

Causes and Impacts of Political Violence Multifaceted Issues

Vohan Cromie*

Department of History and Political Science, University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Bamahu, Ghana

ABOUT THE STUDY

Political violence refers to the use of force, coercion, or intimidation by individuals, groups, or states to achieve political objectives. It encompasses a wide range of actions, from protests and riots to terrorism and armed conflicts. This essay explores the causes and drivers of political violence, examines its different forms and dynamics, and discusses the far-reaching impacts on societies, governance, and human rights. Understanding political violence is essential for developing strategies to prevent and mitigate its occurrence, promote peace, and protect human security.

Causes and drivers of political violence

Political violence is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. These include Socio-economic grievances, political exclusion, ideological radicalization, ethnic or religious tensions, territorial disputes, and power struggles. In contexts of inequality, poverty, and marginalization, individuals or groups may resort to violence as a means to express their grievances or challenge oppressive systems. Political violence can also be driven by ideological or religious extremism. Radicalized individuals or groups may employ violence as a means to enforce their beliefs, challenge existing power structures, or create social and political change according to their worldview.

State repression and authoritarianism can also contribute to political violence. When individuals or groups feel suppressed, denied their rights, or excluded from political processes, they may resort to violence as a means to resist or overthrow oppressive regimes. Political violence takes various forms, each with its own dynamics and characteristics. These forms include riots, protests, insurgency, terrorism, civil war, and state-sponsored violence. Riots and protests are often spontaneous outbursts of public discontent, expressing grievances and demanding political or social change. They may escalate into violence when met with severe repression or when infiltrated by violent actors seeking to exploit the situation. Insurgency refers to armed rebellion against a government or occupying force. Insurgent groups engage in guerrilla warfare, aiming to undermine the existing political order, gain control, or achieve

self-determination for a particular region or ethnic group. Terrorism involves the deliberate use of violence, often targeting civilians, to instill fear, advance political or ideological goals, or provoke a response from the government or society. Terrorist acts can range from bombings and assassinations to cyber-attacks and hostage-taking. Civil wars are prolonged and large-scale armed conflicts between organized groups within a country. These conflicts are often fueled by complex combinations of political, ethnic, religious, and economic factors. Civil wars have devastating consequences for societies, causing immense human suffering, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure. State-sponsored violence occurs when governments or state actors employ violence against their own citizens to suppress dissent, maintain control, or target specific groups. This includes extrajudicial killings, torture, forced disappearances, and repression of civil liberties. State-sponsored violence can exacerbate existing tensions and lead to further cycles of violence.

Impacts of political violence

Political violence has far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and societies. It undermines social cohesion, erodes trust in institutions, and hampers political stability and development. The impacts can be both immediate and long-term. On an individual level, political violence leads to loss of life, physical and psychological trauma, displacement, and disruption of livelihoods. Communities affected by violence experience social divisions, mistrust, and fractured relationships. Economic activities are often disrupted, leading to poverty, unemployment, and economic decline. Political violence also has profound implications for governance and human rights. It challenges the rule of law, undermines democratic processes, and restricts freedom of expression and assembly.

Human rights violations, such as suffering, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, become prevalent in environments of political violence. Moreover, political violence can have transnational consequences. It can fuel regional instability, exacerbate refugee flows, and provide breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism. The spillover effects of political violence can disrupt neighboring countries, strain international relations, and hinder peacebuilding efforts.

Correspondence to: Vohan Cromie, Department of History and Political Science, University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Bamahu, Ghana, E-mail: honyjeo@gmail.com

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Prevention and mitigation strategies

Addressing political violence requires a comprehensive approach that tackles its root causes and promotes sustainable peace. Strategies should include efforts to address socio-economic inequalities, promote inclusive governance, strengthen rule of law, and foster dialogue and reconciliation. International cooperation, diplomacy, and support for conflict resolution mechanisms are crucial in preventing and resolving the conflicts.

Additionally, investing in education, social cohesion, and economic development can help mitigate the conditions that foster political violence. Political violence is a complex and destructive phenomenon that has profound impacts on individuals, societies, and governance. By understanding its causes, dynamics, and consequences, and by implementing strategies for prevention and mitigation, we can work towards building more peaceful and inclusive societies.