



## ABSTRACT

The South-South region of Nigeria is faced with widespread political violence, such that states in the region are usually tense during political activities. Suffice it to say that there are strong political parties in the region, as well as strong political actors who are willing and capable of going to devious lengths to achieve political advantage. Also,

# PARTY POLITICS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA (1999 - 2021)

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## Introduction

Political violence has become an enormous threat to peace in virtually every continent of the world. Much of this political violence is directed (or tacitly allowed) by ruling regimes and their allies, by opposition political parties, and by loosely organized groups of ordinary individuals – both at times of electoral competition but also in patterns of puzzlingly ‘routine’ everyday violence (Omar & Benjamin 2013). No continent of the world is spared. Europe began to experience more political violence due to continuing conflict in Eastern Europe and with instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region spilling over across European borders (HCSS 2017).

Even the United States of America is not spared from the fangs of political violence. The history of political violence in the United States includes recurrent racial and ethnic violence (such as widespread lynchings in the late 1800s and early 1900s); class-based political violence (among others, the Shays and Whiskey Rebellions of the late 1700s and lots more.



as they jostle to win power in the region, they tend to stir violence within and outside their parties. This is a quantitative study, using correlational method. The primary method of data collection was adopted, using questionnaire for data collection. Using Taro Yamane formula, the sample size for this study was 400 from a population of 4,138,455 which is the Population of all adults within the voting age in Rivers and Bayelsa states which were the sample areas of the study. The multistage sampling technique was adopted for the study, covering the stratified sampling and the simple random sampling techniques. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze sections of the questionnaire. A number of findings were revealed in this study. One is that elections moderately influence political violence in South-South, Nigeria. Also, a number of revelations were achieved with regards to respondents' responses to suggested approaches on how to handle political violence in the South-South region. At the end of the study, certain recommendations were made. They are; governments of the South-South states must create jobs for their teeming youths; the judicial system within Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone should be made more robust in dealing with political crimes; civil Society Organizations within the South-South geopolitical zone should improve their capacity, and decline partisanship; the electoral body, INEC, needs to enforce compliance to internal democracy in political parties in South-South Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Election, Party, Politics, Violence*

Africa appears to be one of the worst hit by political violence. A study by Jakkie (2018) about political violence fatalities in Africa shows that the four years that saw the highest number of fatalities, excluding the Rwandan genocide, were in 1990 (95,067 fatalities), 1999/2000 (98,805 and 91,279 fatalities), 2000 (67,843 fatalities) and 2014/15 (67,594 and 67,683 fatalities). There is the belief that political violence is partly responsible for the underdevelopment of the African continent.

From the moment when Nigeria got its independence in 1960, it has had to cope with fragile peace. Numerous factors threaten the peace of the



nation, with some manifesting into violent altercations leading to the destruction of lives and properties. Nearly no geopolitical zone in the country is free from political violence. The South-South geopolitical zone, besides being the hotbed of oil-induced militancy in Nigeria, is also afflicted by inter- and intra-group conflicts (IPCR 2016).

This is a quantitative study, using correlational method. The primary method of data collection was adopted, using questionnaire for data collection. Using Taro Yamane formula, the sample size for this study was 400 from a population of 4,138,455 which is the Population of all adults within the voting age in Rivers and Bayelsa states which were the sample areas of the study. The multistage sampling technique was adopted for the study, covering the stratified sampling and the simple random sampling techniques. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze sections of the questionnaire.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, political violence has continued to gain prominence. Elections in the country are fraught with wanton destruction of lives and properties, as politicians adopt a *do-or-die* approach in their bid to win. Violence has become a norm in Nigeria's political life (Gabrielle 2018). The South-South geopolitical zone is afflicted by inter- and intra-group conflicts (IPCR 2016). An analysis of the Nigeria Watch database for the period between June 2006 and May 2014 revealed that the South-South had 644 political deaths, the highest number in the Southern region of Nigeria (Shamsudeen 2015). One-fifth of households (22%) in the South-South geopolitical zone have been directly affected by conflict events or violence (John & Ruth 2019). Also, political violence in the geopolitical zone is not unconnected to the desperate party politics. As party politics continue to degenerate into arena for retrogressive pursuits and self-seeking interests, its impact on public peace is easy to imagine. This problem of political violence affects Nigeria's democratization, causes voter apathy and a host of other effects on the country.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to determine how party politics affect political violence in the South-South Nigeria within the timeline of 1999 - 2021. Specific objectives are to:



1. To determine the impact of elections on political violence in South-South Nigeria.
2. Explore possible ways of reducing the impact of political violence in South-South Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

There are a number of research questions to this study. They are:

1. What impact do elections have on political violence in South-South Nigeria?
2. What are the possible ways by which the impact of political violence can be reduced in South-South Nigeria?

### **Significance of the Study**

While there has been a number of works on political violence, and how it affects party politics, there is little in the area of how party politics affects political violence. This work is significant in this area, as it fills this gap. This study is a diligent exposition of how unwholesome party politics is responsible for a lot of the political violence witnessed in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country.

A large spectrum of people will benefit from this study. They are students, scholars, politicians, public administrators, government agencies and just about anyone who has interest in political affairs. The study will further serve as a revelation of the activities of political parties, and the machinations within which affect the general society.

Also, this study is significant as it is a valuable addition to the limited literature on political violence in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Also, its value cannot be undermined even in the topical areas of party politics.

Finally, with very clear and concise language, this study will make very important recommendations which political parties will find useful, as well as policy makers.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on party politics, and how it relates to political violence. This work will cover the timelines ranging from 1999 – 2021. The



timeline for the study is ideal because it covers the period of Nigeria's recent democratic experience.

The study will focus on two states of the South-South geopolitical zone namely Rivers and Bayelsa states. The choice of these two states is intentional due to their unique problem of political violence.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Political Party:** A group of people who have come together with same ideology or same political positions with the aim of attaining political power through elections.

**Party Politics:** Party politics are those activities of political parties for the good of the political parties and not the public.

**Democracy:** A system of government which undertakes governance on behalf of the people.

**Violence:** An act of brutality against other people which causes injury or death.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Political Violence**

Various scholars view the phrase, political violence, differently. Aver et al (2013) view political violence as "the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of other people in the society. So, illegitimate use of force is a basis for political violence. However, such force must take place with the aim to have effects on political situations. Or perhaps, the force may be fallout of political relationship. Political violence refers to acts of violence committed by both state and non-state actors for political purposes (Tim et al 2017).

Political violence is aimed at achieving or resisting regime change in established power hierarchies and orders; asserting or resisting supremacy of one form of national identity over another or others; seizing and controlling economic, political or other resources in the form of mineral, key routes; or resistance to any of these forms of violence (Gabrielle 2018). Here, political violence is seen from the point of resistance. Gabrielle (2018) does not indicate if political violence relates to force and destruction. In this regard, one may be inclined to believe



that civil disobedience as a form of resistance also qualifies as political violence.

The starkest manifestation of 'political' violence is armed conflict in the form of civil war (Timothy & Torsten 2010). This perspective is almost a synonymous relationship between civil war and political violence. It may be easy to agree with the perspective because most civil wars have political undertones, and they often result in high casualty levels. Even mild instances of political violence, if mismanaged, can result to civil war. The difference is that while political violence may be said to have taken place if the supposed violence leads to the death or injury of even one person, the determination of civil war has a precise casualty levels which must be reached.

### **Party Politics**

Emmanuel (2012) posits that party politics is the scheming and maneuvering of political parties to gain control of the Structural Frame. The structural frame here is the political party, while the scheming is the party politics. Hence, party politics can be likened to a game for supremacy amongst political parties. In the light of the above, party politics in climes where definitive ideologies are absent is quite crude and often difficult to manage. However, in states where definitive ideologies guide the operations of political parties, even the most obscene form of party politicking manifests under the guidance of party ideology. Hence, fallouts are easy to manage.

With democratization becoming a trend in Africa, political parties have become indispensable. While they play critical roles in the development of Africa, they are also instrumental to the numerous conflicts the continent has suffered. These conflicts are sometimes fallouts of the dangerous party politics instigated by desperation to get power.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Party Politics Political Violence**

Violence is a major feature of political life everywhere around the world (Obakhedo 2011). While this notion seems to normalize political violence, it is pertinent to state that the levels of political violence vary across





countries. And it is when there is escalation of such violence leading to destruction of lives and properties, that it becomes a problem of concern. Such is the situation in Nigeria.

Political violence is not new in Nigeria. What is however new are the metamorphoses of the violence; which is now in shapes, magnitudes and consequences (Ikyase & Egberi 2015). Elections now are tests to the continued existence of Nigeria, with palpable fear of citizens as to whether the country or even they will survive. Even as the election umpire continues to assure of improvement of the processes which should eliminate violence, the politicians and their followers remain unpredictable.

The architects, sponsors, and perpetrators of this violence generally enjoy complete impunity because of both the powers of intimidation they wield and the tacit acceptance of their conduct by police and government officials at all levels (HRW, 2007 in Obakhedo 2011). Little wonder there is the festering belief that the political elites are responsible for the spate of political violence in the country. During elections, opposition parties and ruling party soil their hands in trying to out-rig each other. This is a part of the reasons why no real prosecution is carried out against major election offenders.

Violence during elections happens at two stages in Nigeria; inter-party elections (which has been much discussed) and intra-party elections. Violence among party factions happens most frequently prior to the party primaries, and its intensity correlates positively with the party's political influence (Ebere & Chloe 2010). Major political parties in Nigeria have factions. Such factions exist even in seemingly united parties. This refers to the emergence of parallel party structures and leadership, as well as partisan alignments and re-alignments among the party faithful around the attendant parallel party platforms (Okonkwo & Felix 2016). Often times, these factions are more visible and problematic in ruling parties, as there is more to fight for. Little wonder, primaries in ruling parties are more turbulent. Even though these elections are internal party elections, the violence often escalates to the communities. It is also noteworthy that opposition parties in Nigeria have also displayed such turbulence in their primary elections.



### **Political Violence in Nigeria (1999 - 2021)**

Nigeria's present democratization, which culminated in the country's Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, started amidst great hope and expectations (Dhikru 2011: 1). At this point, the citizens of the country had got tired of the military's dominance of the political landscape. There was the notion that 'the worst civilian government is better than the best military regime'. However, there was high hope that politicians would have learnt from the deep experiences of the past, and that the fourth republic would be a lot progressive. Rather, sad memories of electoral violence in the past were re-enacted (Abah & Nwokwu 2015).

Although the 1999 election was not perfect, Ikyase & Egberi (2015: 36) believe it lacked bitterness, boycotts, thuggery and other malpractices usually associated with electoral process in the country. Abah & Nwokwu (2015: 36) disagree with Ikyase & Egberi (2015), as they state that the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections have been marred by widespread fraud and unprecedented political violence.

In 2003, Political violence took a disproportionate shape; there were incidences of political assassinations (Abah & Nwokwu 2015). The 2003 elections were characterized by manipulation, rigging, thuggery and the assassination of perceived political opponents (Olowojolu et al 2019). These incidences of violence and the perceived blood in the hands of the civilian government concretized the perception that the civilian government was just as untrustworthy as the military regime it took over from.

Prior to the 2007 elections, the outgoing President Obasanjo asserted that the election was going to be a "do-or-die" for the ruling PDP (Olowojolu 2019). With the heightened use of force by Olusegun Obasanjo in his eight year tenure as president, opposition parties knew that he would match words with action.

Right after the 2011 election, Boko Haram, which had been a major threat to security in the country, intensified its attack on the country. The group began to attack churches, mosques, markets and just about any area it wishes. It even got into kidnapping of school girls, for example; the Chibok girls. Although, the violence of the group should strictly be an act of terrorism, some political connotations were ascribed to it. Some in the PDP tried to link the APC to the Boko Haram insurgency (Lauren 2015). It was believed that after Buhari lost in 2011, and after his harsh rhetoric, he saw the Boko Haram as a tool to make the country ungovernable.





## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Frustration-Aggression Theory**

In 1939, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears published a monograph on aggression in which they presented what has come to be known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dennen 2005). Although the book was small in size, its impact was great throughout the social sciences, and the ideas it advanced quickly attracted considerable attention (Berkowitz 1988). This was the origin of the Frustration-Aggression theory and they were known as the proponents. The original frustration-aggression hypothesis postulated that although the drive created by frustration was aggression-specific, a displacement process could take place and the drive then would be reduced through a process of catharsis (Roland 1989). Here, a physiological explanation for aggression exists.

The frustration-aggression theory is relevant to the understanding of political violence. Oftentimes, violence within the political space is an expression of deep-seated frustration. Frustrations can lead to open aggression as well as to hostile ideas and judgment (Berkowitz 1988). Aggression and violence can be regarded as synonyms. When a candidate loses in an election due to rigging, he/she feels frustrated by the system. In Nigeria, the outplay of aggression in this regard is that they incite their followers to destroy and brutalize properties and persons.

## **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section presents the demographic information of the participants of the study, the result of the data collected and analyzed, the interview responses based on the research questions, and the discussion of findings.

### **Demographic Information of the respondents (Questionnaire)**

Table 1.1: demographic characteristics of the respondents

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Female	20	53
	Male	17	47
Age	18-30 years	190	50.1
	31-40years	79	20.8
	41-50years	70	18.5
	51-60years	32	8.4



	61 years and above	8	2.1
Academic qualification	SSCE	139	36.7
	NCE/OND	38	10.0
	HND/Bachelors	123	32.5
	Masters/PHD	72	19.0
	Others	7	1.8
Party affiliation	APC	14	3.7
	PDP	99	26.1
	Others	17	4.5
	None	249	65.7

Table 5.1 presents the demographic information of the respondents. The result revealed that there were 201 (57%) female and 178 (47%) male that participated in the study. Also, 190 (50.1%) of the respondents were within the 18-30 years age bracket, 79 (20.8%) were 31-40 years old, 70 (18.5%) of them were in the 41-50 years age bracket, and 32 (8.4%) were 51-60 years old. This revealed that the younger people responded to the study more, than other age groups. On academic qualification, 139 (36.7%) of the respondents had SSCE certificates, 123 (32.5%) had HND/Bachelor's degree, and 72 (19%) had masters/PhD degrees. As regards party affiliation, the result showed that 249 (65.7%) were not affiliated to any political party, 99 (26.1%) were part of PDP, 14 (3.7%) were in APC and 17 (4.5%) were in other political parties.

### Presentation of questionnaire data analysis

#### Research question One: What impact do elections have on political violence in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1.2: impact of elections on political violence in South-South Nigeria

SURVEY ITEMS	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Rigging of elections in South-South Nigeria has been responsible for political violence between 1999-2021	259(68.3)	102(26.9)	10(2.6)	8(2.1)	3.61	.646
Proliferation of arms in South-South Nigeria is responsible for political violence during elections in South-South Nigeria	162(42.7)	178(47)	32(8.4)	7(1.8)	3.31	.702
Inadequate security during elections in South-South Nigeria is responsible for political violence	132(34.8)	104(27.4)	112(29.6)	31(8.2)	2.89	.980



Heated rhetoric is the cause of violence during elections in South-South Nigeria	66(17.4)	202(53.3)	86(22.7)	25(6.6)	2.82	.795
Elections are opportunities for unleashing vendetta in South-South Nigeria, thereby causing violence	86(22.7)	122(32.2)	140(36.9)	31(8.2)	2.69	.912
Excess money during elections in South-South Nigeria is responsible for political violence in the region	76(20.1)	66(17.4)	162(42.7)	75(19.8)	2.38	1.017
The culture of the people of South-South Nigeria causes violence during elections	18(4.7)	75(19.8)	163(43)	123(32.5)	1.97	.845
<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.81</b>	<b>.842</b>

**Decision rule: if mean is  $\leq 2.49$  = low, 2.5=2.99=average 3.0-3.49=high, 3.5-4.0=very high**

The grand mean in table 5.5 reveals that elections moderately influence political violence in South-South, Nigeria (mean=2.81, SD=.842). This implies that the political violence in the region is partly caused by elections. The participants' responses further expatiates this. As seen in the result, the respondents on the average agreed that rigging of elections in South-South Nigeria has been responsible for political violence between 1999 and 2019 (mean=3.61), however, election rigging isn't the only problem, the respondents equally agreed that proliferation of arms in the region is also responsible for political violence during elections in South-South Nigeria (mean=3.31). Also, the respondents agreed that inadequate security during elections in South-South Nigeria is responsible for political violence (mean=2.89). The respondents also agreed to the claim that heated rhetoric is the cause of violence during elections in South-South Nigeria (mean=2.82), and that elections are opportunities for unleashing vendetta in South-South Nigeria, thereby causing violence (mean=2.69).

**Research question Two: What are the possible ways by which the impact of political violence can be reduced in South-South Nigeria?**

Table 1.3: possible ways by which the impact of political violence can be reduced on internal democracy and party politics

SURVEY ITEMS	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Governments of the South-South states must create jobs for their teeming youths so as to reduce possible thugs for desperate politicians	308(81.3)	63(16.6)	8(2.1)		3.79	.456



The judicial system within Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone should be made more robust in dealing with political crimes, so as to place deterrence	222(58.6)	141(37.2)	16(4.2)		3.54	.577
Security agencies within the South-South geopolitical zone need to be more impartial and proactive in handling matters of political violence	232(61.2)	116(30.6)	24(6.3)	7(1.8)	3.51	.699
Political parties in Nigeria's South-South must place limits on financial contributions of individual members, and also device creative means of getting funds, so as to reduce the likelihood of having godfathers	176(46.4)	189(49.9)	7(1.8)	7(1.8)	3.41	.625
Civil Society Organizations within the South-South geopolitical zone should improve their capacity, and decline partisanship, so as to effectively discharge their functions and reduce political violence	183(48.3)	164(43.3)	32(8.4)		3.40	.640
The electoral body, INEC, needs to enforce compliance to party democracy in political parties in South-South Nigeria	198(52.2)	139(36.7)	35(9.2)	7(1.8)	3.39	.732
Traditional gods of the people of the South-South geopolitical zone should be used to swear in politicians into office, instead of the bible	56(14.8)	28(7.4)	109(28.8)	186(49.1)	1.88	1.070

The result in table 5.6 reveals the possible ways the impact of party violence on internal democracy and party politics can be reduced. The respondents on the average indicated that the governments of South-South states must create jobs for their teeming youths so as to reduce possible thugs for desperate politicians (mean=3.79). They also indicated that the judicial system within Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone should be made more robust in dealing with crimes, so as to place deterrence (mean=3.54); and that security agencies within the South-South geopolitical zone need to be more impartial and proactive in handling matters of political violence (mean=3.51). Also the respondents on the average (mean=3.41) agreed that political parties in Nigeria's South-South must place limits on financial contributions of individual



members and also device creative means of getting funds, so as to reduce the likelihood of having godfathers; they also indicated that another solution would be for civil society organizations within the South-South geopolitical zone to improve their capacity and decline partisanship, so as to effectively discharge their functions and reduce political violence (mean=3.40). The respondents also suggested that the electoral body, INEC needs to enforce compliance to party democracy in political parties in the South-South of Nigeria (mean=3.39).

### **Summary**

This study looked at the impact of party politics on political violence in South-South Nigeria. Rivers and Bayelsa states were used as study areas. Since 1999, most elections held in the South-South region in Nigeria have been marred by violence, leading to human and material losses. The quantitative method was used for the study. Through descriptive statistics, a number of findings were discovered in the study.

### **Conclusion**

Having undertaken the study on the impact of party politics on political violence in South-South Nigeria, a number of conclusions were reached. First of all, party politics has a high impact on political violence in the South-South region of Nigeria. As political parties jostle to win power in the region, they tend to stir violence within and outside the parties. The results of the study also reveal that elections moderately influence political violence in South-South, Nigeria. Lastly, a number of recommendations were revealed as to how to reduce political violence in the South-South region of Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, certain recommendations are pertinent. They are:

- i. Governments of the South-South states must create jobs for their teeming youths.
- ii. The judicial system within Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone should be made more robust in dealing with political crimes.
- iii. Security agencies within the South-South geopolitical zone need to be more impartial and proactive in handling matters of political violence.



- iv. Civil Society Organizations within the South-South geopolitical zone should improve their capacity, and decline partisanship.
- v. The electoral body, INEC, needs to enforce compliance to internal democracy in political parties in South-South Nigeria.

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