



ADVOCACY FOR NON-VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria is a country of overlapping regional, religious and ethnic divisions. A little misunderstanding, disagreement or hate speech between the North and the South of the country, Ethnic groups. Islam and Christianity often coincide and have sometimes resulted in sectarian violence. Campbell (2018). This has been the case particularly in politics and elections. If violence so take place, particularly in politics and elections, the risk to Nigeria and its citizens will be so substantial, especially in sustainable economic and national development of the country. It is on this backdrop that this paper is out to address the importance of no-violence in order to ensure peaceful co-existence and development. It adopted a theoretical approach as its methodology and finds that there is undisputed evidence of poor economic development due to violence and electoral malpractice. The paper therefore, recommended that zoning formula be adopted among the six geopolitical zones of the country, Sanction endorsement of candidates by individuals and groups and make government offices less attractive, and choosing to lead non-violence as a way of life.*

KEYWORDS: *Violence, Non-violence, Patriotism, Economic development, Zoning*



INTRODUCTION

I learnt not so long ago that non-violence has been taken off in the affairs of this country. Can you imagine that? Non-violence? What is wrong with non-violence? Or maybe I should ask, what is wrong with some people's head? Afaha, (2018).

There is no gain saying the already known fact that violence is at its peak, especially among the politicians and that Nigeria earnestly yearns for direction to turn back the hand of the clock. Non-violence indisputably remains the fulcrum of national development and its tools must be harnessed for national well-being. The deliberate neglect of non-violence will only bequeath to our youths a dizzying victim mentality and nihilistic outburst, and no nation ignores non-violence without dampening her citizens sense of patriotism and ultimately losing their identity.

When, therefore, a nation is in trouble as we are today, the solution is not to complain and persecute its adherents but to use it to take stock of our historic bearing, so to speak before recommending solutions to this problems of violence everywhere.

This paper is therefore, emphasizing the importance of non-violence in our elections. According to Ashindorbe (2018), elections are the hallmark of democracy, they also serve the purpose of peaceful change in government and confer political legitimacy on the government. Once election is flawed, it becomes an invitation to anarchy and violence, which may snowball into political instability leading to distorted economic and national development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual Clarification

Violence

Violence according to Chaturvedi (2006) is a destructive action undertaken against properties or persons. It can be deliberate or spontaneous, undertaken by government or private individuals. It therefore, encompasses a wide range of actions including intimidation repression, riots, terrorism, revolution and all forms of warfare. It should be noted that violence does not just refer to conflicts. It has to do with the use of arms and other means to cause havoc, mayhem, harm and injury.

Violence, according to Frere and Wilen (2015) is when two parties involved uses physical forces to resolve competing claims or interests. For Alanamum (2006), violence is where people involved in disagreement takes up arms or other materials or non-materials elements to do harm to the other in order to be victorious in the struggle. Non-material implies that it is possible to do harm and distraction through words of mouth or other spiritual means. Inotherwords, violence includes acts of deliberate violence, resulting in direct attack on a person's physical or psychological integrity.

Election violence which is synonymously used as political violence refers to any act of hostility or aggression before, after or during the election process. According to Igbuzor (2009) as cited by Bashir et al., (2020), electoral violence is any act of violence perpetrated in



the course of political activities, including pre, during and post election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at the polling units, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral officers or to any person connected with the electoral process.

Non- Violence

Non- violence means avoiding not only external physical violence, but also internal violence of the spirit. The resistor not only refuses to shoot his opponent, but also refuse to hate him. Martin Luther King as cited by Bassey and Edwin (2020). It is based on the assumption that justice will eventually prevail, that choices should be made from a place of love rather than hate, that the hurtful action, not the person should be subdued and that voluntary suffering has value as an important facet of life. And that Universe is always on the side of justice. Shap (2012), non- violence is the personal practice of not causing harm to self and others under any condition. It may come from the belief that hurting people is unnecessary to achieve an outcome and it may refer to a general philosophy of abstention from violence.

The term non- violence is often linked with or used as a synonym for peace. Non- violence is a powerful and just weapon. It is indeed a weapon which cut without wounding and enables the man welds it. We should know or not forget also that we are also creations of God who is an ocean of love. There is a power in love that our world has not discovered. Jesus Christ discovered it centuries ago. Mahatma Gandhi of India discovered it a few years ago, but most people never discovered it for they believe in hitting for hitting (Anagwonye, 2008) as cited in Bassey and Edwin (2020). It may be based on moral, religious or spiritual principles or the reasons for it may be strategic, tactical or pragmatic .

Advocates of philosophical, ethical, principles non violent approach believe in human harmony and moral rejection of violence and coercion. It has a religious or ideological basis. They persuade rather than coerce because of the respect and reverence for all sentient and perhaps even non- sentient beings. While the advocates of pragmatic approach believe in practicality rather than the moral or religious aspect of the struggle. They believe that violence is too costly to engage in. Violence in response to violence leads to further violence. And so create a social dynamics or political movement that can project a national or international dialogue. Other tools are civil disobedience, strikes, peaceful demonstration, rally etc. Christopher et al., (2021).

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Relative Deprivation

The development of the concept of relative deprivation is often attributed to American sociologist Robert K. Merton whose study of American soldiers during World War II revealed that soldiers in the military police were far less satisfied with their opportunities for promotion than regular soldiers.

Runciman (1966) formally defined relative deprivation as the actual or perceived lack of resources required to maintain the quality of life-diet, activities, material possessions to which various socio-economic groups or individuals within the groups have grown



accustomed, or are considered to be the accepted norm within the group. Measuring relative deprivation, therefore, allows an objective comparison between the situation of the individual or group compared to the rest of the society.

It is therefore, used in social sciences to describe feels or measures of economic, political or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. Bayertz (1999).

He noted that, there are preconditions of relative deprivation of a commodity for instance by Mr John.

- i. Mr. John does not have that commodity.
- ii. Mr. John knows of other people that have that commodity.
- iii. Mr. John wants to have that commodity.
- iv. Mr. John believes that obtaining or getting that commodity is realistic or have reasonable chance of getting that commodity.

For example, let's say that it is Christmas and your parent just bought you a brand new pair of shoes. You have wanted this pair of shoes for a long time, and you were so excited to receive it as a gift. A few days after you got the pair of shoes, you decided to go to your friend's house to show off a little bit. When you got there, you found out that your friend's parents bought him a brand new I-phone. How would you feel about your pair of shoes now? Are you as happy as you were before?

If you feel a little jealous of your friend or are not as happy with your gift, you are experiencing relative deprivation. Do you now understand that relative deprivation is the belief that a person will feel deprived or entitled to something based on the comparison to someone's else?

Gurr (1971) in his definition refers to relative deprivation as "the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the "ought" and "is" of collective value satisfaction and this disposes men to violence.

Stawart (2002) redeveloped this argument by asserting that where we have social, economic and political inequalities, coinciding with culture differences, culture could become a powerful mobilising agent that can lead to a range of political disturbances including violent conflict and civil wars.

She termed inequalities between culturally defined groups as horizontal inequalities and differentiated this kind of inequality from the normal definition of inequality, which she labelled vertical inequality because it lines individuals or households up vertically and measures inequality over the range of individuals rather than groups.

Langer (2005), further emphasized that the presence of severe horizontal inequalities do not produce wide-scale violence as such, but it rather makes multi-ethnic countries more vulnerable to the emergence of violent conflict along ethnic lines. And that whether horizontal grievances actually result in violent conflict depends to a large extent on whether or not ethnic leaders and elites are willing and able to instigate and or organizes the process of grievance formation and violent group mobilization. In other words, the existence of



mutually beneficial inter-ethnic elites alliances is an important factor for explaining the non-appearance of ethnic group mobilization in countries with severe horizontal inequalities. Put succinctly, the absence of political horizontal equalities at the elite level can significantly reduce the risk of violent group mobilization, even if there are severe socio-economic horizontal inequalities at the mass level because in these situation political elites and leaders lack the incentives to mobilize their constituents for violent conflict. The converse is also true, that ethnic mobilization and violent conflicts appear to become more likely if there is a high degree of political horizontal inequality and exclusion.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Bassey and Edwin (2020) explained that Marth Luther King Jr. examined the power of non-violence philosophy in conflict resolution and before him Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Leo Tolstoy and other advocates of peace had vigorously pursued non-violence as the only tenable and acceptable paradigm in conflict resolution. Martin Luther King Jr. in the article was shown to be deeply influenced by his moral and spiritual background upon which his father had endowed upon him. For Martin Luther King Jr. conflict can only be defeated by non-violence and nothing more, for violence begets violence upon which continuous use of violence leads to the vicious circle of violence. It was therefore recommended that human beings ought to use non-violence in conflict resolution especially in the face of dehumanist and racial discrimination.

Adekoya, and Abdul Razzak (2018) examined the link between unemployment and violence by controlling income and security expenditure as an antidote to reduce violence in Nigeria. Violence according to them claims many lives and properties in the country and increased unemployment needed to be reduced. They tested for endogeneity by using annual data set from 1980 to 2015. Before proceeding to test for the long-run and short-run relationship. The Bound test was used to test the Cointegration while Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model (ARDL) approach was used to conduct endogeneity test. ARDL instrumental variable was also employed to determine long-run and short-run estimates. The result showed that unemployment causes violence while income as a variable to economic growth reduces violence at the 1% level of significance. Similarly, the deterrent variable of security expenditure adversely affects violence at the 10% level of significance. The study therefore recommended policy to promote economic growth as a means of income employment generation among the youths.

Ibok, and Ogar (2018) explained that political violence is a major impediment to Nigeria national development and that with the restoration of democratic rule in May 1999 hope was raised that the new democratic dispensation would resolve the risk of Nigerian's political violence while speeding up the country's economic and social transformation. It is worrisome therefore, that since democratic rule returned, nothing has actually changed. They therefore investigated the incidence of Nigeria political violence and assessed its national development consequences and discovered that political violence dissuaded domestic and foreign investment in the economy, triggered government loss of revenue and resources and resulted in the election of unqualified representatives. They therefore recommended reduction of wages/benefits paid to political office holders, and politicians should strive to achieve national unity instead of growing religious and ethnic tension.



Evaluation Of Empirical Literature

It is clear from the previous works that resolution of conflict can only be done by non-violent approach and nothing more in order to ensure that love continue to exist between the parties, tackle unemployment, encourage domestic and foreign investment and consolidate democracy among others. This paper will therefore lend its voice to the emphasis already placed on non-violence due to the implicating dangers of poor economic development.

DISCUSSION

Nigeria is a country of overlapping regional, religious, and ethnic divisions. A little misunderstanding, disagreement or hate speech between the North and the South of the country, Ethnic groups, Islam and Christianity often coincide and have sometimes resulted in sectarian violence. Campbell (2018). This has been the case particularly in politics and elections. These disagreements or conflicts, we should know are a basic issues of life and human interactions. This is because there will always be a divergent opinions of individuals and groups. What to do is to work to negotiate and dialogue through the differences and the differing perceptions. It is only where conflicts are mismanaged that it can precipitate into crisis and it may become violent or non-violent one that society needs to guard against. If violence so take place, the risks to Nigeria and its citizens will be so substantial, especially in economic and national development of the country.

Nigeria, as a nation owes its citizen a sacred duty to provide for them a smooth democratic transition that is seen as free and fair. Democracy can only be consolidated when elections are devoid of violence and malpractice for only then, credible, qualified, people who are capable of effecting positive change come into the process. Regrettably most elected leaders in Nigeria have the problem of legitimacy when they emerge, which is widely due to electoral malpractices and violence alleged to have herald their emergence. Politics must not be seen as a zero-sum game, national interest should be the top priority. Those who are not successful must play by the rule of the game – peaceful protest, approaching the court for redress and shun political or electoral violence, build on the achieved democracy and allow the constitution and other rules to prevail to have a better country for both the rulers and the ruled. We can imagine the lives and properties destroyed due to do or die politics.

Numbers of fatalities from electoral violence per state and per zone (June 2006 - May 2014).

South-East	No. of fatal ities	North-East	No. of fatal ities	South-South	No. of fatal ities	North-Central	No. of fatal ities	North West	No. of fatal ities	South West	No. of fatal ities
Abia	23	Adam	49	Akwa-	91	Benue	109	Jigawa	10	Ekiti	31



		awa		Ibom							
Anambra	38	Bauchi	63	Bayelsa	95	Kogu	107	Kaduna	65	Lagos	80
Ebonyi	22	Gombe	33	Cross-River	54	Kwara	53	Kano	2152	Ogun	51
Enugu	24	Taraba	61	Delta	142	Niger	86	Kastina	317	Ondo	55
Imo	45	Yobe	30	Edo	83	FCT	59	Kebi	23	Oyo	110
				Rivers	181	Nasarawa	158	Sokoto	11	Osun	59
						Plateau	850	Zamfara	25		
Total	152	Total	235	Total	644	Total	1422	Total	891	Total	386

Source: *Bellow, S.K (2015). Political and electoral violence in Nigeria: Mapping evolution and patterns.*

You can further imagine that an estimated 626 persons were killed across Nigeria in the six month between the start of election campaign and the commencement of the election in 2019 (Sanni, 2019).

This pattern remains very strong as the country prepares to hold another round of elections. It may even be more with pockets of armed or killer gangs who are more dangerous and heartless are springing up everywhere.

It is therefore, very necessary to advocate for non-violence in our actions to save our democracy and nation.

Non-violence is also closely linked with working to end the root causes of violence. Let us spend sometime thinking about ways to incorporate non-violence into our life. Remember, it is only non-violence that cuts without wounding.

CONCLUSION

Non-violence strategies are not a sign of cowardice. It tresses love for all human beings. Infact the choice today is no longer between non-violence and violence. It is either non-violence or non-existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and statistics, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Zoning of national offices should be done between the six (6) geo-political zones of the country. This zoning system should also flow down to the states and local government areas.



2. Endorsement of candidates by individuals or groups should be penalized and prosecuted. Join a political party if you have an interest or remain silent.
3. Politics/government is the largest river of wealth in Nigeria. Politicians therefore fish in that river without checks. These fishing activities should therefore be addressed to ensure that they become less attractive.
4. Choose non-violence as a way of life.

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