemi Awolowo went to the Northern region to campaign for his party candidates, he was attacked and an attempt was made to set his helicopter ablaze.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The overall idea that gave birth to this paper is the need to redirect the state from a culture of political violence to a culture of peace towards sustainable empowerment and development. This calls for possible alteration of power or elite structure within the state

which has always rendered all efforts towards resolving this conflict abortive. The political and local power elites have severally hijacked any process geared towards resolving the lingering conflict. The change of policies as advocated by this work involves a lot of enlightenment and civic awareness with specific focus on gender issues, the youth, and the disadvantaged groups who must change their myopic or utopic values for reality. The situation is so dire that prompting the extreme which entails allowing leadership from bottom-up in the peace process will equally be modest so long as it allows peace to return. It is time to let the masses evaluate and reevaluate their relationship and contract with their political and local leaders. This paper strongly recommends the ADR as a policy option for the Nasarawa State endemic and deep-rooted political violence.

Deceit and unfulfilled promises by political leaders discouraged a number of Nigerians from participating in election and other political activities. Falade (2008) argued that politicians make series of promises during election campaign. Most of these promises are not fulfilled after they had been voted in to power. As a result of this, some voters lose interest in election. One of the respondents interviewed during the 2011 election expressed that "I have come to the sun to suffer even though I am not benefiting anything from the government…I don't even have confidence in them because they have been failing us generally" (Adelakun, 2011). Many political parties mobilize violent groups to guarantee security to candidates, party officials, campaign meetings and related activities during election periods. Most post-election violence is linked to political parties in terms of mobilization, engineering and heightening. Incidents of violent protests and arson tend to be instigated, organized and backed by associates and supporters of opposition or losing parties, party leaders and candidates against alleged electoral irregularities and stolen victories.

Political parties' violence linkage has constructed a regime of public distrust, disgust, apathy and antipathy concerning the political process and political elite. Nigerians have become disillusioned and alienated from the political process. A culture of political violence has been constructed. This has meant that not only is confidence being lost in the electoral process, but a growing political cynicism may be emerging. There has been de-legitimation of governments that acquired power through dubious elections pervaded by violence.

In conclusion, this research work observed that, Since the beginning of the fourth Republic, the academics and the civil societies have paid serious attention to the practice of democracy in Nasarawa State and are much more concerned about its consolidation. It is observed in this paper that Nigeria's democracy is shallow and has failed to take deep roots because political parties are deficient and have been unable to play their expected role in strengthening the foundation of democratic consolidation.

There is a galaxy of ways that Nasarawa state could use to curb political violence and strengthen democratic governance. They include: constitutional amendment; electoral

reform; pressure from civil society groups through agenda-setting; change in the character of the elite; political education etc.

The most important of them which forms the fulcrum of this paper is;

Political Education
All others rest on its effectiveness. It has been argued at several fora that the significance and utility of political education cannot be over-emphasized. This is because political education as it were is the conduit-pipe through which the political cultural values and behavioural patterns of the society are imbibed and internalized political socialization. In any case, since Nigerians tend to be very religious, religious books emphasize the need for acquisition of knowledge as an instrument for guiding and girding against the wiles of the enemy in all societies, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore, there is the need for Nigerians to have a fore and deeper knowledge of causes, manifestations, dimensions, consequences and ways of curbing the phenomenon.

Since education has been identified as the launch-pad of a nation-state's development agenda, political education constitutes a herculean task for the several agents of education in Nigeria; namely: the family; peer groups; schools (primary, secondary, and tertiary); religious institutions; civil society organizations and the fourth estate of the realm (the mass media).Therefore, Nigerians should know the dynamic nature of our politics, and the emerging trends that shape the political culture and determine the direction of political socialization, and in relation to electoral violence, should learn, imbibe and internalize the political sociology of electoral behavior education. This would help the nation to either make or mar its emerging democratic order.

Establishment and Enactment of Law
This aspect explains the law section that was written in either the constitution or electoral act that states the nature of punishment for youth involvement in political violence or any social vice. It is believed that all countries have a written law that explain the nature of punishments, if anyone found to be involved in social vice acts; but the problem is that the article of the law seems to be missing or neglected in the democratic process. On the other hand, other laws that have been left out in either the constitution or the electoral acts need to be established and inserted into such books. Therefore, this study has intended to remind the existing state government about the current situation of political violence and the nature of the punishment that was highlighted in the constitution or in the electoral act.

Eradication of Poverty through Job Creation
Even if there is a high turnout of youth education in the state, which is high literacy amongst the youth, but fail to secure a job the tendencies of youth restiveness, is high. This means that without job creation then poverty will remain with the people and the social problem will continue. So, there is a need for the Nasarawa state government to provide policies that can solve the problem of poverty in the state and by extension in Nigeria.

Commitment by the Government, Community and Society

Nasarawa state Government and societal efforts is another influencing factor in mitigating youth restiveness in the society, both commitments can help in tackling the problem violent group activity or the high rate of the youth involvement in the society. The government has all the means of fighting those social problems whilst the society or community knows those who have involved themselves in such acts. So, each of the two has a vital role to play in solving the problem in the state.

There should be a comprehensive electoral reform in which all faith stakeholders including civil society organizations and international funders and observers should ensure that the quality and credibility of elections in Nigeria are not compromised in order to ensure the epitomic expression of popular choices.

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