
UNIT 14 VIOLENCE AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Structure

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Defining Violence
- 14.3 Causes of Violence
- 14.4 Direct Violence
- 14.5 Violence by Omission
- 14.6 Mediated Violence
- 14.7 Repressive Violence and Alienating Violence
- 14.8 Summary
- 14.9 Exercises

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of violence encompasses physical violence, psychological violence and structural violence. Thus, violence can be any act that threatens a person's physical and psychological integrity and it also can be racism, forced labour and denial of fundamental rights to the citizens. Violence can be caused either by individual, a group of people, the state itself or society as a whole.

The violence in Africa is responsible for many an untold misery. It was estimated that during the decade of the 1980s alone over 3 million people lost their lives due to violence and around 160 million constantly suffered consequences of civil war. Since 1960, Africa has seen 19 full-fledged civil wars along with 11 genocide and 'politicides' compared with the twenty-four that occurred all over the world.

14.2 DEFINING VIOLENCE

Violence can be divided into two broad categories—Direct violence and Structural violence. Direct violence is an act of deliberate attack on physical or psychological integrity of a human being. It is also called as somatic violence. As described earlier, it is a commonly understood form of violence as it is easily observable and often illustrated in the media all over the world. This category includes all forms of homicide like massacre of citizen, civil war and political crimes (see Table no. 1). It also includes any form of brutal action like torture, rape, kidnapping and forced removal, (inflicting upon the victim) where the victim is inflicted with physical and psychological suffering. This form of violence is rampant in Africa,

The second form of violence—Structural violence—is also called as indirect violence. It is a situation in which there is no necessary direct relationship between the victim and the aggressor. Johan Galtung conducted a pioneering research in structural violence. In the 1960s, he studied various forms of violence and showed that the state could resort to systematic violence against its citizens. For him, defining violence purely in somatic terms was incomplete. Violence, for Galtung, was a cause of difference between the potential and the actual. The potential level of realisation is that which is possible with a given level of insight and resources. If, however, insight and resources are monopolised by a group, or a class, the actual level falls below the potential level, which Galtung

referred to as the level where the perpetuation of violence is a cause of concern. In the case of war, violence is direct and killing or hurting a person causes 'actual somatic realisation'. In indirect violence, insight and resources are channeled away so as to deny chances for the events to reach a potential level.

Violence could take place even when there is no direct actor involved, which Galtung referred to as indirect or structural violence. There may not be any person who directly harms another person. The people or institutions responsible for such violence are not often considered guilty of a criminal offence by the law or by society. This kind of violence is, in fact, built into the structure and shows up because of unequal power and consequently unequal life chances. Resources are unevenly distributed and the power to decide the distribution of resources too is unevenly distributed. In such cases, persons with low income are also low in terms of education, health and power.

The general cause for structural violence is inequality. Galtung pointed out that structural violence is perpetuated because of a linear ranking order present in society, by which it is clear as to who is higher and what is the correct manner for interaction. In general, the higher ranked interact with similar higher rank people. In other words, if an actor is high in one system, then he also tends to be high in another system in which he participates. Thus, inequality and structural violence has a high survival capacity despite the change in actors.

Structural violence includes the following three types of violence (see Table no. I). First — Violence by Omission, when the state fails to provide adequate help and protection to human beings who are in danger like social violence or environment hazards like hurricanes and earthquakes. Second — Repressive Violence, when basic rights are denied like participation in day to day social and economic life or right to property. Finally — Alienating Violence, when citizens are deliberately targeted at work, school, and public places etc. These categories will be discussed in detail subsequently.

Table-1 : Different Types of Violence

<u>DIRECT VIOLENCE</u>	
(Deliberate injury to the physical and psychological integrity of a human being)	
<i>Homicide</i>	
Genocide	
Massacre	
Murder	
<i>Brutal Acts</i>	
Torture	
Rape	
Maltreatment	
<i>Restrictions or physical constraints</i>	
Forced removal of population	
Kidnapping	
Taking of hostages	
Imprisonment	
Forced labour	

CT AL TOLLENCE

(Indirect violations of the rights)

Violence by *Omission* (non-assistance to the human being in danger; non-satisfaction of vital material needs)

Lack of protection against social violence (hunger, disease, poverty)

Lack of protection against accidents

Lack of protection against natural violence (hurricanes, earthquakes)

Mediated Violence (dangerous modifications of the natural and social environment)

Repressive Violence (deprivation of fundamental rights)

Social rights

Denial of trade unionism

Denial of social equality

Denial of participation in social and economic life

Denial of protection of material, individual and collective property,

Civil rights (denial of protection from the state)

Political rights (denial of democratic participation in political life)

Alienating Violence (Deprivation of higher rights)

Alienating living conditions (at work, home, school)

Social ostracism (hostility against certain members and group of society like women and children)

Ethnocide

14.3 CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

In Africa, violence is an age-old phenomenon. Violence is directly associated with the scarcity of certain elementary goods which are needed by human beings and protection such as food and shelter. Along with the problem of scarcity of these essential goods is another important point viz. the organisation of human society. The societies are organised in such a way that a group of individuals fulfil their needs, not the entire society. This has resulted in competition and rivalry that ultimately results in violence. In Africa, many countries show skewed relationship within the society. In general, the top 10 per cent of population amasses more than 70 per cent of the resources and the bottom 30 per cent is left with merely 10 per cent of resources. They are often deprived of basic necessities. They constantly face problem of hunger. This population is a volatile population; warlords to wage war against their rivals in Africa recruit many youngsters from this group. For example, in South Africa, many criminal elements involved in drug peddling and smuggling of small arms, employ youth from poverty-stricken areas of Mozambique to carry out assassinations. All the nations in Africa, which have seen high violence like Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burundi, Angola and Liberia, are at a very low level of development.

In Africa, ethnicity is the second source of violence. It had been a perennial source of tension but in recent years some observers hold different views. This view essentially holds that ethnicity is not naturally derived from the cultural practices but is a consciously designed ideological creation. The

ethnic violence takes place because of the manipulation of the elite who incites and distorts ethnic consciousness into an instrument to pursue their personal ambition. The press and government functionaries closely support the ethnic designs of such leaders. Along with ethnicity, there are other sources like civil war and political rivalry as explained subsequently in this unit.

14.4 DIRECT VIOLENCE

This is the most brutal form of violence and Africa is all the time reeling under it. It involves direct physical attack with an intention to inflict injury or even to kill. Either an individual or a group practises it. In Africa, this form of violence is mostly observed in clashes between two ethnic groups or rival political groups. Rwanda and Burundi are an ideal case of direct violence between two groups. Rwanda and Burundi have two rival ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi and their rivalry is age-old. Hutu are in majority but Tutsi, even though they are in minority hold almost all prime posts in society due to better education in both the countries. This happened during colonial times when the colonial administration promoted Tutsi. This rivalry resulted in a major outbreak of violence in 1994. In the full-fledged battle, members of military forces from either side used weapons on the other groups. There was all the time ethnic tension between two tribes for decades but in a major breakout in 1994, the majority population of Hutu, in a well planned and properly executed operation killed between 500,000 to one million Tutsi people as well as many Hutu moderates. A Tutsi-led guerrilla army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) retaliated by killing the Hutu president and captured power.

The civil wars fought in Africa are the other major source of violence. In Angola a long civil war, which lasted for over 20 years, the longest civil war in the world has destroyed the fabric of the society. It started with a fight to capture power in 1975, when Portuguese government, the colonial authority, declared that it would transfer sovereignty of the nation to people and not to any political party. A clash took place between groups who were fighting armed liberation struggle to capture power. The rivalry set between the MPLA, UNITA and FNLA. Hectic military efforts were made by all the three liberation movements to capture Luanda, the capital town before the scheduled independence on 15 November 1975. The MPLA succeeded in capturing Luanda and established its government. The civil war broke out after the independence in Angola in which the FNLA continued its fight against MPLA for few more years but the main battle was continued by UNITA for over two decades. 300,000 Angolans died in the fighting between 1975 and 1992; around 4 million—nearly a third of the population—are estimated to have been displaced. Further, at least 300,000 more are estimated to have died since 1992 from fighting, landmines and starvation. The millions of displaced civilians are entirely dependent on aid, as Angola's agriculture and infrastructure have been made unworkable or destroyed by the war.

The brutal acts like torture, rape and maltreatment are common occurrence in civil wars. Mozambique shares the same history of civil war and violence as Angola. Mozambique too was a Portuguese colony and was declared independent in the same year. The rivalry was set between the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo), the ruling party and Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), which was fighting against the government. The RENAMO, in its effort to terrorise and prevent the people from cooperating with the government employed many brutal methods like chopping off nose or limbs. The RENAMO also used local population as a human wall to resist attacks from the government forces. The Mozambican civil war too has similar drastic effect on the society. Around one million died of war and famine between 1981 and 1994.

Political rivalry within the states in Africa is often violent. People from warrior tribes take pride in displaying weapons in public political meeting as a show of strength. The political rivalry between Zulu and Inkatha tribes in South Africa is a case in which political rivalry causes bloodbath in the society. Zulu, a warrior tribe, has/had Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) headed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Its rival the African National Congress (ANC) mainly represents Xhosa groups. Soon after the dismantling of 'White rule' in South Africa, a rivalry was set between the two political parties. The ANC was an internationally recognised party for its long fight against the apartheid system and its leader Nelson Mandela was also recognised all over the world. They had a large grass root support in South Africa. The IFP was a local party and was supported by the *apartheid* government. The IFP was strong in the province of Kwazulu-Natal where Zulus were in majority and the ANC supporters were in minority. The rivalry resulted in an attack on the ANC supporters in Kwazulu-Natal and it was spread to neighbouring province too. As a result of the violence, between 1990 until the end of March 1994, around 14,211 people died. The number of killings per day crossed even the ugly mark set during the 'White Rule' in 1980s when around 5400 people were killed. These killings made South Africa the world's most violent society.

The political assassinations are common in military rule in Africa. The military rule of General Idi Amin in Uganda was very violent. He came to power in 1971 by deposing a civilian government. His military rule was responsible for killings in military prisons and even respected citizens like the chief justice and the vice-chancellor of the university were killed in order to put down the protest against his regime.

The direct violence was also observed during the colonial rule. Namibia, under the German rule, saw widespread genocide. In the Berlin Conference of 1884, it was given to Germany and was then called as South West Africa. The German occupation lasted up to 1915, when they were defeated at the hands of combined British and South African forces. This period, though short, was the most brutal occupation of the land. The German administration took to extreme measures to stop the uprising of Hereros, the local inhabitants who were fighting against German colonial rule. It resorted to genocide and reported to have killed 60 per cent of the population of Central and Southern Namibia.

14.5 VIOLENCE BY OMISSION

It is primarily referred to the notion of non-assistance to human beings in danger. The states have resources and manpower to assist citizens who are caught in natural or man-made disasters. In the case of violence against minority group by the majority group, the police force should intervene to protect the minority group. Similarly, in the case of predictable natural disasters, the state should take emergency measure to protect the life of citizens. If the state fails to intervene whenever human lives are threatened by the phenomena the harmful effects of which are technically avoidable or controllable to protect, then it becomes violence of omission.

Hunger is a common example of violence of omission in Africa. It is called as the 'silent violence' of modern times. There are under-nourishments and deaths after natural disasters but on many occasions, in Africa, it is not because food is not available but because of several social and political reasons. During Biafra war, the Nigerian federal government deliberately starved the secessionist Ibo population.

Health is second common example of violence of omission in Africa. Within a country it is common to observe that people's vulnerability to diseases varies considerably according to regional, social or ethnic factor. Urban versus rural areas and political power to allocate public money for a particular region play a key role.

14.6 MEDIATED VIOLENCE

It refers to deliberate human intervention to change the existing natural or social environment, which might not immediately affect the victims, but in the long-run it would have profound negative effects. In mediated violence, the aggressor and victims are not in a direct relationship. The most common observable phenomena are efforts to change natural environment like nuclear test, industrial pollution or the sale of products that pose a danger to their users. In Africa, one common practice among the US and European multinationals is the sale of a wide range of toxic products that are banned in their home countries because they can induce cancer, generic malformations or miscarriages. The products like pesticides such as DDT, drugs such as *Depo Provera* (used for contraception), and textiles such as infant garments manufactured with toxic dyes.

Mediated violence was also the part of the colonial agriculture policies in many African countries. The colonial authorities forcibly introduced crops, which worked as input to the industries. Some independent African countries replacing the traditional food crop with cash crops for export also follow this practice. It has often resulted in marked decrease in food availability among the rural communities.

14.7 REPRESSIVE VIOLENCE AND ALIENATING VIOLENCE

Repressive violence refers to conditions when survival is not threatened but other fundamental rights are not given. It constitutes an important infringement on the freedom, dignity or equality of rights to which human beings are entitled. Alienating violence is a kind of violence that refers to the deprivation of a person's higher rights, such as the right to emotional, cultural or intellectual growth. It is important to a person's well being that certain non-material needs be fulfilled. One of the most serious forms of alienating violence is what can be called as 'ethnocide' that is, policies or actions that significantly alter the prevailing material or social conditions under which the cultural identity of a group of people or the whole community is guaranteed. The *apartheid* rule in South Africa is the best example of this kind of violence. It passed several laws, which restricted all the fundamental rights of the blacks and made their life miserable. The White domination in South Africa started in 1652 when the first Dutch settlement, later also called as Boers and *Afrikaners*, started. The settlers, from the beginning had an exploitative tendency and hunger for land. The British joined them in 1775. There was a series of wars that took place for the domination between them; the most notable was Anglo-Boer war from 1899-1902 in which the Boers were defeated. Finally, to the detriment of black population, British and Boers came together to form the Union of South Africa in 1910. The new 'White' government in power divided the society on the lines of the white and black. The most important step to deprive blacks from their land was taken by this government. It passed the Land Act of 1913, which took away land from the ownership of the blacks. Thus, the whites that constituted around 13 per cent of the total population took control of 87 per cent of the land and the blacks that constituted 76 per cent of the total population (along with 11 per cent of Asians and other community) were left with only 13 per cent of land. The land taken by the whites were mineral-rich (mostly gold and diamond mines) and good agriculture land and the blacks were given infertile land. This killed the backbone of the black society, as they were mainly dependent on agriculture for livelihood. The main aim of the Land Act was to uproot blacks from their agricultural land and send them as labour to the gold and diamond mines, which were owned by the white and were in need of cheap mine workers.

The Land Act was further supported by the Native (Urban Areas) Amendment Act of 1930, which placed control over the entry of blacks in urban areas. The Native Law Amendment Act 1937 gave more power to the government to enforce segregation and forcible removal of the blacks from the urban areas. Every black, who entered urban areas that were the areas under the control of the whites, was made to take a pass for a specified period from the white authority. If a black lived more than the specified period, he was liable to be punished as per the law. This step was taken with an intention to keep women, children and old person away from the white-owned areas as they were seen as a liability. The whites were only interested in the black able-bodied persons.

After the Second World War, the *apartheid* laws became more repressive and discriminatory. The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified every citizen according to the ethnic group. This became the basis for the White' government to treat each ethnic group. The Group Areas Act of 1950 divided the residential areas as per the ethnic groups and authorities were given further power to bring changes in these areas. Under the law the blacks were forcibly removed from their houses, and were resettled in specified areas away from the white settlements. The black townships were like slums.

The *apartheid* government tried to control inter-racial marriage to maintain purity of white blood. The Immorality Act of 1927 made the marriage between white and black a criminal offence. It was amended in the Prohibition of Mixed marriage Act of 1949 that banned intermarriage between blacks, whites and other ethnic groups. The main aim of the laws was to maintain racial purity in the biological sense especially between Europeans and "coloureds", those who were born of mixed blood. The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 aimed at reserving areas for 'Whites only'. The act made areas like public halls, benches in parks and toilets reserved for whites. Separate seats were reserved in train, bus and ships etc. for whites. The blacks were discriminated on frivolous ground such as not being properly dressed. Wilful use of such places by a person of the "other" race was considered an offence. Such restrictions could not be challenged in any court of law.

The *apartheid* government gave the blacks to administer the Bantu Education Act of 1953. It allowed education only in the tribal languages; the blacks were forced to attend the government-run Bantu School. Similarly, with the Extension of University Education Act 1959, it forced the blacks to attend universities established only for blacks. The government was given extensive powers to establish and maintain the finances of the black populations. The government had power to cancel admission to a person, if it felt that such enrolment affected administration of the university. This was mainly used to remove political activists from the colleges, who were fighting against white supremacy.

The most serious aspect of denial of fundamental right was that the blacks were neither allowed to run political movement nor conduct any trade union activities to protect their rights. The government passed the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1956 to check labour union movement among the blacks. The law enabled the government to have job reservation on racial grounds i.e. in what proportion certain category of jobs are to be filled with people of certain social background. It aimed at the reservation of technical and managerial jobs only for the whites on attractive salaries. The Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956 did not allow any public meeting; it was targeted at labour/trade unions. The Native Labour (Settlement and Disputes) Act 1953 made any strike by Africans, and under any circumstances, an offence.

Political activities were totally banned for the blacks. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 was specifically made to deal with the passive resistance movement. The government punished the activists with the imprisonment for not more than three years or a whipping not to exceed ten strokes and a fine. The communist movements too were strong in South Africa. The government enacted the Suppression of Communist Act of 1950, which banned the Communist party of South Africa, and no person was allowed to become either an office-bearer or a member. It put the burden of proof on to the accused in criminal trials and made a provision to forfeit the property of accused.

The African National Congress (ANC) was in the forefront of the struggle against *apartheid* rule. The government enacted the Unlawful Organisation Act 1960 to ban the activities of the ANC and other parties. It empowered the president to declare ANC and others as illegal without prior notice to the organisation if in his view they threatened or likely to be threaten public safety or order. The ANC was banned within twenty-four hours of the passing of law and was banned in South Africa for almost three decades. Along with the above laws, the government already had assumed unlimited power with the Public Safety Act, 1953 which allowed the president to declare a state of emergency in all or any part of the Republic. The state of emergency was declared without much consideration and police and armed forces had the powers to detain any one without warrants. The periods of emergency were the most violent periods.

14.8 SUMMARY

Violence, in its broad sense, includes physical and psychological violence along with situations when fundamental rights are denied to the human beings. An individual, a group and even the government resort to violence. The situations like hunger, malnutrition are violence committed against citizens by the state especially in the conditions when food is available and yet government does not distribute it for political reasons. In Africa, violence is manifested in all forms, Ethnic clashes remain the main source of violence in Africa. The civil war is another important source of violence and it is closely linked to the ethnic tension that prevailed in Africa. Incidentally, the government happens to be a great source of violence in Africa. In military ruled states, kidnap and murder of members of opposition party is a common occurrence. The government resort to structural violence is also a common occurrence. The denial of health facility, allowing the Multinational Corporations to market banned products and not releasing food stock are various means of structural violence. The human rights groups in Africa who try fight against such violence highlight these problems but it is too modest a step. The violence can be curbed only if the African governments make a genuine effort to promote good governance.

14.9 EXERCISES

- 1) "Ethnicity is the main cause of violence". Do you agree on the basis of your study of violence in Africa?
- 2) Define "Direct Violence" and explain how civil war is responsible for the incidence of "Direct Violence". Cite instances from Africa?
- 3) Identify an example of "mediated violence" in Africa.
- 4) The "White Rule" in South Africa was responsible for "Repressive Violence" and "Alienating Violence". Discuss.