

Political Violence as a form of Communication: Understanding Marginalised Voices in South Africa through Content Analysis.



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Mini Dissertation Presented for the Degree of Master of Social Science
in Political Communications

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Abstract

Violence elicits profound emotional responses and serves as a potent medium of communication in societies grappling with systemic inequities and historical grievances. In South Africa, political violence has persisted as a troubling legacy, complicating the nation's democratic transition. While much of the existing research has focused on the manifestations of violence—such as interpersonal, criminal, and public unrest—this study explores violence as a form of communication within the South African socio-political landscape.

Grounded in an interpretivist framework, this research investigates how marginalized communities employ violence to express grievances, assert political demands, and navigate systemic exclusions. By employing qualitative content analysis of media reports, the study reveals the symbolic and strategic dimensions of violence. Key findings highlight the role of media in amplifying violent narratives, the intersection of socio-economic inequalities with identity-based violence, and the limitations of traditional communication channels in addressing grievances.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on political violence by framing it as a communicative act that reflects and perpetuates power dynamics and systemic inequalities. It offers practical recommendations for fostering non-violent political dialogue through inclusive policymaking, community engagement, and media reform. By situating South Africa's experience within a global context, the research underscores the need for nuanced, context-specific interventions that address the root causes of violence and promote sustainable social cohesion.

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List of Acronyms

- ANC African National Congress
- IPV Intimate partner violence
- IRA Irish Republican Army
- LTTE Tamil Tigers
- NVC Non-violent communication
- SLT Social learning theory
- TRC Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- UK United Kingdom
- USA United States of America

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The intricate political terrain of South Africa has been shaped by acts of regular violence and was plagued by violence while transitioning from apartheid to democracy. In the subsequent decades, different types of violence have been prominent characteristics of the political scene. Using violence as a political tactic has a long and troublesome history as it displays authority, demands recognition, or communicates discontent in many political contexts. This kind of violence is unique as it functions within the political dynamics of society and helps to shape those dynamics by using symbolic communication to convey political goals and desires.

Hegre et al. (2019) stated that political violence may act as an early warning system for a country by drawing attention to existing tensions, disputes, and impending crises. South Africa has been struggling with high levels of violence, most notably in the context of interpersonal relationships and the institutions of society. This persistent problem traces back to diverse causes, including historical legacies, social inequality, economic imbalances, and cultural standards. Violence is prevalent on a national scale and manifests among individuals, within families, and on media platforms.

Family violence includes violence committed against intimate partners and child abuse. It has significant repercussions for health and development in the family unit. Given the gravity of this problem, South African legislation has addressed family violence from a family-centred perspective. This highlighted the importance of familycentred comprehensive legal frameworks and interventions that account for the multifaceted nature of family violence and its impact on individuals and communities (Ryan et al., 2018). Furthermore, it recognises that to effectively address violence in families, a holistic strategy that goes beyond punitive measures is required. The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 and the Children's Act of 2005 provide a legal framework for preventing family violence and guarantee the protection of victims. It is vital to be aware of the legislative response to the issue of family violence to understand the larger social environment in which violence occurs, as it clarifies the

significance of the initiatives that foster prevention, early intervention, and support for victims.

According to Lund et al. (2020), the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic spread several types of violence, including femicide, violence against children, and violence in the home (see Ndlovu et al., 2022). Gender-based violence is an urgent problem in South Africa (Ranganathan et al., 2021; Tholaine & Calvino, 2022). Research investigating the influence the pandemic had on gender-based violence among women in South Africa during lockdown revealed the interconnectedness between public health issues and violence. It highlighted the need for measures to address the increased risks faced by marginalised people across the world.

Some connections exist between women's empowerment and intimate partner violence, and their understanding could provide valuable insights into prospective tactics for the prevention of such violence and the provision of assistance for survivors. However, interventions for preventing intimate partner violence and HIV encountered challenges in reaching young women in southern Africa (Mannell et al., 2019). This emphasises the need for context-specific approaches that anticipate intersecting factors such as gender, age, and social norms. For example, young women have reported being victims of violence in Johannesburg. The experiences of young black women using public transit in Johannesburg are proof that violence against women is not confined to relationships between intimate partners but may also emerge in public areas (Eagle & Kwele, 2021). Taking measures to ensure safety and protect vulnerable groups would be unachievable without studies that focus on the intersectionality of violence, racism, and gender in particular settings.

There is a correlation between sexual violence and the incidence of unwanted pregnancies among teenage girls and young women in South Africa, so stressing the need for comprehensive interventions pertaining to sexual and reproductive health (Ajayi & Ezegbe, 2020). Van der Wath (2019) suggested that it is necessary to inspect the attitudes of healthcare workers about intimate partner violence to better understand the obstacles that must be overcome to address this problem in healthcare settings. This emphasises the need for healthcare practitioners to know and respond appropriately to acts of violence, and to equip them with resources and training to successfully help survivors.

Digital technology has created new channels through which political violence can be expressed and displayed. Social media platforms allow for the quick broadcast of information and the amplification of voices; however, they can propagate hate speech, disinformation, xenophobia, and provocative material. The media substantially affects the formation of public opinion and the establishment of social norms via the propagation of certain narratives, framing of topics, and directing public debate. Chenzi (2021) strongly emphasised the role that false news and social media play in the ongoing spread of bigotry in South Africa. The digital environment has evolved into a key platform disseminating violent political communication and influencing public perception and political behaviour.

The repercussions of political violence extend beyond the immediate risk of physical injury. It is important to consider the psychological consequences of prolonged exposure to violent political acts. As explained by Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019), frequent exposure to political violence in Israel had considerable effects on mental health and societal well-being. This research consolidates the many lines of inquiry pursued for a thorough investigation of how violence is manifested as a form of political communication in South Africa. To give a detailed explanation of the phenomena a variety of contributing elements need to be understood, such as societal structures, the effect of digital media, the allocation of resources, and the psychological impact, to identify viable avenues for its reduction and resolution.

Where and How the Inquiry Will Be Conducted

This research focuses on South Africa, with a particular emphasis on marginalised communities where political violence is most pronounced. A qualitative approach will be employed, using content analysis of media reports, to unpack the communicative dimensions of violence. This will further provide nuanced insights into the motivations and implications of using violence as a political language. By grounding the study in specific case studies and thematic analyses, the inquiry aims to bridge theoretical perspectives with lived experiences, offering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

1.2 Problem Statement

South Africa has made tremendous progress towards democracy and social equality. However, the fact that violence is being used as political communication is concerning. This sort of violence can be identified by the fundamental political goals it seeks to achieve, providing a set of obstacles in the nation's continued attempts to achieve stability and development. Not only does it put the residents' physical safety and security in jeopardy, but it also weakens democratic processes, exacerbates social differences, and may prevent sustainable growth. In addition, the expression of violence as a form of political communication adds distortions to public discourse, thereby influencing the formation and execution of public policy.

A culture of violence continues to exist despite the dramatic changes that have taken place in South Africa's political landscape – a sign that underlying sociopolitical tensions and problems have not been addressed. To address this problem, it is necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of the dynamics and causes of the use of violence as a mode of political communication. However, most research on violence in South Africa has concentrated on its manifestations, such as intimate partner violence (Mannell et al., 2019), sexual violence (Ajayi & Ezegbe, 2020), or violence in public transport (Eagle & Kwele, 2021). Therefore, the investigation of violence as a form of political communication is largely unexplored.

The phenomenon is complex with many layers, and each is separately significant. One of many factors is the introduction of digital technology and how it has significantly altered the way political ideas are communicated. Another factor is the immediate emphasis on the physical consequences of political violence but the disregard for the psychological effects of prolonged exposure to it. Research was conducted to understand these factors in a wider context. The demonstration of how digital platforms spreading false news has evolved into facilitating the promotion of xenophobia in South Africa (Chenzi, 2021), and the mental health ramifications of recurrent exposure to political violence prove that the repercussions are far-reaching and varied (Pat-Horenczyk & Schiff, 2019).

The current challenge is achieving an all-encompassing comprehension of the manifestations, causes, ramifications, and possible solutions associated with the use of violence as a mode of political communication in South Africa. To effectively address this issue, a multifaceted approach is required. This approach must consider the historical backdrop, the role of societal institutions, digital media, the psychological repercussions, and the general sociopolitical atmosphere in South Africa.

1.3 Research Assumptions

- 1.3.1 Violence is a significant form of political communication in South Africa, influenced by the country's complex historical, social, and cultural context.
- 1.3.2 There are tangible motivations and dynamics at play behind the use of violence as a political tool, including power dynamics, social inequalities, and marginalisation.
- 1.3.3 Media and social platforms can play an important role in perpetuating violence and xenophobia.
- 1.3.4 It is possible to identify strategies for fostering non-violent political dialogue and communication that can help mitigate violence in South Africa.

1.4 Significance of Study

Within the framework of South Africa's distinct sociocultural milieu, the study's purpose is to analyse the reasons for dynamics of and impacts of using violence as a form of political communication. It investigates how violence is used as a political language, its effects on the structures of society, and the way that public discourse is conducted. The study is diverse and involves a variety of stakeholders. These stakeholders include policymakers, community organisations, researchers, and the public. The research may majorly affect the formulation of policies, the participation of communities, and the implementation of social interventions in South Africa, with the goal of decreasing the incidence of violence and enhancing the quality of communication. Stakeholders may progress towards creating a society that is more inclusive, peaceful, and fair if they acquire a more in-depth knowledge of violence as a form of communication. *The following are some of the most important elements that illustrate the study's relevance:*

1.4.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of violence as a form of communication in South Africa. This research contributes to the academic conversation associated with violence, interpersonal relationships, and the dynamics of society by examining the historical, social, and cultural elements that affect violence and its communicative function.

1.4.2 Informing Policy and Interventions

This study has significant implications for policymakers and organisations involved in violence prevention and intervention. It could influence the creation of more focused and successful policies, programmes, and interventions. It may become a blueprint for the development of comprehensive regulatory frameworks, support services for victims, and programmes targeted at treating core issues while encouraging alternate forms of communication.

1.4.3 Empowering Marginalised Communities

Violence often disproportionately affects marginalised communities, so perpetuating cycles of inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. This research sheds light on

the perspectives and experiences of these groups to bring focus to their difficulties and contributions to the discourse on violence. This research could empower marginalised populations and influence programmes that try to address the specific issues and requirements of such communities by giving a voice to under-represented voices.

1.4.4 Fostering Social Cohesion and Understanding

Violence as a form of communication can contribute to societal divisions and tensions. This research promotes understanding and empathy among many sectors of South African society by investigating the underlying processes of violence in the country. It challenges negative myths, prejudices, and biases, and fosters a society that is more inclusive and cohesive and where people and groups can participate in constructive discourse and peaceful communication.

1.4.5 Enhancing Community Engagement

Research on violence as a form of communication can facilitate community engagement and mobilisation. This research could inspire community-based initiatives, grassroots movements, and collaborations among stakeholders by increasing awareness and knowledge of the complex causes that contribute to violence. It may make it easier for academic institutions, civil society organisations, and community people to work together to devise and implement interventions tailored to the unique environment to combat violence and encourage alternative forms of communication.

1.4.6 Strengthening Sustainable Development

Violence as a form of communication hampers social, economic, and sustainable development in South Africa. This research aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 16: "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions", accomplished by resolving this problem. It contributes to the overarching objective of establishing a fair, peaceful, and sustainable society that strives to be free from violence.

1.5 Limitations

Numerous possible constraints can influence this study. *These constraints include the following:*

1.5.1 Sampling Bias

Sampling bias relates to the inherent challenges in accessing and gathering data from diverse populations affected by violence. Variables such as limited resources, time restrictions, and access to specific populations may make it difficult to acquire a representative sample that appropriately represents the experiences and viewpoints of all key stakeholders, including marginalised groups.

1.5.2 Ethical Considerations

Research on violence involves many ethical aspects, especially participant confidentiality, participant safety, and informed permission. Participants could have difficulty expressing their experiences owing to anxiety, cultural conventions, or the delicate nature of the subject matter. This may affect the breadth and reliability of the data obtained.

1.5.3 Subjectivity and Interpretation

This study involves complex and nuanced phenomena. Researchers must be conscious of their preconceptions and the possibility that the evidence they gather could be interpreted subjectively. Given that the interpretation of the experiences of the participants and the reasons behind the violence may differ, extreme care must be used when drawing conclusions.

1.5.4 Availability and Reliability of Data

Based on the scope and nature of the study, it may be challenging to obtain reliable and comprehensive data. Data collection may depend on self-reporting or secondary sources, which may present constraints such as memory bias or insufficient information. The dependability of publicly accessible statistics, news in the media, or anything shared on social media should be subject to careful analysis.

1.5.5 Contextual Factors

Violence and its communicative nature are influenced by a wide range of contextual factors, including historical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. It may be difficult to capture the complexities of these characteristics and how they interact with violence in South Africa. There must be utmost caution before extrapolating the outcomes of this study to other situations or presuming that they have universal relevance.

1.5.6 Time Constraints and Scope

Conducting an in-depth investigation of violence as a form of communication in South Africa may be constrained by time limitations and the scope of the study. It may not be possible to investigate every facet and feature in detail. Therefore, the researcher needs to make strategic judgements on the emphasis and depth of the study.

Although these potential limitations exist, it is possible to overcome them by carefully designing the research, being aware of the study's scope and context, using rigorous data collecting and analysis procedures, and publishing the findings clearly.

1.6 Delimitations

This study establishes clear parameters to investigate violence only within the context of political communication in South Africa, focusing mainly on crucial factors that shape and affect the country: its historical context, the lingering effects of apartheid, deeply rooted socio-economic disparities, evident power relations, the ubiquitous influence of media, and emerging digital platforms.

The research is based in South Africa and is characterized by its distinctive historical and social terrain. Consequently, the results and analyses are restricted to this context. Although there may be similarities with other regions or socio-political frameworks, the research deliberately avoids making assumptions or drawing analogies. The deliberate demarcation of boundaries provides a comprehensive and detailed comprehension of the complexities in the region.

Violence may take several forms, including cultural, economic, and personal manifestations. The attention is on its political aspect. This study's focus omits acts of

violence that arise from non-political motivations, even if there may be some connections or overlaps.

1.7 Aims and Objectives

This research aims to achieve several goals by examining violence as a form of communication in South Africa; getting a thorough grasp of the socio-cultural, historical, and political variables that lead to the pervasiveness of violence in the nation; and investigating the reasons and goals that lie behind the use of violence as a form of expression and communication. *Specific objectives of this research are to:*

- 1.7.1 Investigate the complexities of violence as a manifestation of political communication in South Africa, including its historical, social, and cultural dimensions.
- 1.7.2 Explore the motivations and dynamics behind the use of violence as a form of political communication, paying particular attention to power dynamics, societal inequalities, and the role of marginalised communities.
- 1.7.3 Analyse the role and influence of media and social platforms in the propagation and perpetuation of political violence and xenophobia, and their impact on public perceptions and attitudes to violence.
- 1.7.4 Identify potential strategies for fostering non-violent political dialogue and communication that can contribute to reducing political violence in South Africa,

including initiatives that promote social cohesion, inclusivity, and empowerment of individuals and communities.

1.8 Research Questions

- How does violence manifest as a form of political communication in South Africa, considering its historical, social, and cultural dimensions?
- What are the motivations and dynamics behind the use of violence as a form of political communication in South Africa, and how do power dynamics, societal inequalities, and marginalised communities' factor into this?
- How do media and social platforms contribute to the propagation and perpetuation of political violence and xenophobia in South Africa, and what is their impact on public perceptions and attitudes to such violence?
- What potential strategies can foster non-violent political dialogue and communication to help reduce political violence in South Africa, particularly those promoting social cohesion, inclusivity, and empowerment of individuals and communities?

1.9 Thesis Outline

This work is organised into six chapters; the present chapter introduces political violence in South Africa as a form of communication, giving background context, defining its purpose and significance, and articulating the rationale behind the topic.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of existing literature pertinent to political violence, theories of social conflict, and the role of media in societal dynamics. It includes a critical analysis of earlier research findings and theoretical frameworks. The chapter identifies gaps in existing literature that the study aims to address, setting the foundation for the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 delves into the theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding political violence. It explores the complexities of political violence as a social phenomenon and examines how the unique sociopolitical context of South Africa fits within these

frameworks. The chapter also introduces various communication theories related to political violence, so setting the stage for a deeper exploration of these themes.

Chapter 4 describes the research approach, philosophy, and methods used in the study. It explains the qualitative research method and using content analysis as the primary tool for data examination. Ethical considerations, data security, and the procedures for data collection and analysis are discussed thoroughly.

Chapter 5 presents the key findings from the content analysis conducted in the study. It thematically explores the historical dimensions of violence, motivations behind political violence, the role of media, and power dynamics in South Africa. The chapter also analyses how violence manifests as political communication and discusses societal hierarchies, grassroots movements, and media portrayal.

Chapter 6 interprets and contextualises the findings from the previous chapter. It considers the historical, social, and political implications of these findings and offers a deep insight into the complexity of political violence in South Africa. The chapter presents recommendations for policy, media, education, and community engagement based on the study's findings. It also suggests directions for future research and acknowledges the limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Political violence has garnered significant attention from researchers, politicians, and social activists given its complex nature. The manifestations of this phenomenon exhibit a wide range of expressions, such as public unrest and planned campaigns of terror. At the core of the inquiry is South Africa, a country characterised by a turbulent past marked by the enduring consequences of apartheid.

A comprehensive understanding of political violence requires a sophisticated methodology. This requires investigating the many ways individuals and collectives use violence as a means of communication, power negotiation, and for the restructuring of social narratives. The diverse range of media platforms, including conventional and digital media, are also crucial in shaping, magnifying, or potentially reducing violence. However, what is the role of South Africa in this discussion?

South Africa's historical narrative was characterised by prolonged periods of racial segregation and persecution throughout the apartheid era. It laid the foundation for political turbulence and thereafter instances of violence. Although the official dismantling of apartheid occurred in the 1990s, its enduring consequences persist in the socio-political framework of the country. These legacies have had a marked impact on the functionality of political communication and the consequent violence.

The study topic is being perpetually reshaped by the emergence of new perspectives, particularly those from marginalised areas. Therefore, this study includes influential literature from renowned academics and novel views that question conventional beliefs. However, an examination of contemporary political violence would be insufficient without a comprehensive analysis of the influence exerted by social media platforms. This analysis considers the intricacies of these platforms and examines their dual nature as instruments for mobilisation and as environments that could reinforce divided narratives.

2.2 Historical Context of Violence in South Africa

South Africa was previously defined by colonialism, apartheid, and socio-political battles, which has considerably contributed to the incidence of violence, including the dynamics of violent conflict. As stated by Makkan et al. (2022), the contemporary panorama of violence has been formed by significant events, legislation, and social shifts.

During apartheid, the government maintained a system of racial segregation and discrimination, so inducing significant social divides and extensive acts of violence. According to Ryan et al. (2018), apartheid policies, such as the Group Areas Act and the pass laws, instigated the forcible relocation of people from their homes, huge demonstrations, and state-sanctioned violence against those who opposed the government.

Violent confrontations, riots, and repression by the state were seen throughout the social and political conflicts against apartheid. This was true for the anti-apartheid movement and the resistance of different political and social organisations. These movements reached their zenith in important events such as the Soweto Uprising in 1976 and the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, both highlighting the violent character of the fight for independence (Makkan et al., 2022).

Throughout the 1990s South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy. After apartheid was abolished, there was a dramatic drop in violence. Nonetheless, the nation remained challenged by issues such as social inequality, poverty, and criminal activity. Ranganathan et al. (2021) noted factors that led to continual violence in communities: economic inequality, restricted access to resources, and high unemployment rates.

2.3 Forms and Manifestations of Violence as Communication

Violence as a form of communication manifests in diverse and complex ways. As outlined by Makkan et al. (2022), this multifaceted phenomenon can be understood through two primary manifestations: physical violence and protest movements. They

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each reflect distinct aspects of the South African societal fabric and are elaborated on below.

Physical violence is a direct and palpable form of communication that pervasively affects the social landscape. It is a grim indicator of the underlying societal issues as it encompasses acts like assault, domestic abuse, and gang-related aggressions. It becomes a conduit for expressing dominance and control, often reflecting frustrations, fears, and power dynamics prevalent in communities. As Ndlovu et al. (2022) specified, the high rates of domestic violence are not merely individual or isolated incidents but rather are symptomatic of broader systemic issues such as entrenched gender inequalities and cultural norms that perpetuate violence against women and children. The victims of this violence, disproportionately women and children, bear the brunt of these societal failures. Each act of violence underscores the urgent need for systemic change and societal introspection.

Protest movements and civil unrest are rooted in the country's history of resistance to apartheid. Makkan et al. (2022) interpreted these protests as not mere expressions of discontent, but as more structured and strategic communicative acts aimed at challenging oppressive systems and advocating social justice. These protests have been pivotal in shaping the country's political discourse, from the anti-apartheid struggles to recent student-led movements demanding better educational resources and service delivery. They are a platform for marginalised voices, which are often silenced in mainstream channels, to articulate their grievances and demand change. They also reflect the vibrancy and resilience of a society that continues to seek pathways towards equity and justice despite its fraught history.

Other forms of violence extend to more symbolic and non-physical forms presenting distinctive messages and implications. Makkan et al. (2022) explored how violence is used to express, intimidate, and convey ideologies in South Africa, ranging from symbolic gestures to communicative acts. Symbolic gestures are poignant expressions of dissent and resistance, entailing public vandalism, property damage, and defacement of significant symbols. These acts are often targeted, deliberate, and chosen for their representational value in questioning authority or rejecting particular ideologies. For instance, defacing a symbol associated with a historical regime or a contemporary political group is an assertion against the ideologies and actions that

these symbols represent. By dismantling these symbols, individuals or groups communicate their opposition and discontent in a manner that transcends verbal expressions. This approach rejects and challenges the prevailing narratives by making a statement that resonates with a broader audience and often ignites public discourse.

Communicative acts of violence intimidate, marginalise, and degrade individuals or groups and encompass behaviours like verbal threats, hate speech, and aggressive online conduct (Chenzi, 2021). These acts are often facilitated and amplified by the reach and immediacy of social media platforms. As highlighted by Chenzi (2021), the prevalence of social media has profoundly affected how these communicative acts of violence are disseminated and experienced. Platforms that enable instantaneous and widespread sharing of information can also become conduits for spreading hate speech and threats, exacerbating tensions, and rapidly fostering divisive narratives. The impact of these communicative violence acts extends beyond the immediate victims; it permeates the social fabric, fostering a climate of fear, hostility, and division. In South Africa, where societal fractures and historical injustices already pose significant challenges, these communicative acts can further entrench divisions and hinder efforts towards reconciliation and unity.

Multiple case studies and real-world events exemplify the many ways South Africans use violence as a form of communication. For example, the use of physical violence as a mode of communication and the long-standing tensions between labour, capital, and the state in the Marikana massacre in 2012, where mine employees went on strike and were met with fatal force by the police (Makkan et al., 2022). Another example was the Fees Must Fall campaign in 2015, where the rise of student-led protests tuition fees demonstrated the ability to challenge institutional inequalities and demand accessible education through protest movements and civil unrest (Makkan et al., 2022).

In understanding the varied forms of violence as communication in South Africa, clearly violence transcends physical acts. It is a complex language used to articulate frustration, resistance, and opposition. Each form is a testament to the intricate ways in which violence is woven into the tapestry of South African social and political discourse. Acknowledging and addressing these various forms of violence as

communication is crucial in comprehending the deeper societal issues they reflect and in fostering dialogues aimed at healing, understanding, and transformation.

2.4 Role of Marginalised Communities

In South Africa, the narratives of marginalised communities are inextricably linked to the nation's history and its contemporary socio-political landscape. Apartheid's methodical discrimination and socio-economic disparities have profoundly shaped the experiences of these communities. Although apartheid has been abolished, its remnants continue to affect the lives of many, particularly marginalised groups. This ongoing marginalisation often finds expression in political violence as a communication tool for expressing frustrations, asserting rights, and demanding change (Ndlovu et al., 2022).

The manifestations of political violence in these communities are not uniform but are shaped by the intersections of race, gender, class, and other socio-demographic factors. For instance, intimate partner violence (IPV) has been linked to socioeconomic empowerment initiatives, in the rural Northwest province of South Africa. While these initiatives aim to uplift women, they sometimes inadvertently exacerbate IPV which highlights the complex interplay between gender and economic status in the context of violence (Ranganathan et al., 2021). This intersectionality underscores that violence in marginalised communities is multi-dimensional and influenced by a variety of socio-economic and cultural factors.

The relationship between marginalised communities and violence extends beyond responses to external oppression. Within these communities, there are internal dynamics of power and violence that often go unnoticed. Women, especially young women and adolescent girls, frequently experience this internalised violence. Not only do young women face high rates of sexual violence leading to unintended pregnancies (Ajayi & Ezegbe, 2020), but they risk their lives daily when using public transport (Eagle & Kwele, 2021). These situations are stark reminders of the pervasive nature of this violence and highlight that while there is a broader struggle for societal recognition and justice, marginalised communities also grapple with internal conflicts and challenges.

The complexity of the interaction between political violence and marginalised communities in South Africa reflects broader global trends. Hegre et al. (2019) have emphasised the importance of understanding the early warning signs of political violence, applicable for predicting and mitigating violence in marginalised communities. In addition, Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff's (2019) research on continuous traumatic stress due to political violence highlights the psychological impacts on these communities. In South Africa, ongoing violence perpetuates a cycle of trauma and stress, among the most vulnerable populations.

The media can highlight stories concerning marginalised groups or contribute to further suppression. Biased media representations often focus disproportionately on the violent actions emanating from these communities, while neglecting the systemic and historical injustices that underlie such behaviours, so further spreading misinformation about these communities. This phenomenon has been observed globally, as digital platforms often become echo chambers that reinforce existing prejudices and escalate tensions (Chen et al., 2023).

There are other significant contributions to the political violence experienced by marginalised communities, such as economic disparities which were explored by researchers like Merrill and Orlando (2020). They examined the links between resource wealth and political violence. Also, the environmental dimension discussed by Vestby (2019) notes the impact of climate variability on the motivations for participating in political violence. This is particularly relevant for South Africa, where environmental challenges intersect with socio-economic issues and further complicate the landscape of political violence.

There are also glimmers of hope and avenues for positive intervention. Research on IPV and HIV in South Africa has highlighted the need for context-specific strategies that address the unique needs and challenges of these communities (Mannell et al., 2019). In healthcare, the perceptions of emergency nurses towards women exposed to IPV are critical in shaping the support provided to these victims. The role of healthcare professionals goes beyond mere treatment; they are pivotal in offering psychological support and guidance, helping to break the cycle of violence (Van der Wath, 2019). This highlights the importance of professional-centric approaches alongside community-focused strategies.

2.5 Comparative Analysis of Global Instances

Political violence as a form of communication is not exclusive to South Africa. Multiple countries have grappled with similar manifestations of violence that have profound socio-political implications. By examining these global instances, one can identify patterns, lessons, parallels, and contrasts that enhance our understanding of the South African scenario.

2.5.1 Latin America: Guatemala and El Salvador

In the latter half of the 20th century, both Guatemala and El Salvador were embroiled in brutal civil wars and underwent state-sponsored violence against civilians with mass killings and disappearances eliminating opposition and further intimidating the broader populace. The brutality meted out in these nations mirrored the systemic targeting of perceived enemies during apartheid-era South Africa. However, the ethnic dimension, especially against indigenous communities in Guatemala, provides contrast. Unlike in South Africa, where racial lines were more distinctly drawn, in Guatemala violence increased existing ethnic divisions. As highlighted by Bartusevičius et al. (2020), dominance-driven political orientations often predict political violence in various regions, including non-WEIRD samples.

2.5.2 Middle East: Syria

The Syrian conflict stemmed from the wider wave of the Arab Spring protests which quickly morphed into a full-blown civil war. Much like the previously mentioned countries, political violence in Syria was meant to communicate a clear message, especially by the state. Their military tactics included barrel bombings, sieges, and the use of chemical weapons that also aimed to crush dissent and instill fear. While South Africa's political violence during apartheid was largely internal, Syria's situation complicated the narrative as it drew international intervention and proxy wars. As highlighted by Chen, Wang, and Han (2023), political violence can often intersect with other crises, such as infectious diseases, which further complicates conflict scenarios.

2.5.3 Asia: Sri Lanka

The civil war in Sri Lanka between the government and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) is another lens to understand political violence. The LTTE used suicide bombings as a military tactic and a form of political communication, thereby conveying their resolve and dedication to their cause. The ethnic dimension of the conflict has parallels with South Africa's racial divides. As the author stated in Macheke (2022), understanding the role of faceless perpetrators in political violence is crucial for reconceptualizing peacebuilding strategies.

2.5.4 Africa: Rwanda

Perhaps one of the most brutal instances of political violence in recent history is the Rwandan genocide. The mass killings of Tutsis by Hutu militias were driven by a toxic mix of political manoeuvring, propaganda, and historical tensions. Radio stations played a critical role in communicating and amplifying the call for violence. This form of communication through mass media illustrates how powerful media can be in shaping violent narratives. South Africa has a history of state-controlled media during apartheid, albeit with different outcomes. As highlighted by Chenzi (2021), the role of media in propagating violence and xenophobia is a significant factor in understanding political violence dynamics.

2.5.5 Europe: Northern Ireland

The political violence between the nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist communities, often backed by their armed wings like the Irish Republican Army (IRA), entailed territorial claims but also identity. Murals, songs, and even public executions communicated political stances, garnered support, and intimidated opponents. The role of identity in the troubles was tied to religion and colonial history, and although it manifested differently it is comparable to South Africa's racial and colonial past. As the author stated in Cornell et al. (2022), discourses of gender and political violence provide insight into the complexities of identity-driven conflicts.

2.6 Lessons, Parallels, and Contrasts with South Africa

2.6.1 Media of Communication

The media of communication used across diverse political landscapes profoundly affected the dynamics of political violence. The radio broadcasting of hateful propaganda during the Rwandan genocide was a catalyst for mass violence, as highlighted by Bartusevičius et al. (2020). Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, murals poignantly conveyed the sentiments of divided communities, encapsulating their history, pain, and aspirations. South Africa's struggle against apartheid echoes these modalities with a unique cultural layer. Songs like "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" (God Bless Africa) and Toyi-toyi dances became symbols of resistance. These media were powerful tools of mobilisation, cohesion, and expression while emphasizing the universality of art and culture as a mode of political communication, as denoted by Cornell et al. (2022).

2.6.2 State vs Non-state Actors

The dynamics of political violence often fluctuate based on the actors involved. In many global contexts, the state becomes the primary perpetrator, wielding power against marginalized elements. However, the rise of non-state actors such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka and the IRA in Northern Ireland presents a complex web of resistance, militancy, and sometimes terrorism. Their organized, structured approach, complete with hierarchies and distinct objectives, contrasts with the more fragmented resistance movements in South Africa. The South African resistance was intense and diverse, comprising multiple factions and strategies, all unified by a shared objective – ending apartheid, as stated by Ajayi and Ezegebe (2020).

2.6.3 International Dimension

Internal dynamics dictate the course of political violence, but international players are important. Syria illustrates how international intervention in the form of support or opposition can influence a nation's history, as highlighted by Chen et al. (2023). In stark contrast, South Africa's battle against apartheid remained largely an internal

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affair despite receiving significant attention, sanctions, and even support from global actors. Grassroots movements worldwide rallied in support of the ANC (African National Congress) and other anti-apartheid entities, while nations like the USA (United States of America) and the UK (United Kingdom) imposed sanctions. The international dimension in South Africa's case was more of a moral and economic stressor than direct intervention, showcasing the spectrum of international involvement in political struggles, as denoted by Lund et al. (2020).

2.6.4 Post-Violence Reconciliation

The aftermath of political violence is as crucial as its inception. The scars of such events remain etched in the collective memory of nations, requiring careful and compassionate healing processes. Post-genocide, Rwanda introduced the Gacaca courts – a form of community justice aimed at truth-telling, reparation, and, eventually, reconciliation. South Africa embarked on a similar but distinct journey with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC aimed to unearth the atrocities of apartheid, offering victims a platform to share their stories and perpetrators an opportunity for amnesty upon full disclosure. While both processes had their critics, they represented crucial steps in mending divided societies and addressing the past to forge a united future, as denoted by Macheke (2022).

2.6.5 Identity and Violence

The role of identity is paramount in discussions about political violence since it is often based on race, religion, ethnicity, or other factors. Whether the Hindu–Muslim divide in India, the Tutsi–Hutu categorization in Rwanda, or the Protestant–Catholic dichotomy in Northern Ireland, identity often becomes both the trigger and target of violence. South Africa's apartheid was characterized by racial divisions between Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians. While these divisions and their implications differed from other global instances, the underlying theme remained consistent: identity can be weaponized to discriminate, dominate, and perpetuate violence. Exploring these parallels and contrasts with South Africa underscores the universality of identity-based conflicts while highlighting the nuances that make each struggle unique, as highlighted by Chenzi (2021).

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2.7 Role of Leadership in Political Violence

Leadership and its rhetoric can inflame tensions or inspire peace. Political leadership is a potent force, shaping societal trajectories, and has historically influenced nature and extent of political violence. South Africa's turbulent history illuminates how leadership has directly or indirectly propelled political violence. The apartheid regime's policies institutionalised racial segregation, so creating a breeding ground for violence. Leaders such as P.W. Botha epitomised an era where the government's hardline stance and inflammatory rhetoric contributed significantly to the perpetuation of violence (Chenzi, 2021).

In contrast, leaders like Nelson Mandela symbolised the embodiment of resistance to violent oppression as they used their influence to advocate reconciliation. His leadership exhibited a conscious departure from endorsing violent measures to focusing on dialogue and nation-building.

However, it is essential to understand that while certain leaders advocate peace, their rhetoric can sometimes be used as a facade to downplay or divert attention from covert operations or violent actions taken by their followers. This dichotomy underscores the complexity of the role of leadership in political violence.

Grassroots leaders or community influencers also have a profound impact. For instance, community leaders often wield significant influence, especially in the context of IPV in South Africa. When they perpetrate or condone gender-based violence it sends a powerful message that such actions are acceptable or can be ignored (Mannell et al., 2019; Ranganathan et al., 2021). Similarly, narratives from grassroots leaders can influence public perceptions and attitudes towards violence in public spaces making them perilous environments for young black women, like the "minibus taxi" transport systems (Eagle & Kwele, 2021).

The correlation between education and violence has been explored globally. Østby et al. (2019) posited that education could lead to pacification when advocated by leadership. Upon recognising this correlation, South Africa's post-apartheid leaders have consistently emphasised the importance of education. While education can

facilitate pacification, the content and direction of the educational discourse are crucial and are often determined by the leadership.

Leadership is pivotal in predicting political violence. Early-warning systems such as the VIEWS project indicate that leadership decisions and rhetoric can function as predictors of impending violence (Hegre et al., 2019). Proactive leadership can use such systems to mitigate potential hotspots of conflict.

Internationally, resources like oil affect political violence. Regions rich in oil, such as the Middle East and North Africa, often experience accelerated carbon extraction linked with occurrences of political violence. This correlation suggests that leadership decisions about resource management can inadvertently lead to conflicts, especially when resources are scarce or mismanaged (Merrill & Orlando, 2020).

South Africa's history showed the psychological impact of continual traumatic stress resulting from political violence. Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019) underscored how repeated exposure to political violence can shape public perception and responses. Leaders in such contexts are responsible for providing healing, support, and avenues for redress.

2.8 Economic Perspectives on Political Violence

Political violence is intertwined with socio-economic factors. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are not merely economic metrics but also reflect deeper societal fissures and interplay with political violence. Østby et al. (2019) emphasised the link between education and political violence despite education being closely related to these economic indicators. Lack of education stemming from economic disparities can aggravate marginalised cohorts susceptible to participation in violent activities as a means of expression or survival. This resonates with Vestby's (2019) research highlighting individual motivations rooted in climatic and economic vulnerabilities as drivers for participation in political violence.

In South Africa, inequality is not just economic but also deeply racial and social. Such structural inequalities have birthed movements and uprisings, sometimes leading to violent confrontations (Cornell et al., 2022). Global research suggests that economic disparities can contribute to the propagation of ideologies that justify political violence

(Webber et al., 2020). When people feel disenfranchised or perceive themselves as being systematically oppressed, they become more susceptible to extremist ideologies that may grant them a sense of purpose or revenge.

The ramifications of political violence on South Africa's national economy are profound. Violence disrupts trade, reduces foreign direct investment, and damages infrastructure. Political violence also erodes trust in institutions, markets, and the state's ability to maintain order. The eroded trust translates into reduced business confidence, a reluctance to seal international partnerships, and consequently stunted economic growth. Furthermore, political violence can exacerbate pre-existing economic vulnerabilities. For instance, Chen et al. (2023) emphasised how infectious diseases, such as malaria, and political violence intertwine in sub-Saharan Africa. Economic strains caused by health crises can catalyse civil unrest, so creating a vicious cycle – subsequently impeding public health responses.

As explained earlier, political violence affects regions rich in resources like oil and has broad economic implications (Merrill & Orlando, 2020). Similarly, South Africa is rich in minerals and is crucial in the global supply chain and yet faces economic repercussions when political violence disrupts its mining and export sectors.

It is also essential to consider that political violence is not always an output of economic disparity; it can also be a tool to maintain economic hierarchies. Bartusevičius et al. (2020) noted that the dominant-driven autocratic orientations could predict political violence in both WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) and non-WEIRD samples. This suggests that for the elite to maintain economic dominance they could resort to or endorse political violence.

2.9 Psychological and Sociological Aspects of Political Violence

Political violence is a complex interplay of individual motivations, collective behaviours, and societal structures. It is crucial to explore the psychological and sociological underpinnings to comprehend its genesis and perpetuation.

Exposure to continual traumatic stress, such as political violence, can deeply affect the individual psyche. Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019) highlighted the lifelong impacts of such exposure, as seen in Israel. Individuals in such environments tend to normalise violence, often adopting it as a legitimate form of expression, defence, or communication. Beyond the immediate trauma is an internalised sense of vulnerability that potentially leads to a worldview where violence is not anticipated but expected.

Individual motivations are interdependent on broader societal norms, values, and ideologies. Webber et al. (2020) indicated that ideologies justifying political violence arise and thrive in social contexts. Such ideologies can give a sense of belonging, purpose, or empowerment, especially in societies marred by inequalities or systemic oppression.

A well-rounded education can challenge violent narratives, promote critical thinking, and offer non-violent communication (NVC) avenues. Østby et al. (2019) highlighted the pacifying effect of education on political violence. Educational institutions are not only centres for knowledge dissemination but also spaces where societal norms and values are negotiated and internalised.

There is also a collective aspect to this. Political violence often emerges from group behaviours fuelled by collective grievances, histories, or aspirations. Hegre et al. (2019) introduced the ViEWS system, which signals potential political violence hotspots. Such systems underscore that political violence is not spontaneous but often results from collective mobilisations. These mobilisations are subsequently influenced by societal narratives, historical memories, and shared experiences. The group identity becomes a potent force as acts of violence are framed not as individual transgressions but as acts of collective resistance or assertion.

The media amplifies these narratives. Information dissemination shapes collective perceptions and reactions, whether it is genuine report or "fake news," as Chenzi (2021) noted in the context of xenophobia in South Africa. When societal narratives are dominated by real or perceived tales of injustices, they can promote violent mobilisations. Conversely, the media can be pacifying by facilitating platforms for dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation.

Cornell et al. (2022) discussed how gender and political violence discourses intertwine in the South African context. Such intersections show that societal norms and values do not operate in silos but rather cross-influence each other. For instance, a society normalising gender-based violence may find it easier to justify or overlook broader political violence. Similarly, systemic racial or economic injustices may foster violent ideologies, thus driving marginalised groups to voice their frustrations

The sociological fabric is essential in understanding responses to political violence. Marchi and Da Silva (2019) examined political violence from the extreme right in Portugal, shedding light on how societal structures, political vacuums, or perceived threats can invigorate extremist ideologies. Societies feeling threatened, whether from economic downturns, demographic changes, or external influences, may be more susceptible to violent narratives.

2.10 Impact on Youth and Future Generations

While political violence casts shadows over all strata of society, it has a particularly pronounced effect on the youth. If the youth are continually exposed to political violence, it can mould their psyche. The repeated exposure can lead to an internalised expectation of violence (Pat-Horenczyk & Schiff, 2019), making them more susceptible to accepting violence as a normative aspect of life. This may influence the youth to view violence as a legitimate response to perceived threats, grievances, or forms of expression. The normalisation of such violence at a young age can have cascading effects as it influences their life choices, aspirations, and even their parenting techniques – thereby affecting subsequent generations.

Societal discourses significantly shape youth perceptions, especially discourses that intertwine gender and political violence (Cornell et al., 2022). For instance, young men growing up in environments where masculinity is intertwined with aggression might come to view violence as an affirmation of their identity. On the other hand, young women in the same environments may perceive their safety and agency as perpetually under threat, causing an internalised fear or adoption of self-preserving behaviours that limit their societal participation.

Education can challenge, reshape, and even pacify violent narratives (Østby et al., 2019). But it can equally perpetuate them if not wielded judiciously. Education could buffer violent tendencies by promoting critical thinking, fostering empathy, and offering avenues for constructive communication, as denoted by Østby et al. (2019). However, it can exacerbate the issues if educational content or pedagogy reinforces divisive ideologies or overlooks histories of violence and injustice, as the authors highlighted.

The youth are native to the digital age, and their perceptions can be significantly shaped by the media's influence (Chenzi, 2021). They often derive their understanding of societal events from online narratives, making them vulnerable to polarised or extremist viewpoints if not balanced by critical media literacy.

Youth-focused initiatives are crucial, whether in education, community programmes, or in media. The ViEWS systems can also be informative for youth-centric interventions (Hegre et al., 2019). By identifying hotspots or potential flashpoints, targeted youth programmes can be initiated, aiming to provide constructive outlets for grievances, promoting inter-community dialogues, or fostering skills that enable youth to be peacemakers in their communities.

2.11 Fanon's Argument on Political Violence

Frantz Fanon, in his seminal works "Black Skin, White Masks" and "The Wretched of the Earth", compellingly narrates the psychological effects of colonialism and the complex role of violence decolonisation. He argues that violence can act as a catalytic force for the oppressed to reclaim identity and agency. Fanon's view on violence is that it is not merely an act of aggression but an instrument of liberation and a path towards decolonisation. This perspective resonates with oppressed groups, where violence becomes a language of the unheard and a response to the long-standing suppression of their voices and identities.

Apartheid's inherent racial discrimination and segregation echo the colonial oppression Fanon describes. His insights into the psychological impacts of such systemic oppression are particularly relevant in understanding the struggles against apartheid. During this era, violence was a reaction to the immediate brutalities of the apartheid regime and a broader expression of resistance against a long history of

subjugation. In post-apartheid South Africa, while the overt systems of apartheid have been dismantled, their residual effects of socio-economic inequalities continue to influence the societal landscape. Here, Fanon's ideas offer an outlook of the continued struggle against these systemic inequalities and the forms of resistance that emerge in response.

However, Fanon's theories have not been without critique. Scholars like B.K. Jha (1988) have critically examined Fanon's views on violence, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of its role and effects. Critics have noted that while Fanon's perspective on violence as a liberating force is compelling, it might also oversimplify the complex dynamics of post-colonial societies, as denoted by various authors. The glorification of violence as a means to an end can potentially overlook other forms of non-violent resistance that have been equally effective in anti-colonial struggles. Furthermore, the psychological impact of engaging in violence on both the perpetrators and the victims raises ethical and moral concerns. In the South African context, where the legacy of violence from apartheid continues to have profound impacts, these critiques invite a more critical reflection on the role of violence in political and social movements.

Fanon's theories are relevant to contemporary research. They underscore the liberating potential of violence for the colonized, offering a profound perspective to analyze the historical narratives of violence and resistance during apartheid. The apartheid era in South Africa resonates strongly with Fanon's depiction of colonial violence and the subsequent quest for liberation and identity by the oppressed. The echoes of this struggle continue to shape the political and social landscape in contemporary South African society, with the legacies of violence from apartheid still visible in various forms of socio-political unrest and conflict.

Fanon's perspectives have greatly influenced theoretical frameworks used in analysing political violence, especially those exploring the psychological impacts of such violence and its role in political change. His ideas about violence as a transformative tool for the oppressed are an essential component for understanding the motivations and dynamics behind political violence in post-apartheid South Africa. It is particularly evident in studies focusing on gender and political violence, where Fanon's insights help unravel the complex interplay between systemic oppression and

personal agency (Cornell et al., 2022). His theories also help us understand the autocratic political orientations that often underpin political violence, as evidenced in various global contexts, including Western and non-Western societies (Bartusevičius et al., 2020).

Fanon's theories have direct relevance to the objectives of studies examining the South African context. For instance, when researching the complexities of violence as a manifestation of political communication, one can gain a foundational understanding from his arguments of how violence has historically helped oppressed groups to express resistance and assert their identities. This understanding is crucial in analysing the role and influence of media and social platforms in propagating political violence, as these media can often reflect or distort the narratives of resistance and liberation rooted in historical struggles. Fanon's theories also contribute to identifying strategies for fostering non-violent political dialogue and communication, as they highlight the need for acknowledging the historical and psychological impacts of violence in any peacebuilding or reconciliation efforts.

In contemporary research on political violence in South Africa, Fanon's ideas can be pivotal in reconceptualising peacebuilding strategies. By understanding the historical context and psychological underpinnings of political violence, as depicted by Fanon, researchers can develop more nuanced and effective strategies that address the root causes of such violence. This approach is vital in creating sustainable peace and reconciliation in societies like South Africa, where the legacy of political violence is deeply intertwined with the nation's history and identity (Macheka, 2022). Therefore, Fanon's theories offer an indispensable framework for comprehensively understanding and addressing the multifaceted nature of political violence in South African.

2.12 Research Gaps

One of the most pressing gaps is the study of intra-community dynamics. Much has been said about the external oppressions faced by marginalised communities, but there is limited comprehensive research on the subtleties of power relations within these communities. How do these internal dynamics exacerbate or mitigate the external challenges they face? Such an investigation is crucial for formulating

interventions that consider not just the broader societal context but also the intricacies in marginalised groups.

Another notable gap is the nuanced exploration of intersectionality, in the South African context. More understanding is required of how race, gender, class, and other sociodemographic factors intertwine and influence each other as they play a role in the manifestations of violence. For instance, how does the experience of a Black woman from a low economic background differ from that of a Black woman from a more affluent background? And how do these experiences contrast with those of Black men or individuals from other racial or ethnic backgrounds in similar economic circumstances?

There is a need to examine the trajectories of violence. Political violence and IPV have received considerable attention, while the more insidious, everyday forms of violence that individuals face need further investigation, especially in urban settings. For instance, the violence faced by young Black women in public transport settings is under-researched (Eagle & Kwele, 2021).

The media's role is another area rife with discrepancies, especially in an era of digital transformation. The media's influence on public opinion is a globally accepted phenomenon, while there is limited research on how South African media, with its unique history of state control during the apartheid era, influences perceptions today. There are no comprehensive studies on the propagation of misinformation exacerbating violence through social media in South Africa, and the counter-narratives that emerge in these platforms.

Studies like those of Ranganathan et al. (2021) touch upon economic empowerment and its unintended violent consequences, but there is a gap in understanding the broader influence of the economic landscape factors and their influence on violence. How do South Africa's rampant unemployment, poverty, and economic inequalities contribute to the cycle of violence? More so, how can economic interventions be tailored to uplift communities and ensure they do not inadvertently lead to more violence?

There is also a pressing need to study resilience, and coping mechanisms used by marginalised communities. A holistic understanding of violence must also incorporate

the strategies these communities adopt to navigate, resist, and even transform their violent landscapes. These resilience strategies could provide key insights for interventions. Another major discrepancy is the relative lack of longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies are indispensable to understand the evolution of violence, its triggers, and the long-term effects of interventions.

2.13 Summary

Political violence in South Africa is a complex and multi-layered issue, requiring a multi-faceted approach for resolution. Strategies aimed at mitigating violence must consider the historical context, socio-economic factors, media influence, and psychological impacts. The nuanced and multifaceted nature of violence in this context underscores the complexity of addressing and mitigating it. This comprehensive survey of scholarly discourse reveals the intricate tapestry of factors that contribute to and arise from political violence.

The historical legacy of apartheid has indelibly marked the societal fabric, embedding patterns of violence in the national psyche. From physical assaults to symbolic acts of resistance, this legacy continues to manifest in various forms of violence reflecting the deep-seated grievances and inequalities that persist. The enduring repercussions of apartheid are coupled with contemporary challenges such as economic disparities and digital misinformation, so compounding the complexity of the issue. However, these historical insights provide critical learnings for understanding the mechanisms of violence and forging a path to attempt to end the cycle of violence.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

3.1 Overview and Rationale

The intricate nature of political violence is why it garners significant interest from researchers, politicians, and activists alike. Theoretical frameworks in the social sciences and humanities are analytical tools enabling us to refine our perspective and enhance our understanding. Structured methodologies facilitate the understanding, analysis, and ultimate resolution of the complex issues presented by political violence.

Theoretical frameworks are crucial in research for guidance and establishing a fundamental structure that supports the formulation of research questions, informing the selection of techniques, and influencing the interpretation of findings. Researchers are empowered to situate their findings within the wider academic discourse, establishing a connection with previous research and creating a foundation for future investigations.

The racial tensions intensified by apartheid did not just subside upon its cessation. They transformed and manifested in diverse aspects of South African society. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge that political violence in South Africa is inherently intertwined with its historical legacy of apartheid. The subject matter is intricately intertwined with the aforementioned factors since it is influenced by the racial stratifications, economic disparities, and institutional biases created by the apartheid regime.

An in-depth examination of South Africa's political violence transcends academic inquiry, as it assumes a moral, social, and political need. The nation's distinct historical path is a fertile ground for scholarly investigation into the indigenous cultures, colonial legacies, the atrocities of apartheid, and the subsequent difficulties in the postapartheid era. The South African context offers valuable insights into how institutional oppression can influence societal dynamics, the many manifestations of resistance, and the inherent difficulties accompanying periods of transformation – regardless of their initial promise.

South Africa is a microcosm of worldwide conflicts, and the lessons derived from it have wider ramifications. The experiences of the country, including its challenges and achievements, could provide valuable perspectives for other countries contending with their legacies of prejudice, division, and aggression. Scholars can establish connections, discern recurring trends, and promote ideas with broader applicability through a comprehensive comprehension of the South African environment.

Considering the intricate nature of political violence in South Africa, research without a strong theoretical foundation may result in shallow comprehension and erroneous remedies. A sturdy theoretical framework prevents the study from being overwhelmed by the breadth of the subject matter. Having direction is a fundamental aspect that

guarantees that each element of evidence, narrative, and conclusion is firmly grounded in a comprehensive and cohesive framework.

Moreover, a robust theoretical framework guarantees that the study makes a valuable contribution to the wider scholarly and pragmatic conversation about political violence. This practice guarantees that the results and recommendations of the study are firmly grounded in a robust and widely accepted knowledge base, so enhancing their authority and reliability.

3.1.1 The Essence of Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks serve several pivotal roles. They offer a structured approach to understanding and interpreting complex realities. They bring clarity and specificity to an area of study by defining terms, variables, and the relationships between them. Østby et al. (2019) noted that a well-chosen theoretical framework can guide researchers through intricate relationships and dynamics inherent in political violence.

These frameworks also facilitate comparability. When diverse researchers approach a topic through a shared lens, fostering collaboration and cumulative knowledge building, their findings become more easily comparable. In political violence, where variables and manifestations are myriad, such approaches ensure that the knowledge created is cohesive and continuously evolves, progressively refining the understanding of complex issues.

3.1.2 The South African Context

South Africa's past, marked by apartheid's deep-seated racial segregation and the subsequent transition to democracy, provides a rich tapestry of factors contributing to its current political violence manifestations. In such a context, theoretical frameworks are not just tools; they become vital lifelines that allow researchers to consider the many influences that shape the country's political fabric.

Theoretical frameworks extend beyond understanding political violence as a relic of the past because it continues to manifest in new and evolving forms. The frameworks become instruments of foresight, helping scholars and policymakers to anticipate potential flashpoints and develop strategies to mitigate impending conflicts.

3.1.3 Customising Frameworks to the South African Narrative

While global or universally recognised theoretical frameworks provide a strong starting point, it is crucial to adapt and fine-tune them to South Africa's unique narrative. The country's indigenous cultures, languages, socio-political hierarchies, and economic disparities require a nuanced approach. Herein lies the rationale for adopting and evolving frameworks that resonate deeply with the South African ethos.

In this context, researchers must exercise caution. The danger of over-generalising or forcibly fitting South African realities into pre-existing global frameworks can lead to oversights. It underscores the importance of iterative research processes, where frameworks are continually revised and refined based on empirical findings.

3.1.4 The Way forward

As political violence continues to evolve, so must our theoretical approaches. The digital age, globalisation, and changing geopolitical landscapes bring new dimensions to the discourse on political violence in South Africa. Frameworks need to incorporate these contemporary variables, understanding how global influences intertwine with local dynamics. A collaborative approach, drawing insights from various disciplines – sociology, psychology, economics, or political science – will enrich these frameworks. Such interdisciplinary collaboration ensures a more holistic and integrative perspective on political violence, capturing all its complexity. It is also paramount that while future research endeavours are rooted in robust theoretical frameworks, they maintain a strong connection to grassroots realities. Engaging with local communities, understanding their lived experiences, and integrating their narratives ensures that frameworks remain relevant, empathetic, and effective.

3.2 Theories on Political Violence

Political violence is intricately connected to a multitude of causes that converge to give rise to certain expressions. To have a thorough comprehension of political violence, it is necessary to engage with the literature and examine the many ideas that seek to explain its origins, dynamics, and consequences.

Galtung (1969) noted that violence may exist in many manifestations outside of physical aggression. The concept of 'structural violence' was introduced by the individual, positing that social structures and institutions can sustain injury by depriving individuals of their fundamental necessities, entitlements, or opportunities in society. The theoretical paradigm discussed below has significant relevance in the context of South Africa, given the systematic oppression of the majority of Black people by apartheid's institutional structures. This oppressive regime engendered profound grievance among the populace, ultimately leading to the eruption of political violence.

The viewpoint is further elucidated by Gurr's (1970) proposition of the Relative Deprivation Theory. According to Gurr, the emergence of political violence may be attributed to the perceived disparities between peoples' expectations of what they deserve and the actual outcomes they experience. The experience of perceived deprivation can develop into collective dissatisfaction, in particular when exacerbated by social disparities. South Africa underwent pronounced racial and economic disparities throughout apartheid, and the concept of relative deprivation serves as a valuable framework for comprehending the underlying reasons that drove several resistance groups.

Tilly (2003) highlights the significance of political opportunity frameworks. Formal entities, such as governmental processes, and informal elements, like community norms, are structures that provide parameters within which political activity may be feasible. When these systems are viewed as lacking openness or receptiveness, marginalised groups may choose violent means to articulate their grievances or contest the prevailing state of affairs. This theory provides insight into the reasons why some groups within the resistance at different periods of South Africa's history decided to resort to armed conflict in response to the state's use of violence against non-violent opposition.

Skocpol (1979) posited a structural theory of revolutions that underscores the significance of state institutions and foreign influences in the genesis of political violence. In conjunction with external influences, the author suggested that the erosion of state institutions may give birth to revolutionary circumstances in which disgruntled citizens mobilise against the governing authority. The phenomenon of political violence in South Africa may be comprehended when analysed using this analytical framework,

in particular during the final phases of apartheid. The apartheid regime experienced an unprecedented level of pressure due to the escalation of international sanctions and the mounting domestic opposition.

Nevertheless, while structural variables are pivotal, they should not be regarded as the only determinants. The Symbolic Interactionism Theory of Blumer (1969) emphasises the importance of symbolic actions and meanings in influencing collective behaviour, such as acts of aggression. The resistance against apartheid was characterised by many symbolic expressions, ranging from the iconic clenched fist salute to the powerful anthems of liberation. These symbols had significant value as catalysts for individuals and influenced communal behaviours.

Tullock (1971) proposed the Rational Choice Theory, which posits that political violence is driven by a rational evaluation of costs and benefits. From this standpoint, the use of violence is a logical decision when the perceived advantages, such as the attainment of political goals or the garnering of attention for a particular cause, surpass the possible drawbacks, including retaliatory measures by the state or condemnation on an international scale. Evidence suggests that different factions in the antiapartheid movements in South Africa did consider the potential outcomes of their violent and non-violent actions concerning their aims.

Crenshaw (1981) and other scholars examined political violence from a psychological perspective. Crenshaw explored the causes behind terrorist acts, where she noted that these activities are driven by a multifaceted interaction of human, organisational, and environmental elements. The convergence of personal grievances, ideological dedication, and a conducive environment may propel people into extremist ideologies. Although South African resistance should not be conflated with acts of terrorism, there was a significant overlap between personal and political dimensions in the antiapartheid movement, which aligns with the perspectives of Crenshaw.

Furthermore, Della Porta (1995) underscored the significance of social connections and networks. The phenomenon of 'political learning' involves the exchange of experiences, techniques, and ideas among those participating in resistance groups, leading to a gradual radicalisation and acceptance of violence as a legitimate approach. This phenomenon is observable in the evolutionary trajectory of different factions in the resistance movement in South Africa, whereby the interplay of domestic

dynamics and relations with external allies played a pivotal role in shaping their strategic approaches and tactical manoeuvres.

Finally, Fanon's (1961) perspective introduces an additional layer of analysis which posits that violence may be a cathartic mechanism for the marginalised. Fanon's perspective posited violence as a means for the marginalised to reestablish their sense of humanity, discard their perceived sense of inferiority, and confront those who oppress them. The thoughts put out by the individual in question, while deemed controversial, exhibit similarities with the tales of several individuals who actively opposed the oppressive actions associated with the apartheid regime. The individuals saw their acts of violence not only as tactical manoeuvres within the realm of politics but also as expressions of their inherent worth, humanity, and ability to exert influence. Comprehending political violence in South Africa necessitates the amalgamation of different theoretical frameworks, acknowledging that the nation's historical context, along with wider socio-political forces, engendered a very unstable combination. Global theories provide fundamental perspectives, but, as Tholaine and Calvino (2022) contend, it is via their convergence with the unique circumstances of South Africa that a holistic comprehension arises.

3.3 Communication Theories

Understanding acts of violence through the prism of communication theories is an innovative approach, albeit one that has increasingly gained traction in recent years. The lens of communication allows us to discern the intentions behind such acts, decode the messages embedded within, and predict potential responses from various actors in society. This approach is rooted in the idea that violence, like other forms of communication, is intended to convey messages, express grievances, and elicit specific reactions (Schmid, 1983).

3.1.1 Semiotics of Violence

Derived from semiotics, which revolves around signs and symbols and how they generate meaning (Eco, 1976), the semiotics of violence posits that acts of violence serve as symbolic expressions. For instance, a riot in a marginalised community manifests collective anger and further symbolises the gesture of showcasing

deepseated grievances. By analysing the choice of targets or the manner of violence, one can discern the underlying 'message' or 'statement' made (Barthes, 1972).

3.1.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

McCombs and Shaw (1972) noted that media do not necessarily tell people what to think but more of what to think about. In political violence, the coverage or lack thereof can significantly influence public perception. When violent acts are extensively covered, they can dominate the public discourse, shaping the agenda of political leaders and the general populace. In this way, those perpetrating violence may seek extensive media coverage to ensure their grievances become central societal issues.

3.1.3 Cultural and Narrative Theories

Violence can weave narratives that influence societal perceptions and responses (Hall, 1997). These narratives, borne out of collective memories, shared experiences, or propagated ideologies, can legitimise, marginalise, or vilify acts of violence. A significant instance is the portrayal of freedom fighters versus terrorists. The narratives of these labels can shape how violent acts, and their perpetrators are perceived in the public domain (Fiske, 1990).

3.1.4 Noise and Feedback in Communication

The classic Shannon–Weaver model (1948) of communication introduced the idea of 'noise' – factors that distort the intended message between the sender and the receiver. In the context of violence, 'noise' can stem from multiple sources. For instance, external influences such as media biases, state propaganda, or international interventions can skew the original 'message' embedded in an act of violence (Chomsky & Herman, 1988). In addition, the receiver's own prejudices, beliefs, or experiences can alter the perception of the violent act, making the communication process even more complex.

3.1.5 Framing Theory

As proposed by Entman (1993), framing refers to selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, or solution. In political violence, framing determines how such acts are presented and

interpreted. An act can be framed as an act of 'desperation', 'terrorism', 'resistance' or 'retaliation'. Each frame has its own set of implications and elicits peculiar emotional and cognitive responses from the audience (Goffman, 1974).

3.1.6 Muted Group Theory

Muted Group Theory, initially developed by Edwin Ardener (1975) and expanded by Shirley Ardener, posits that marginalised groups within a society often struggle to articulate their experiences and perspectives due to the dominance of the language and communication frameworks established by more powerful groups. This theory provides a compelling lens through which to analyse the dynamics of political violence as a form of communication, particularly in the South African context. Muted Group Theory emphasises that dominant groups shape language and discourse to reflect their worldviews and interests. As a result, marginalised groups are left with limited avenues to effectively express their realities, often resorting to alternative forms of communication that challenge the dominant narrative. These alternative forms, however, are frequently dismissed or misunderstood, perpetuating a cycle of marginalisation.

3.1.7 Spiral of Silence Theory

Noelle-Neumann (1974) posited that individuals fear social isolation, so subsequently influencing their willingness to express minority opinions publicly. In a climate where violent acts become regular, those opposing or supporting such acts may remain silent because of the fear of backlash or ostracisation, further complicating the communication dynamics. This can create echo chambers where only dominant narratives prevail, influencing public policy and social reactions to violence.

3.1.8 Symbolic Interactionism

Rooted in Mead's (1934) work, symbolic interactionism emphasises the shared symbols and meanings that guide human interactions. Violent acts can be seen as symbolic gestures with embedded meanings. However, the challenge lies in decoding these meanings, especially when multiple cultural, social, or political symbols intertwine (Blumer, 1969).

Reflecting on the intricate link between violence and communication, as Van der Wath (2019) suggests, is akin to delving deep into the complex web of human intentions, expressions, and perceptions. Violence is not just a physical or emotional outburst but also a deeply symbolic act, intended to communicate, negotiate, protest, or affirm. Using the theories of communication to understand these acts can reveal their underlying motivations and pave the way for more effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

3.4 Power Dynamics and Societal Hierarchies

Power and hierarchy are often interwoven inside the fabric of society dynamics. These systems have a significant impact on interpersonal relationships and the political environment, ultimately leading to instances of violence. The concept of power dynamics is intricately linked to the theoretical framework of intersectionality, whereby the manifestation of these dynamics is influenced by a complex interplay of factors such as race, gender, class, and several other markers of identity (Eagle & Kwele, 2021). The historical narrative of South Africa, characterised by the presence of apartheid, exemplifies the intricate dynamics at play.

The ViEWS project, led by Hegre et al. (2019), emphasises analysing underlying power dynamics to enhance the anticipation of political violence. The capability to identify early indicators relies on comprehending the complex interplay between those in positions of authority and the marginalised. This phenomenon is notably evident in South Africa, where enduring historical inequalities resulting from apartheid continue to exert effect, often intensifying community tensions.

Political violence in Israel has resulted in the emergence of distinct stresses throughout different stages of life (Pat-Horenczyk & Schiff, 2019). A comparable trend may be seen in South Africa, resulting from the enduring effects of apartheid and characterised by different features which have left lasting marks on successive cohorts. It highlights the consequential nature of power dynamics that persist and have

an impact beyond their immediate context, influencing those potentially indirectly involved in the original occurrences.

Economic factors expand this discussion, regarding resources such as oil. Merrill and Orlando (2020) analysed the significance of oil in the Middle East and North Africa, specifically in terms of its impact on the increased extraction of carbon and its following influence on political conflict. By drawing a comparison to South Africa, it is possible to reflect on the significance of resources, namely gold and diamonds, in influencing the dynamics of power and violence.

Considering gender relations, especially in the realm of political violence, adds a layer of intricacy. Cornell et al. (2022) comprehensively examined the complex discourses about gender and violence in South Africa. Their analysis highlights the many manifestations of power hierarchies in this context, necessitating the inclusion of a gendered viewpoint. The gender perspective is an integral component of any discussion on power in South Africa, including instances of brutality during apartheid and modern events of gender-based violence.

Interestingly, the environment also has a significant impact in this domain. Vestby (2019) examined the potential impact of climatic variability on individuals' incentives to engage in acts of political violence. The potential correlation between environmental degradation and socio-political instability suggests a forthcoming predicament for places such as South Africa, which are currently contending with water shortages.

Infectious illnesses can also significantly affect the dynamics of power relations. Chen et al. (2023) elucidated the correlation between malaria and civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa. It provides insight into the susceptibility of communities during periods of health distress and prompts inquiries about potential future obstacles that South Africa may encounter in the light of its HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The underlying ideals that serve as the foundation for acts of violence must not be disregarded. According to Webber et al. (2020), ideologies can significantly mould individuals' behaviours, especially those that justify acts of violence. The historical narrative of South Africa is characterised by many instances of violence that were motivated by ideological factors, whether enforced by the state or initiated by resistance movements.

Education is often regarded as a symbol of optimism; it also connects with the power dynamics. Østby et al. (2019) extensively examined the potential mechanisms via which education could contribute to the process of pacification. Nevertheless, in the context of a country like South Africa, the enduring impact of 'Bantu Education' is a poignant reminder of the ambivalent nature inherent in educational institutions, which were intentionally structured to maintain and reinforce existing power dynamics.

Marchi and Da Silva (2019) challenged the notion that political violence is primarily associated with fragmented post-colonial countries. Instead, they focus on Western Europe and provide insight into the emergence of extreme right violence in Portugal. This is a poignant reminder that power inequalities and the consequent violence are not limited to certain geographical or socio-political contexts.

The general applicability of the psychological foundations of political violence based on authoritarian attitudes motivated by a desire for supremacy should be considered. Bartusevičius et al. (2020) further elaborated on this assertion by applying it to Western and non-Western settings, positing a cross-cultural inclination inherent to human nature. In the context of South Africa, authoritarian governance during apartheid and the pursuit of power by different groups are substantial indications of this phenomenon.

The interconnection between power dynamics and social hierarchies is inherently associated with instances of political violence. The asymmetries of power manifest in many global settings and may be analysed from various perspectives such as economics, gender, health, and ideology. South Africa, characterised by its enduring legacy of apartheid and ongoing socio-political issues, is a prime example of the intricate complexities inherent in these relationships. The complex interplay of power dynamics, assertions of dominance, and acts of resistance persistently influence the narrative, making it a vital context for comprehending the wider manifestations of political violence.

3.5 The Role of Media in Shaping Narratives

The media plays a crucial role in moulding, guiding, and sometimes even determining popular attitudes and comprehension. The representation of political violence in various media platforms has significant ramifications extending beyond simple

reporting, including traditional print, broadcast media and contemporary digital platforms.

The influential nature of media is seen in its capacity to highlight some topics while diminishing the profile of others. The capacity to influence public perceptions of importance is conceptually rooted in agenda-setting, which posits that the frequency and way topics covered in the media may shape their perceived significance among the public (Chenzi, 2021). This idea strongly influences public sentiment, in conjunction with the extensive scope and instantaneous nature of modern media platforms.

Hegre et al. (2019) highlighted the significance of early-warning systems in anticipating political violence based on insights derived from the ViEWS project. They prioritised rigorous data collecting and analysis, recognising the crucial role of media in effectively disseminating this data to a wider audience. This investigation elucidates the potential role of media in amplifying these first indicators or suppressing them, contingent on the narratives they choose to endorse.

According to Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019), the Israeli environment presents a vivid portrayal of a population that endures political violence. The media narratives in this context fulfil two functions: serving as a record of current conflicts; and influencing communal memory. The influence of media depictions of violence extends beyond initial public reactions and has a significant role in shaping following generational understandings of such occurrences.

The economic environment is intricately intertwined with narratives generated by the media. Merrill and Orlando (2020) investigated the correlation between oil resources and political violence in the Middle East and North Africa, presenting a compelling narrative. Media organizations often focus their storytelling on the geopolitical aspects of oil, perhaps exacerbating sectarian tensions and reinforcing existing divisions. In a similar vein, as denoted by Bartusevičius, Van Leeuwen, and Petersen (2020), the media discourse in South Africa about its abundant natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, and other minerals, has been influential in either mitigating or intensifying the associated political conflicts.

The function of the media in shaping gender narratives, in particular in the context of political violence, introduces an additional layer of analysis. Cornell et al. (2022) examined in detail the interconnections between gender rhetoric and violence in South Africa. The depiction of gender-based violence by the media has a significant influence since it can either perpetuate existing societal preconceptions or contest them.

Environmental narratives also resonate within this discourse centred on media. Vestby (2019) suggested that there is a growing media issue related to the connections between climatic variability and incentives for political violence. The subject of climate change is very susceptible to sensationalism, given its extensive ramifications. The role of the media is crucial in guaranteeing the provision of accurate, impartial, and accountable journalism, in particular in places such as South Africa that are confronted with challenges such as drought and water shortages.

The complex correlation between infectious illnesses and political violence, as elucidated by Chen et al. (2023), is an additional facet. The examination of the correlation between malaria and civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates the intricate interplay between health narratives and political dimensions. The depiction of epidemics by the media, including their origins and consequences, can either promote solidarity in times of hardship or exacerbate existing divisions.

The importance of media is further amplified by examining the ideological foundations of political violence, as investigated by Webber et al. (2020). Ideologies tend to garner attention and influence when they are consistently emphasised in media narratives, in particular those that support or justify acts of violence. The media assumes a pivotal role as a significant arena where ideological conflicts unfold, exerting influence over extensive segments of the population.

The media often highlights education narratives interwoven with political implications. Østby et al. (2019) highlighted the significance that educational backgrounds may have in promoting pacification or inciting violence. The narrative function of media is crucial in shaping public mood towards educational reforms, disparities, or accomplishments.

Moreover, it is notable that political violence is not limited to emerging or transitional nations. Marchi and da Silva (2019) deftly analysed the emergence of extreme right

violence in Portugal, highlighting the significance of media in shaping global societal dynamics. The portrayal of such events by Western media has significant ramifications for global views and prejudices when compared to violence in non-Western settings.

Bartusevičius et al. (2020) examined the psychological dimensions associated with political violence, focusing on attitudes motivated by dominance. The amplification or glorification of such tendencies in media narratives can potentially exacerbate conflicts. Conversely, the practice of responsible journalism may contribute to the moderation of these inclinations.

The advent of social media platforms has significantly complicated these storylines. As denoted by Bartusevičius, Van Leeuwen, and Petersen (2020), the circumvention of traditional gatekeeping mechanisms is disorderly but often enables a more democratized dissemination of knowledge. The dual nature of this phenomenon allows for its use in grassroots initiatives that advocate peace and solidarity while presenting the risk of exploitation by divisive entities seeking to foster disharmony.

Political Violence, Media Coverage, and Its Impact on the Economic Landscape and Sustainability

The Role of Political Violence in Shaping Economic Outcomes

Political violence significantly disrupts economic activities, undermining stability and long-term growth. In South Africa, incidents such as service delivery protests, strikes, and xenophobic attacks highlight the profound socio-economic challenges faced by marginalised communities. These acts of violence, often born out of systemic inequality and governance failures, disrupt trade, deter foreign investment, and destabilize local economies. Key sectors, including mining, manufacturing, and tourism, bear the brunt of such disruptions, resulting in job losses, reduced productivity, and long-term economic vulnerabilities.

Media Coverage and the Amplification of Violence

Media plays a critical role in framing political violence and shaping public perceptions. In South Africa, both traditional and digital media platforms are instrumental in

disseminating information about violent incidents. However, how violence is presented often has broader implications for the economic landscape and sustainability:

1. **Sensationalism and Fear:** Media outlets, driven by the need for higher viewership and engagement, often sensationalize violent events. This creates a climate of fear, discouraging tourism and foreign investment—two crucial contributors to South Africa's GDP. Negative international headlines about violence, such as xenophobic attacks, can tarnish the nation's image, affecting trade relations and investment.
2. **Erosion of Business Confidence:** Persistent media coverage of political instability can lead to a loss of business confidence. Investors view such coverage as a signal of systemic instability, prompting capital flight and reduced economic participation. In turn, this exacerbates unemployment and inequality, creating a vicious cycle of economic decline.
3. **Impact on Local Economies:** Media narratives often highlight the destruction caused by protests or violent actions, overlooking the underlying socio-economic grievances. By focusing predominantly on the violence rather than its root causes, the media can reinforce stigmas about certain communities, perpetuating their economic marginalization.

Political Violence and Sustainability

Sustainability encompasses social, economic, and environmental dimensions, all of which are adversely affected by political violence and its coverage:

1. **Economic Sustainability:** The disruptions caused by violence undermine economic sustainability by damaging infrastructure, reducing workforce productivity, and stalling essential services. Rebuilding damaged property and recovering lost economic momentum often drain public resources that could have been allocated to development.
2. **Social Sustainability:** Political violence, when amplified by media coverage, often deepens societal divisions. Misrepresentation or biased reporting can perpetuate stereotypes, fuel xenophobia, and weaken social cohesion. A

divided society is less resilient, making it harder to achieve long-term sustainable development goals (SDGs), such as Goal 16 on peace and strong institutions.

3. **Environmental Sustainability:** Protests and riots associated with political violence frequently result in environmental degradation, such as the burning of public infrastructure or the destruction of natural resources. These acts have long-term consequences for the communities affected, further hampering efforts toward environmental sustainability.

Adverse Effects of Media-Covered Political Violence on Sustainability

Media coverage of political violence can have the following specific negative impacts on sustainability:

- **Polarization and Social Unrest:** Coverage that focuses on sensational elements rather than nuanced analysis often exacerbates societal divisions, leading to recurring cycles of violence and social instability.
- **Misdirected Policy Responses:** Policymakers, responding to the media narrative rather than root causes, may implement short-term punitive measures rather than addressing systemic issues like poverty, inequality, or poor governance.
- **Reduced International Cooperation:** Countries portrayed as unstable due to violent events may face diminished international partnerships, affecting trade, aid, and environmental collaboration initiatives necessary for sustainable development.

Recommendations for Sustainable Media Practices

To mitigate these effects, media outlets must adopt practices that align with sustainability objectives:

- **Balanced Reporting:** Focus on the socio-economic and political causes of violence, not just the incidents, to foster understanding and empathy.

- **Highlight Solutions:** Showcase community initiatives and policy efforts aimed at reducing violence and promoting inclusivity.
- **Ethical Coverage:** Avoid sensationalism that exacerbates fear and division, ensuring coverage does not stigmatize affected communities.

Media Coverage of Political Violence in Other Countries During Turbulence

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions and narratives during times of political violence. In many countries, the way media frames and disseminates information about violence can either exacerbate tensions or contribute to resolution. Examining examples from other nations provides insights into the dual role of media during turbulent times and its implications for South Africa.

1. Rwanda: Amplifying Violence Through Hate Media

During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, media outlets, particularly the state-run Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), played a significant role in inciting violence. The station broadcasted hate speech, dehumanizing the Tutsi population, and calling for their extermination. This coverage not only fueled ethnic tensions but also normalized violence, turning the media into a tool for mass mobilization against a specific group.

- **Implication for South Africa:** In a context of xenophobic violence, South African media must be cautious to avoid similar patterns of stigmatization and stereotyping that could further marginalize vulnerable communities.

2. The United States: Media Polarization and Social Unrest

During events like the Capitol riots in January 2021, American media exhibited polarized coverage, with right-leaning outlets framing the event as a patriotic protest while left-leaning outlets emphasized its violent and anti-democratic nature. This divergence in narratives exacerbated societal divisions, highlighting how selective framing can amplify polarization.

- **Implication for South Africa:** Media outlets must strive for balanced reporting, particularly during violent protests, to avoid deepening ideological divides or delegitimizing genuine grievances.

3. Syria: International Media and the Spectacle of War

The Syrian civil war saw extensive media coverage, much of which was sensationalized by international outlets. Graphic imagery and emotive reporting often overshadowed nuanced discussions of the conflict's root causes. Additionally, digital platforms became battlegrounds for misinformation and propaganda, further complicating international perceptions of the conflict.

- **Implication for South Africa:** With the rise of digital media, South African platforms must guard against the spread of disinformation and strive for context-sensitive reporting to ensure an informed public debate on political violence.

4. Northern Ireland: Identity and Media Narratives

During the Troubles, the media in Northern Ireland often reflected the sectarian divide. Unionist and Nationalist communities had their preferred outlets, which reinforced opposing narratives. While some media efforts aimed at fostering peace, others perpetuated divisions by framing the "other side" as the antagonist.

- **Implication for South Africa:** Media in South Africa should work towards bridging divides rather than reinforcing them, especially in contexts of racial and ethnic violence.

5. India: Media and Communal Riots

Indian media, particularly during communal riots such as the Gujarat riots in 2002, has been criticized for biased reporting that inflamed tensions. Sensationalism and the spread of unverified information often led to greater mistrust among communities, exacerbating violence.

- **Implication for South Africa:** Responsible journalism practices, including fact-checking and avoiding inflammatory rhetoric, are essential in preventing similar outcomes during social unrest.

Lessons for South Africa

These global examples highlight the media's powerful influence in shaping public narratives around political violence:

- **Framing Matters:** Sensational or one-sided framing of violence can deepen divisions and legitimize hostility.
- **Avoiding Hate Speech:** Media must refrain from amplifying divisive rhetoric or stereotypes that target specific groups.
- **Promoting Dialogue:** Balanced and inclusive reporting can foster understanding and create avenues for peaceful resolution.
- **Guarding Against Misinformation:** Fact-checking and accountability are critical in countering disinformation that fuels unrest.

Conclusion

Media in times of turbulence wields immense power to either calm or escalate conflicts. For South Africa, lessons from other nations underscore the need for a media landscape that prioritizes ethical reporting, promotes nuanced understanding, and contributes to building social cohesion amid challenges. This approach is vital for fostering a sustainable and peaceful society.

3.6 Theories on Social Cohesion and Non-violent Communication

Peaceful communication and social cohesiveness are crucial as they highlight the inherent human desire for peaceful cohabitation and the social need for productive communication.

Non-violent communication (NVC) is a communicative framework emphasising its fundamental principles as compassion, understanding, and collaborative problemsolving. NVC was created to provide an alternative approach to confrontational and polarising conversations. According to NVC, people can communicate in a manner that elicits empathy instead of hatred. This method significantly emphasises the identification and precise articulation of one's needs while concurrently demonstrating respect and understanding for the needs of others. The principles of this theory manifest distinct ramifications in socio-political contexts such as South Africa.

South Africa has a turbulent past, characterised by prolonged racial differences and resistance to the apartheid state. This background amplifies the importance of NVC. Cornell et al. (2022) considered the complex interplay between gender and political violence in South Africa. The intricate interplay between gender dynamics and past racial tensions is complex and varied. The use of NVC in this setting necessitates skilfully navigating the many layers involved, focusing on ensuring that conversations effectively address and respect the historical and traumatic experiences of both individuals and the community.

NVC has also garnered support within the domain of political beliefs. Webber et al. (2020) elucidated the beliefs that justify political violence, highlighting the urgent need to engage in constructive conversation. Instead of exacerbating differences via polarising disputes, NVC provides avenues for fostering open and empathic interactions. Dialogue potentially reconciles differing ideologies, facilitating the development of solutions that recognise and accommodate a range of viewpoints while avoiding the use of hostility or violence.

Vestby (2019) discussed the relationship between climatic variability and reasons for political violence, highlighting an additional aspect of communication in the environmental realm. Climate change is a fertile breeding ground for conflicts because of its extensive and often contentious ramifications. However, by using NVC principles, stakeholders could collectively resolve these difficulties. It is possible to prevent the progression of environmental issues into fully-fledged political confrontations by acknowledging common concerns, finding reciprocal advantages, and striving for comprehensive resolutions.

Health narratives, especially in the context of infectious illnesses, are a significant area where the ideas of NVC are relevant and significant. Chen et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between malaria and civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa, revealing complex challenges faced by this region. Discussions about health emergencies, often including accusations and defensive responses, may greatly benefit from the ethical principles of NVC. By prioritising common objectives such as the well-being and security of the community, stakeholders could avoid polarising discussions and instead choose resolutions that are advantageous to all parties involved.

The use of NVC may be extended to education, as highlighted by Østby et al. (2019). This has significant importance in understanding the function of education. Given its significant social ramifications, education systems are sometimes controversial. NVC offers frameworks for engaging in discussions that prioritise the well-being of students above controversial political issues, whether they pertain to curriculum disagreements, access disparities, or institutional concerns. The need to maintain a healthy and forward-looking discourse about education is crucial, considering its revolutionary potential.

Hegre et al. (2019) comprehensively reviewed the ViEWS project, highlighting its focus on the efficacy of early-warning systems in forecasting instances of political violence. These proactive activities highlight the need for preventive communication. Stakeholders may effectively use NVC concepts to proactively address and mitigate difficulties while maintaining a solution-oriented approach in talks. Engaging in proactive talks, especially in situations characterised by a history of political violence, may significantly contribute to the prevention of conflicts.

The limitations and imperatives of prolonged discussion are highlighted by the ongoing political violence experienced by Israel, as shown by Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019). In the given environment, the concepts of NVC are not only advantageous but also essential. By consistently prioritising common human experiences above polarising political narratives, communities can cultivate settings that are less susceptible to the development of conflicts.

Bartusevičius et al. (2020) examined the psychological aspects of political violence, with a particular focus on orientations motivated by dominance. The attitudes, grounded in aspirations for authority and dominance, pose considerable obstacles to attaining a peaceful discourse. However, as NVC prioritises mutual respect and understanding, it presents an alternative perspective. By prioritising the collective wellbeing of society rather than individual power dynamics, engaging in conversations could reduce the likelihood of violent escalations.

In summary, the interconnected concepts of social cohesion and NVC are a framework for understanding and promoting harmonious relationships throughout society. These ideas are universally applicable but need customised implementations in certain circumstances. South Africa, characterised by its complex socio-political structure, illustrates the difficulties and possibilities associated with various theoretical frameworks. The pursuit of a harmonious and non-violent community, however challenging, becomes feasible via the illuminating principles of comprehension, compassion, and productive discourse.

3.7 Synthesis and Theoretical Framework for the Study

This study adopts an integrative framework drawing from the diverse theoretical perspectives discussed. It combines the communication lens with the power dynamics inherent in South African society and the media's role in shaping political violence narratives. This synthesised framework guides the research methodology and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of political violence in the South African context.

3.7.1 Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) gives insights into the understanding of violence as a form of communication in South Africa (Makkan et al., 2022). This theory noted that individuals learn behaviour via observation, imitation, and reinforcement which may alter an individual's actions and their views on violence.

The SLT emphasises observational learning, where individuals gain information, attitudes, and behaviours through seeing others in their social surroundings (Makkan et al., 2022). People can see and internalise different types of violence as a mode of communication in South Africa, which has high rates of violent crime. This learning via observation may come from various places, such as interactions with family members, peers, members of the community, and even depictions of violence in the media.

The effect of SLT is especially important in the context of South Africa, where historical experiences of violence and social inequities have perpetuated cycles of violence and aggression (Ranganathan et al., 2021). This makes the influence of SLT especially relevant in South Africa. Exposure to violence, whether direct or indirect, may serve as a model for communication tactics, so normalising violence to vent anger, settle issues, or earn status within a group. It can happen whether the violence is directed at an individual directly or at the community.

Individuals learn behaviours via observation and learn the anticipated results or consequences connected with such behaviours. The importance of reinforcement in behaviour modification is emphasised by the theory. If a person sees others getting benefits or good results because of using violence as a communication method, then they could be more motivated to engage in the same behaviour themselves. On the other hand, if students see that non-violent modes of communication relate to negative consequences or sanctions, they could be dissuaded from using peaceful techniques (Makkan et al., 2022).

3.7.2 Applications and Implications

In the context of violence as a form of communication in South Africa, the theory suggests that individuals may internalise the belief that violence is an effective means of achieving their goals or asserting power owing to the perceived benefits of violence

and its reinforcement in their environment (Makkan et al., 2022). It could be the case because individuals may internalise the belief that violence is an effective means of achieving their goals or asserting power, given the perceived benefits of violence. It may be particularly noticeable in areas that have a high prevalence of violence and where people possibly do not have access to alternative models of productive communication practices.

By applying SLT to the setting of South Africa, it is possible to establish interventions and methods that will break the cycle of violence and encourage other forms of communication. People may be persuaded to adopt more constructive and peaceful forms of expressing themselves by focusing on the many sources of observational learning and giving positive examples of NVC. This can be accomplished by targeting the various sources of observational learning and offering positive models.

According to Ranganathan et al. (2021), implementing community-based programmes that stress the need for good role models, conflict resolution skills, and NVC strategies may help interrupt the transmission of violent behaviour and encourage prosocial interactions. These interventions may focus on resolving social disparities, fostering

empathy and understanding and offering opportunities for the development of skills and of the individual.

Researchers and practitioners can gain insights into the underlying mechanisms of violence and design interventions that aim to change attitudes, behaviours, and societal norms associated with violence in South Africa by incorporating SLT into the understanding of violence as a form of communication (Makkan et al., 2022). These interventions should consider the social and cultural context, entail partnership with local communities, and attempt to empower people by providing them with skills in NVC, conflict resolution tactics, and alternative forms of expressing their needs and concerns.

3.7.3 Interdisciplinary Insights

The SLT is based on the premise that people acquire knowledge and skills via their interactions with the environment. It incorporates the many ways in which society and interpersonal interactions shape our behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes. The theory posits that learning is a cognitive phenomenon occurring in a social framework, therefore challenging conventional learning theories that attribute learning only to direct experiential factors. Upon analysing the SLT in the light of the offered references, there is clearly extensive use and significance of this theory across several domains, in particular in the realm of political violence and social frameworks.

According to Albert Bandura, the proponent of the SLT, people acquire knowledge and skills via observation, internalisation of observed behaviours, and subsequent enactment of these internalised behaviours. The presence of the observation–learning–action triangle is seen in several areas, including political views, environmental initiatives, and gender dynamics.

Webber et al. (2020) considered the complex interplay between political ideology and instances of violence, offering a compelling demonstration of SLT. In some circumstances, people may internalise extremist ideology after exposure to it via various channels such as the media, peer groups, or social institutions – potentially leading to subsequent actions. The political violence phenomenon may result from individuals acquiring and internalising behaviours via observation in a certain sociopolitical context.

Cornell et al. (2022) studied gender and political violence in South Africa and provided insights into the intergenerational transmission and internalisation of gendered behaviours and attitudes. In communities characterised by gender disparities and patriarchal systems, people acquire the tendency to normalise and, on occasion, perpetuate acts of violence and discrimination based on gender. In these situations, the significance of social institutions, media representations, and family lessons becomes crucial, as they reinforce the assumption of the SLT, which posits that learning occurs via observation.

The examination of the environmental sphere, especially the analysis of climatic fluctuations and the examination of the underlying reasons behind political violence as studied by Vestby (2019), may be enhanced by adopting a SLT perspective. Communities that see the profound consequences of climate change may have a strong inclination to act, perhaps resorting to assertive measures, to safeguard their interests. The motivation to act, which is influenced by the observation of environmental deterioration and the perceived socio-political reactions to it, highlights the effectiveness of learning by observation.

The relationship between health difficulties, namely the intersection of infectious illnesses such as malaria and civil wars (see Chen et al., 2023), may also be situated in the framework of the SLT. Communities that see the socio-political consequences of health crises, in conjunction with their perceptions of governmental reactions, develop ideas and attitudes that can shape their subsequent behaviours. In areas where health crises are linked with political narratives, the actions shown by individuals, such as compliance, resistance, or violence, may be seen as acquired reactions to observable stimuli.

The use of SLT in education was identified as a significant area of study by Østby et al. (2019). Observational learning possibilities abound in educational settings, including many aspects such as peer relationships and curricular material. The educational experiences of people are often the foundation for the values, beliefs, and behaviours they demonstrate in their later life. Within the realm of political violence, educational institutions can either sustain divisive ideologies via the implementation of biased curriculum and instructional methods or cultivate an environment of peace and understanding by prioritising inclusive and comprehensive education.

Hegre et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of observational learning in predicting political violence. Early-warning systems operate by assessing society's behaviours and attitudes, effectively accessing the cumulative results of social learning processes. By comprehending the knowledge acquisition processes undertaken by societies in response to their surroundings, stakeholders can anticipate and forecast probable escalations and conflicts.

Pat-Horenczyk and Schiff (2019) explained the impact of persistent exposure to political violence on individuals' psychological well-being. The research provides valuable insights into how protracted exposure to such violence can shape collective behaviours. Communities consistently exposed to instances of violence may internalise a perception of conflict as a normative state, so maintaining ongoing cycles of aggressiveness and retaliatory behaviour. The SLT is a framework through which one can observe and analyse how prolonged exposure to language shapes and influences social behaviours.

The examination of economic landscapes, in particular the analysis by Merrill and Orlando (2020) on the intricate relationship between oil geopolitics and political violence, can be effectively understood within the SLT framework. Communities that see the socio-economic consequences of resource allocations develop behavioural patterns in response to these observations, especially in resource-abundant places. The influence of economic stakes extends beyond mere motivation since it shapes behaviours through ongoing observational learning processes.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study focuses on understanding political violence in South Africa through a content analysis of various media. The objective is to uncover patterns, themes, and narratives related to violence as a form of political communication. This section details the research approach, philosophy, method of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations essential for a content analysis study.

4.2 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which emphasizes understanding phenomena in their natural contexts and interpreting the meanings individuals ascribe to them. Content analysis, the chosen method, involves systematically examining textual material to identify patterns, themes, and subtleties. This approach allows for both qualitative richness and quantitative structure, enabling the counting of theme occurrences.

Content analysis can reveal both manifest content, such as terminology and explicit narratives, and latent content, which uncover underlying meanings and ideologies. This dual capability provides depth to the research, allowing for an exploration of both overt and hidden aspects of political violence depictions.

The methodical nature of content analysis ensures a structured and repeatable process, with data organized into categories and themes. This organized approach provides rigor and allows for the application of findings to similar or different contexts.

In this research, the media's role is crucial as it reflects societal opinions, biases, and narratives. Media depictions often carry inherent biases that can distort the true nature of events. Through content analysis, this study aims to uncover both the overt messages and the underlying narratives that shape these portrayals.

4.3 Research Philosophy

Research is not just limited to the collection of facts and the formation of conclusions. This research was finalized based on philosophical issues that not only guided but also significantly shaped its scope and depth, providing a robust framework for its execution. Interpretivism was the overarching philosophical framework for this study. It acknowledges the nuances and subtleties that are inherent in human experiences and in social phenomena. Interpretivism considers that people individually build and interpret the world around them, and therefore its emphasis is on the individuality and subjectivity of human experience. It recognizes that the world is not just an objective domain that can be measured and defined, but also a complex web of experiences, beliefs, and interpretations that weave together to provide meaning to phenomena. The interpretivist philosophy acknowledges the role of the researcher as an active interpreter in the research process. Researchers are not uninterested onlookers; they are actively involved in their subject matter.

Interpretivism introduces a new dimension to the field of content analysis by providing an additional layer. A traditional content analyst might not extend beyond counting occurrences, noting patterns, or following trends. However, interpretivism challenges the established norms by registering what is present and then further extracting deeper meanings, implications, and interpretations of what is being said, using every source of media, as denoted by Makkan et al. (2022) and Mannell et al. (2019). Every word, phrase, and decision in the material is not viewed as a simple description but rather as an exhaustive narrative of comprehension and interpretation. The material is ready to be unpacked, meaning that each element is carefully analyzed to uncover underlying themes, assumptions, and contextual significance. This comprehensive approach ensures that the analysis delves into the depth of the content, revealing insights that might otherwise be overlooked.

In South Africa, interpretivism takes on greater significance. The conversation about political violence in South Africa is more than simply about the retelling of events. It is a convoluted story full of interconnected historical legacies, cultural differences, political ambitions, and personal experiences, as denoted by Comins (2023).

Interpretivism supports comprehending the interaction between historical legacies, social institutions, human experiences, and media portrayals.

4.4 Data Collection

The data was collected through content analysis. A wide range of textual sources were meticulously analysed to encapsulate a broad spectrum of perspectives and narratives. These included various South African newspapers. The rationale was to capture the multifaceted nature of political violence in South Africa, encompassing its portrayal in the media, the motivations behind it as articulated in political discourse, and the public perceptions that are shaped and reflected by the media. Thereafter, following the guidelines set by Silverman (2016), careful and detailed coding of the collected texts was performed, which allowed for the identification and categorization of recurring themes and patterns.

This study examined the expressions and consequences of political violence as a kind of communication using a well-chosen sample of credible South African newspapers: Mail & Guardian, BusinessTech, Daily Investor, News24, and SowetanLive. These newspapers were chosen based on their reputation in reporting, historical relevance, and broad coverage of political events. The study provided thorough and complex knowledge of political violence in South Africa by using a varied range of sources, therefore leveraging several points of view and areas of expertise.

To gain important understanding, the study concentrated on certain elements of these newspaper pieces. First, politically violent events – including thorough narratives of political killings, demonstrations, and other forms – were investigated. For example, "a total of 131 assassinations in 2023 were related to organized crime, the minibus taxi industry, political assassinations, and personal killings" (Comins, 2023). This offered a numerical foundation for comprehending the frequency and kind of political violence in modern South Africa. Second, with an eye on socio-economic and political elements fueling violence, the fundamental causes of these events were examined. Thorne, S. (2024) underlined economic inequalities and resource competitiveness as main causes of violence: "political killings mostly target individuals holding political and occasionally administrative positions in government" (Tandwa, 2023). Third, the impacts of political violence on society – especially those on democracy, government, and social life – were investigated. Tandwa (2023) emphasized that "this violence not only violates political and civil rights but also undermines democracy by allowing criminal elements to influence or control government functions." Finally, the responses

and remedies for political violence from national governments, civil society, and international organizations were discussed, therefore offering understanding of the success of different approaches. News24 (2023) examined the government's policies for combating political violence and stressed the difficulties in putting these ideas into effect because of ingrained corruption and strong criminal networks.

Quotations from the newspapers confirmed the assertions of this study. Comins (2023) noted, for example, "A total of 131 assassinations in 2023 were related to organized crime, the minibus taxi industry, political assassinations, and personal killers." This emphasized the frequency of political violence and its many manifestations. Moreover, it was observed that "political assassinations generally target those holding political and sometimes administrative roles in government" (Mail & Guardian, 2023). These are now mostly related to municipal councilors and are focused on the local municipal scene. This enhances the conclusions of the dissertation on the sociopolitical causes of violence. Emphasizing the effects on society, Tandwa (2023) noted, "this violence not only violates political and civil rights but also undermines democracy by allowing criminal elements to influence or control government functions." Finally, responses to political violence were examined, noting that "overlaps between categories present a challenge in disaggregating the data, but what these figures nevertheless represent is the entrenched use of contract killers as a solution to electoral, business, and romantic disputes" (Doyen, 2023).

Using thematic analysis, the information gathered from the newspapers was categorized to establish trends and recurring themes that related to the aims of the study. The main themes included the kind and degree of political violence, socioeconomic and political causes, consequences for democracy and governance, and reactions of society and state. Ensuring that the data were methodically arranged and that the conclusions derived were strong and significant depended on this thematic analysis.

To secure our results, we focused on the recorded kinds and frequency of events. Several accounts of political violence, especially emphasizing the murder of political leaders as a typical method used to influence political results, were recounted (Mail & Guardian, 2023). For instance, politically motivated murders typically occur during election years, which would be perceived as being a calculated activity by different

groups to eliminate competitors and to consolidate power. This emphasizes the firmly ingrained character of political violence in South African politics and concurs with historical trends.

Examining contributing elements, including corruption, resource competitiveness, and historical legacies under the socio-economic and political drivers' topic, we found that local councilors were often targets for political killings as they had great power over municipal resources (Mail & Guardian, 2023). One major source of power and influence is control over municipal funding and resources, which fuels fierce rivalry and often bloody conflicts. This emphasizes how political and economic elements interact to produce violence – therefore offering a complete representation of the underlying reasons for political violence.

Examining how political violence affects democratic processes and public confidence in government, we developed insights into the consequences for governance and democracy. Articles covered how violence compromises democratic procedures and fuels intimidation and fear (Mail & Guardian, 2023). This issue is important as it emphasizes the larger social consequences of political violence outside of its immediate physical damage. It influences public participation in political procedures, voter turnout, and general confidence in the democratic framework. The stability and integrity of South Africa's democracy are much threatened by the use of violence as a weapon for political advantage.

The theme of community and state responses examined actions taken by different stakeholders to solve political violence and emphasized the need for thorough strategies to solve the underlying causes of violence and to safeguard democratic institutions (Mail & Guardian, 2023). This theme examined public policies, local projects, and how international organizations can help to reduce political violence. It also examined the difficulties these initiatives faced: systematic corruption, inadequate funding, and the widespread impact of organized crime.

Examining newspaper stories provided a rich supply of information, so supporting the conclusions of the study on political violence as a form of communication in South Africa. The research provided strong findings on the kind, causes, and effects of political violence, as well as the necessary reactions to minimize it by methodically classifying and identifying salient themes. This approach guaranteed that the study

concurr with current debates on the subject and is based on actual findings. Using reliable and varied media sources gave the study legitimacy and depth, therefore enabling a thorough understanding of the political violence problem facing South Africa.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues discussed below are the moral compass that directed the research, ensuring that it was carried out with integrity, respect, responsibility, and sensitivity.

4.5.1 Respect for the Sensitivity of the Subject

The nature of the topic is filled with emotional, social, and cultural effects. It brings with it the burden of history, the agony of afflicted communities, and the intricacies of sociopolitical landscapes. The study was founded on a commitment to approach the material with the highest care considering the seriousness of the situation (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). This meant that there was a heightened awareness of the potential for damage while the information was being analysed. A strong effort was made to ensure that the findings of the research would not, unwittingly, contribute to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes, support narratives that divide people, or trivialise the experiences of individuals who were affected.

4.5.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

It was crucial to conceal the names of people whose information was analysed. Strong precautions were taken to guarantee that the confidentiality of sources and individuals was maintained. This was especially important for cases involving direct quotations, information from media outlets, or personal sources. No information properly published online or in hard copy is considered confidential and should always be properly referenced. This applies to this entire paragraph. Another key point is that, if at all possible, it is essential to give the page number of the text where the quoted matter derives from, for example, (Brown, 2024: 12).

However, this is often not possible for online references. Additionally, it is important to note that not all sources are newspapers; for example, News24 and BusinessTech are online publications. Names, affiliations, and any other details that could be used for

identification were either removed entirely or simplified to protect the privacy of the persons or organisations involved, except where consent was requested for their usage in publishing. This protected identities and meant that the individuals' contributions could be shared without the risk of retaliation or receiving negative feedback.

4.5.3 Avoiding Biases and Preconceived Notions

This study was committed to fair and unbiased research. Accordingly, any personal biases or preconceived beliefs were definitively excluded. The subject matter was approached with an open mind, while striving to comprehend without imposing preconceived notions or values but presenting the material to speak for itself. Given the divisive nature of the discourses on political violence, this was very important.

4.5.4 Transparent Reporting

Lastly, there was a commitment to open and honest reporting. The procedures, approaches, problems, and choices relating to the research were recorded and shared with transparency. Any possible conflicts of interest and the limitations of the study have been recognized. By adhering to this principle of transparency, the research maintained accountability to its stakeholders and the entire academic community, ensuring that all aspects of the study were openly communicated and responsibly managed.

4.6 Data Analysis

Aligning with the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis was undertaken. After the collection of data, the systematic approach to decipher the complex narratives was initiated. Initially, a preliminary review of the data was conducted to generate initial codes. As recommended by Quinlan et al. (2019), this involved a close reading of the content to identify key concepts and patterns. These initial codes were not just categorisations but were the basis from which broader themes emerged. Developing the codes into potential themes was iterative and

reflective. Some of the codes were merged, some bifurcated, and others discarded all the while ensuring that the evolving themes accurately captured the complexities of the subject matter. This dynamic process is a hallmark of qualitative research in view of its potential to guide the analyst rather than impose preconceived notions onto it (Silverman, 2016).

Qualitative data analysis software was used to manage and organise the vast data, as recommended by Silverman (2016). The software facilitated the sorting and categorising of data which would enable visualisation of connections between different codes and themes. As the analysis progressed, the themes were continually refined to ensure coherence and alignment with the research objectives. This involved revisiting the data multiple times, a practice that Quinlan et al. (2019) emphasise as crucial for ensuring the depth and validity of the analysis. The final themes represented not just the most recurrent patterns in the data but also the most meaningful and relevant to the study's focus. The culmination of this analytical process was the establishment of a narrative that, while acknowledging the diversity of perspectives and experiences, provided a holistic understanding. This narrative was not just a collection of disjointed themes but a coherent story that combined the different strands of data into a comprehensive picture.

4.7 Conclusion

This study was guided by the principles of qualitative research and therefore adopted an interpretivist philosophy ensuring a profound exploration of the multi-dimensional aspects of political violence as a communicative phenomenon in the socio-political fabric of South Africa. The methodology, rooted in qualitative paradigms, was a lens to view and analyse the data and a framework to understand and interpret the complexities in the subject matter.

As Silverman (2016) articulated, the content analysis approach is instrumental in dissecting and understanding the vast array of textual data derived from various South African newspapers. This method provided a structured yet flexible means to navigate the intricate narratives and discourses that shape the public's understanding of political violence. It is often hidden that the dual focus on manifest and latent content allows

for a comprehensive exploration of both the explicit and the subtle aspects of these narratives, thereby enriching the study with depth and nuance.

Following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis in the data analysis phase further strengthened the study. This approach enabled the identification and interpretation of recurrent themes and provided a robust structure to organise and make sense of the data. As recommended by Silverman (2016), the use of qualitative data analysis software helps to efficiently manage the data, so ensuring that the analysis is both systematic and replicable – thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

Interpretivism was pivotal in shaping the study. This philosophy, emphasising the subjective and interpretive nature of human experience as noted by Quinlan et al. (2019), aligned seamlessly with the study's qualitative approach. It allows for deeper engagement with the data, and facilitated an understanding of the underlying meanings, beliefs, and perspectives that influence the portrayal and perception of political violence in South Africa.

The ethical considerations of the research were vital, given the sensitive nature of the topic. Adherence to principles of respect, confidentiality, and unbiased analysis ensured that the study met the highest ethical standards. The commitment to transparency in reporting and acknowledging the limitations of the study reflect the rigour and honesty with which the research was undertaken.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

The content analysis revealed several prevalent themes that elucidated the deep-seated historical contexts underpinning current manifestations of political violence in South Africa. The data clarified the motivations behind such violence, the role of the media in perpetuating it, and the potential strategies to foster non-violent dialogue.

5.2 Historical Dimensions of Violence

Several prevalent themes emerged that elucidated the deep-seated historical contexts underpinning current manifestations of political violence in South Africa. These findings underscore the nation's continual wrestling with its apartheid past and the manifestations of that past in contemporary dynamics.

Content sources frequently invoked the era of apartheid to explain the nuances of modern political violence. While the racially segregated system of apartheid concluded in the early 1990s, the analysis highlighted that its socio-economic and psychological vestiges are still prominent in South African society. References to socio-economic disparities, especially amongst historically disadvantaged racial groups, were prominent, indicating the long-lasting impacts of apartheid-era policies and prejudices (Cornell et al., 2022).

Much of the content reviewed portrayed political violence as a form of communication. Marginalised communities, bearing the burdens of historical oppression, have often turned to violence as an evocative, albeit harrowing, medium to convey their grievances. The narratives in the dataset suggest that these acts are not just expressions of anger, but also deeply symbolic actions, echoing years of frustration and disenfranchisement (Webber et al., 2020).

The role of media emerged as ambivalent in the findings. While media platforms frequently amplify the grievances of marginalised communities, providing them a voice on national and international stages, there were also instances of potential

sensationalism. Some narratives risked framing these communities solely through the lens of violence, potentially sidelining the intricate socio-historical backgrounds informing their actions and leading to the risk of further marginalisation and perpetuated cycles of violence (Chenzi, 2021; Marchi & Da Silva, 2019).

Lastly, the educational sector's role in shaping South Africa's collective memory was a discernible theme. The analysis highlighted that educational institutions have a profound potential influence — they can reinforce or challenge dominant narratives on apartheid and its ongoing ramifications. Østby et al. (2019) similarly stressed the importance of curricular decisions in either mollifying or aggravating sentiments tied to historical injustices.

5.3 Motivations Behind Political Violence

From the content analysis, it became clear that political violence in South Africa cannot be attributed to isolated incidents or singular motivations. The patterns in the dataset revealed many interconnected reasons, each part of a larger tapestry of historical and socio-political factors.

5.3.1 Endemic Societal Inequalities

A dominant theme was the entrenched socio-economic disparities in South Africa. As portrayed across various sources, these societal inequalities play a significant role in fuelling political violence. Disadvantaged communities, often feeling trapped by the economic and social constructs, have occasionally resorted to violence. Such acts are both an articulation of their frustrations and a demand for more equitable recognition. Cornell et al. (2022) emphasised that these sentiments are exacerbated by lingering historical injustices, making the road to resolution more complex.

In addition to economic factors, the contentious dynamics between different political entities emerged as a palpable theme. Sources frequently depicted violence as a tool in the arsenal of political power plays — used to destabilise rivals or assert dominance in particular regions. Hegre et al. (2019) documented such strategies in various global contexts, and the findings suggest similar patterns in South Africa. This dimension underscores the complexity of political violence, revealing its multi-layered nature that goes beyond simple grassroots motivations.

Amid the broader narratives, the voices of marginalised individuals and communities shone through distinctly. A common sentiment was the feeling of being sidelined by the mainstream political discourse, leading individuals to perceive violence as their sole recourse. Personal testimonies from social media platforms were especially poignant in this regard. They portrayed a visceral image of people yearning for a platform where their concerns would be genuinely addressed, without resorting to drastic measures (Webber et al., 2020).

5.4 Violence as Political Communication

The content analysis reveals the nuances of how violence functions as a mode of political communication in South Africa. Instead of viewing violence merely as arbitrary or chaotic, the data suggests a structured communication process, underscoring its symbolic and instrumental dimensions.

Central to the theme of violence as communication is the concept of sender–receiver dynamics. In numerous instances, acts of violence were not random but were directed towards particular groups or institutions. Through this lens, the instigators of violence can be viewed as 'senders', using violent acts to transmit messages of various themes – dissent, vengeance, or assertions of supremacy. The intended 'receivers' of these messages, whether direct victims, bystanders, or broader societal groups, are tasked with interpreting and making sense of these actions. As Østby et al. (2019) noted, understanding the intent and purpose behind acts of violence can provide insights into their origins and potential solutions.

A notable dimension in the data was the cyclical nature of this violent communication. A feedback loop is created when the initial act of violence transmits its message and the responses it evokes are notably in the form of retaliation or counter-messages. This cyclicity often sees violence begetting more violence, as each subsequent act serves both as a reaction to preceding messages and is a fresh communication on its own. The feedback mechanism suggests that without adequate intervention or channels to break the cycle, this form of violent communication can perpetuate indefinitely, leading to protracted conflicts (Hegre et al., 2019).

This section also presents the results derived from the analysis of five selected newspaper articles. These findings offer a contemporary perspective on the manifestations, drivers, and impacts of political violence in South Africa, highlighting how such violence functions as a form of political communication. The themes extracted from these articles align closely with the theoretical underpinnings and historical context discussed in previous chapters. By examining these recent cases, the study elucidates the ongoing relevance and dynamics of political violence in South Africa's socio-political landscape.

5.4.1 Incidents of Political Violence

According to the study, political violence is still rampant in South Africa and is typified by many political assassinations and associated acts of violence. Comins (2023) claims that "a total of 131 assassinations in 2023 were related to organised crime, the minibus taxi industry, political assassinations, and personal killers". This figure emphasises the frequency of deliberate homicides as a means of political communication, in which violence is used to eliminate competitors, threaten rivals, and shape political events. The regular occurrence of these killings underscores the ingrained character of violence in the political sphere.

Political killings are generally intentionally organised to convey a clear message to political opponents and the public and are not haphazard events. Often the victims are individuals who have great power or control over resources others want. For example, "political assassinations generally target persons holding political and sometimes administrative roles in government. These are now mostly involving municipal politicians and are centred in the local municipal scene" (Comins, 2023). This suggests a trend where local government officials, reflecting the great stakes connected with control over municipal resources and political authority at local level, are more susceptible. The methodical focusing on these people implies that political violence is a tactic used to preserve or change power structures in society.

Moreover, the frequency of similar events throughout the years, with notable surges during election seasons, suggests that political violence is firmly ingrained in the political society. For instance, 42 political killings were noted during the 2019 national elections, proving how election cycles aggravate violent conflicts as different groups fight for influence and control (Mail & Guardian, 2023). This tendency towards violence

during elections emphasises the importance of political violence in forming South African political environments.

5.4.2 Underlying Causes of Political Violence

Political violence's fundamental causes are diverse and include political and socioeconomic elements. Comins (2023) underlined the importance of financial incentives, saying that "local councillors have significant control over municipal resources, so making them targets for political assassinations". This control over resources such as contracts for housing, bids, and infrastructure projects fuels fierce rivalry and may cause violent conflicts for these highly sought-after roles. These positions are so profitable that people are ready to go to any lengths, including violence, to keep or control them.

Further aggravating political violence is the emergence of structured criminal gangs such as so-called "construction mafias". Often engaged in the ruthless eradication of rivals or whistleblowers, these gangs demand payments from new building and development projects (*Mail & Guardian*, 2023). The junction of governmental authority and criminal activity generates a volatile atmosphere in which violence is a strategy used to guarantee political and economic gains. This intertwining of political and criminal interests blurs the boundaries between justified political action and organised crime, therefore challenging attempts to control and lower violence.

Furthermore, South African socio-economic inequalities are marked by high unemployment and poverty and contribute to the frequency of political violence. This is especially the case at local government level where decisions on resource distribution are taken, and the fierce rivalry for limited resources and opportunity sometimes results in violent conflicts. According to the *Mail & Guardian* (2023) "the financial benefits and income earned from local government positions often mean the difference between poverty and economic well-being". As people and organisations fight for access to these vital resources – often with violent results – this economic inequity fosters political violence.

Moreover, violence is largely maintained by historical legacies of injustice and exclusion. The structural disparities created during the apartheid period have had a long-lasting effect, creating conditions wherein violence becomes a tool for expressing

authority and resolving conflicts. The continuation of these past injustices emphasises the need of thorough socio-economic changes to solve the underlying causes of political unrest.

5.4.3 Implications for Governance and Democracy

Political violence profoundly affects democracy and governance, therefore compromising democratic procedures and erasing public confidence in political institutions. As Tandwa (2023) notes, "this violence not only violates political and civil rights but also undermines democracy by allowing criminal elements to influence or control government functions". The use of violence to accomplish political goals skews democratic processes by generating a climate of fear and intimidation, therefore deterring actual political involvement. Violence disturbs the usual operation of democratic institutions and makes it challenging for them to be open and efficient.

Furthermore, political violence undermines the integrity of elections. "The greatest number of political assassinations was during the 2019 national elections when 42 events were recorded" (*Comins, 2023*) said. The frequency of violence during elections emphasises how political violence is deliberately used to affect election results, therefore compromising the validity of the voting process. Fear of violence may lower voting participation, distort the results, and result in the election of those who use aggression to win office.

Moreover, the participation of organised crime in political violence, which is said to be a "system of collaborative criminal governance", showcases how criminal forces may manage political operations (*Mail & Guardian, 2023*). As criminal networks entwine with political systems, this influences not just the immediate victims of violence but also government and the rule of law. Entrenchment of criminal groups into political systems may result in corruption, misallocation of funds, and overall public mistrust of governmental institutions.

Long-term effects of political violence erasing democratic values and governance systems include instability and the slow-down of South Africa's progress. Normalising violence as a means of political advantage compromises the basic principles of democratic government, therefore fostering a cycle of corruption and unrest. This affects the current administration and creates a risky precedent for further political

activities, where violence could be a tolerated and anticipated component of the political process.

5.4.4 Community and State Responses

Dealing with and reducing the problem of political violence depends on the coordinated efforts from governmental agencies, civil society, and international organizations. The government has set many policies to fight political violence, but the widespread influence of organized crime and systematic corruption usually hinders these initiatives (News24, 2023). Doyen (2023) reported that "overlaps between categories present a challenge in disaggregating the data, but what these figures nevertheless represent is the entrenched use of contract killers as a solution to electoral, business, and romantic disputes." This illustrates the difficulty in resolving political violence as it interacts with other kinds of criminal behaviour. Effective results need a comprehensive strategy covering the symptoms and the underlying reasons for violence.

Often, publicizing incidences of political violence and urging investigations and prosecutions are essential in promoting justice and responsibility. Still, the state's ability and motivation to act on these problems limits the efficacy of these initiatives. Influencing the government to resolve political violence more successfully includes the participation of international organizations and the implementation of sanctions. These external forces may provide the government with the necessary momentum and stricter policies to effectively address political violence.

Apart from government and civil society initiatives, interventions at the community level are vital. Before they turn to violence, community leaders and local organizations may greatly help by encouraging communication, peace, and the resolution of issues. Creating community resilience to political violence requires the strengthening of social cohesiveness, local government, and guarantees of access to basic services and economic opportunities for every community member. This grassroots strategy may support more sustained reduction of political violence and complement broader policy projects.

Furthermore, the global community should help South Africa in its attempts to temper political violence. Technical assistance, capacity-building projects for local law enforcement and courts, and the backing of projects aiming at transparency and

accountability may all be part of this. Through international cooperation, political violence can also be monitored and recorded, ensuring that these concerns remain on the global agenda and that offenders are held accountable.

5.4.5 Conclusion

The findings from the analysis of newspaper articles provide a contemporary perspective on the manifestations, drivers, and impacts of political violence in South Africa. The prevalent use of political assassinations and other forms of violence as tools for political communication highlight the entrenched nature of violence in the political landscape. Socio-economic disparities, control over municipal resources, and the involvement of organised crime are significant drivers of this violence. The impact on governance and democracy is profound, undermining democratic processes and eroding public trust. Addressing political violence requires comprehensive strategies involving government action, civil society advocacy, and international support to resolve the root causes and to protect democratic institutions. These findings support the dissertation's analysis, emphasizing the critical and ongoing relevance of political violence in South Africa.

5.5 Role of Media and Social Platforms

The content analysis highlights the media's multifaceted role in shaping, reflecting, and amplifying the dynamics of political violence in South Africa. This intricate relationship demands a nuanced understanding, given the profound influence the media wields on public sentiment and action, especially in the digital age.

5.5.1 Media Framing and Setting Agendas

The media's power in framing events cannot be understated. Media organisations have an outsized role in shaping public perceptions of political violence by choosing which events to cover, how to portray them, and what narratives to foreground.

a. Escalating through Sensationalism

Perhaps in pursuit of higher viewership and readership, some media outlets used sensationalism in their coverage. This approach is characterised by exaggerated

reporting and emotionally charged narratives and can inflame public sentiments (Chenzi, 2021). For instance, coverage that continually emphasises the violent aspects of a protest, while sidelining the root grievances, can skew public perception, so making reconciliation more challenging.

b. Mediation and Calls for Peace

Contrarily, several media entities sought to use their platforms constructively. They foregrounded voices of reason, showcased the shared humanity of all parties involved, and advocated dialogue over destructive action. Although less sensational and perhaps less commercially rewarding, such endeavours play a pivotal role in fostering understanding and promoting peace (Østby et al., 2019).

5.5.2 The Dualism of Social Media in Political Dynamics

With its pervasive reach and real-time nature, social media has redefined the landscape of political mobilisation and discourse.

a. Mobilisation and Voice

Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have democratised the dissemination of information. These platforms often serve as rallying points for protests, allowing for quick organisation and mobilisation. Marginalised communities historically sidelined in traditional media have found a potent voice to air grievances and seek solidarity on these platforms. When directed constructively, such mobilisation can lead to meaningful dialogue and reforms (Webber et al., 2020).

b. Echo Chambers and Intensification

However, the very design of social media, which often prioritises content aligned with a user's existing beliefs, has fostered the creation of echo chambers. Individuals are seldom exposed to dissenting views in these digital bubbles. Instead, their existing beliefs are continually reinforced, which can intensify divisive narratives. Such polarised environments can escalate tensions, with misinformation and incendiary content often going unchecked, so further fanning the flames of political violence (Chenzi, 2021).

5.5.3 Media as a Catalyst and Amplifier

In the framework of political violence, the media serves two purposes: it may both aggravate and reduce violence. Newspapers and other media sources often provide critical coverage of politically violent events, therefore guiding the public and legislators. Media coverage, however, may sometimes aggravate conflicts by stressing polarising stories. The *Mail & Guardian* (2023) observed that the explosion of media coverage on political deaths "underscore the deeply ingrained nature of violence inside the political arena".

Apart from conventional news coverage, social media has grown to be a major venue for spreading knowledge and organising political activity. The fast dissemination of news on social media can intensify disputes by the use of incendiary materials. As *Mail & Guardian* (2023) emphasises, "the involvement of organised crime in political violence, described as a 'system of collaborative criminal governance', shows how criminal elements can exert control over political functions." Media coverage that ignores the fundamental reasons for violence and instead emphasises its dramatic elements sometimes magnifies this impact.

5.5.4 Media's Role in Shaping Public Perception

Public opinion of political violence and the participating players is much shaped by media coverage. Public opinion and political debate may be shaped by the way victims, offenders, and the background of violence are documented. For instance, the thorough coverage of political killings by the *Mail & Guardian* in respect of their impact on local government leaders' vulnerability and the great stake of political power highlights the institutional problems causing violence, and this reporting helps to position the problem within a larger sociopolitical setting.

Furthermore, the way the media covers government and civil society reactions to political violence could strengthen or undermine public confidence. Good coverage of successful initiatives may boost public involvement in democratic processes and strengthen trust in political institutions. On the other hand, stressing mistakes and corruption could strengthen scepticism and disappointment in the political structure.

5.5.5 Challenges in Media Reporting

Media coverage of political violence has difficulty with authenticating facts, prejudice, and false information. Although "overlaps between categories present a challenge in disaggregating the data, but what these figures nevertheless represent is the entrenched use of contract killers as a solution to electoral, business, and romantic disputes" (Doyen, 2023). This reflects the difficulty of precisely reporting on political violence, in which many motivations and players are engaged.

Furthermore, sensationalism in media coverage risks oversimplifying the problems and emphasising the spectacular features of violence instead of the fundamental reasons for it. The *Mail & Guardian* (2023) underlined the importance of sophisticated reporting that takes political and socio-economic factors of violence into account. This demands ethical reporting that strikes a compromise between the need to prevent aggravating tensions and the need for public knowledge

5.5.6 Media as a Tool for Advocacy and Change

Notwithstanding the difficulties, the media is nevertheless a very effective vehicle for change and advocacy. Investigative journalism holds offenders responsible, exposes injustices, and unearths corruption. Media attention is sometimes the means by which civil society groups magnify their demands for justice and change. The *Mail & Guardian's* (2023) investigations into political violence reveal examples when media coverage has resulted in more public scrutiny and pressure on authorities to act.

Moreover, foreign media coverage could raise awareness of political violence in South Africa worldwide, therefore attracting possible international assistance and involvement. This worldwide focus may put additional pressure on local authorities to maintain democratic values and more successfully resolve violence.

5.5.7 Implications and Forward Path

The critical role of media in shaping the socio-political narrative in South Africa cannot be overstated. The findings of this study illuminate the significant influence wielded by both traditional and social media in the perception and propagation of political violence. This suggests the need for a responsible and conscious approach to media reportage

and consumption. As Hegre et al. (2019) highlighted, understanding the dynamics of media influence is crucial in predicting and mitigating political violence.

This understanding is the basis for a path forward that involves multiple stakeholders, each playing a vital role in shaping a more cohesive and less violent society.

Traditional and digital media entities have an ethical imperative to exercise discernment and responsibility in their reporting. The power of the media to shape public opinion and societal discourse makes it a potent tool that can exacerbate tensions or foster understanding and peace. In line with the recommendations of Silverman (2016), media outlets should be aware of the societal implications of their narrative framing choices, ensuring that their content does not unwittingly perpetuate stereotypes or inflame tensions. This involves a commitment to balanced reporting, where diverse perspectives are given a platform, and sensationalism is eschewed in favour of factual, context-rich narratives.

Social media platforms face the challenge of addressing the divisive nature of echo chambers. The algorithms that govern these platforms often reinforce existing beliefs and viewpoints, so limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. These platforms urgently need to revise their algorithms to promote a broader range of views to counteract this, as Chen et al. (2023) suggested. Such algorithmic changes, coupled with efforts to flag and reduce the spread of misinformation, can contribute significantly to a more balanced and less polarised digital discourse.

Policymakers have a crucial role in enhancing media literacy among the populace. The proliferation of digital media has made it imperative for citizens to be equipped with the skills to critically engage with this content. As Quinlan et al. (2019) recommended, media literacy campaigns can empower individuals to discern facts from sensationalism and propaganda. These campaigns should be comprehensive, targeting the youth but also older generations who are increasingly active digital media consumers. By fostering a critical and informed approach to media consumption, these initiatives can contribute to a more discerning and less susceptible audience.

In addition to these interventions, there is a need for ongoing dialogue about responsible media consumption and the role of digital platforms in democratic processes. This dialogue, which can take the form of public forums, educational programmes, and policy discussions, should aim to build a consensus on the ethical

responsibilities of media creators and consumers. The goal should be to foster a media landscape that supports democratic ideals, respects diversity and promotes social harmony.

Ultimately, the path forward is one of collective responsibility and engagement. Media entities, policymakers, and the public must collaborate to create an environment where the media serves as a tool for unity and understanding rather than division and violence. Although challenging, such efforts are essential for guiding South Africa towards a future characterised by informed dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and a robust and responsible media landscape.

5.6 Power Dynamics and Societal Hierarchies

The content analysis revealed the intricate interplay of power dynamics and societal hierarchies in shaping political violence in South Africa. These interwoven threads, deep-rooted in history and manifested in contemporary societal structures, are critical context to the cycles of unrest and their underlying motivations.

5.6.1 The Lingering Shadow of Apartheid

Apartheid has cast a long shadow over South Africa's political, social, and economic landscapes, creating ripple effects that continue to be felt – decades after its end in 1994.

a. Structural Disparities

The apartheid regime meticulously crafted socio-economic disparities based on racial lines. These divisions were politically dismantled but still manifest in stark socioeconomic inequities spanning education, employment, and land ownership, among other areas (Cornell et al., 2022). Such systemic imbalances have rendered marginalised communities particularly susceptible to feelings of disenfranchisement.

b. Exclusion from Decision-making

Despite the transformative strides made post-apartheid, narratives from marginalised communities indicate a persistent feeling of being sidelined in significant decisionmaking processes. This sentiment of exclusion often translates into perceived

powerlessness, driving communities towards political violence to assert agency and to seek recognition (Hegre et al., 2019).

5.6.2 Intersecting Identities and Amplified Oppression

The concept of intersectionality underscores the layered and often compounded experiences of oppression faced by individuals belonging to multiple marginalised groups.

a. Dual Burden of Oppression

The study found that individuals, especially from historically marginalised racial groups, face a compounded form of oppression due to their intersecting identities. For instance, people from these groups may confront racial discrimination compounded by socio-economic disadvantages. This multi-dimensional oppression leads to a heightened vulnerability to political violence. Cornell et al. (2022) highlighted that the intersection of these different forms of marginalisation creates complex layers of oppression, where the experience and impact of political violence intensify.

The intersections of race, socio-economic status, and other factors mean that experiences of political violence can vary significantly in marginalised communities. For example, the lived experiences of political violence for a middle-class individual of a marginalised racial group may differ considerably from those of a person from the same group but with lower socio-economic status. These differences can shape not only the type and extent of violence experienced but also the resources and strategies available for coping and resistance. The study underscores that effectively addressing political violence requires acknowledging and responding to these varying experiences and challenges.

b. A Nuanced Struggle

Socio-economic status is a significant factor in the study. Those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum often experience political violence more acutely, as economic hardships can exacerbate vulnerabilities and limit access to protective resources and support systems. This aspect of intersectionality reveals that economic

empowerment and improving socio-economic conditions are crucial in mitigating the impact of political violence.

5.6.3 Implications and the Road Ahead

The entrenched power dynamics and societal hierarchies in South Africa, especially those emerging from the apartheid era, have influenced the nation's socio-political trajectory. Recognising and addressing these issues is paramount for a harmonious future.

a. Policy Interventions

Østby et al. (2019) asserted that understanding these dynamics is fundamental to crafting effective policy interventions. Reforms need to be multi-pronged, addressing both the legacy of apartheid and the nuanced oppressions faced by intersecting identities. Land redistribution, socio-economic upliftment programmes, and inclusive decision-making forums can be pivotal in this regard.

b. Empowerment through Education

Educational initiatives can be transformative. The state can foster more inclusive dialogue by equipping marginalised communities, especially women, with the knowledge, skills, and platforms to voice their concerns. Moreover, education about intersectionality can illuminate the nuanced challenges faced by various community subsets, leading to more tailored interventions (Østby et al., 2019).

c. Grassroots Movements

While top-down policies are essential, grassroots movements in marginalised communities can catalyse meaningful change. These movements can channel the communities' lived experiences into actionable agendas, providing direction to the broader socio-political change narrative.

The legacy of apartheid and the compounded oppressions arising from intersecting identities form a complex tapestry that influences South Africa's political violence dynamics. While the challenges are undeniably multifaceted, a combined effort of

policy reform, education, and grassroots mobilisation can pave the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and peaceful nation.

5.7 Strategies for Fostering Non-violent Communication

Exploring strategies for fostering NVC in South Africa reveals several promising approaches, especially amid a landscape often dominated by narratives of violence. These strategies, drawn from various studies and initiatives, demonstrate the potential for transformative change through community engagement, empowerment, and media responsibility.

Community dialogue has emerged as a vital tool for diffusing tensions and fostering understanding. Grassroots initiatives focusing on this dialogue provide platforms for individuals and groups from conflicting parties to come together, air their grievances, and engage in constructive discussions. Such dialogue resolves immediate disputes, also offering an opportunity for deeper understanding and empathy.

Empowerment initiatives are crucial for reducing tendencies towards violence, especially those aimed at marginalised communities. Programmes focusing on education and skill development empower individuals, giving them the tools and confidence to seek non-violent solutions to their challenges. Ranganathan et al. (2021) highlighted the positive impact of such empowerment initiatives, demonstrating how they contribute to reducing IPV. Providing people with education and skills, especially young women and vulnerable groups, enhances individual capacities while contributing to broader social change. It helps shift the narrative from one of dependency and disenfranchisement to one of agency and opportunity.

The role of the media in promoting non-violence cannot be overstated. Some media houses in South Africa have pursued promoting social cohesion and unity. Their content focuses on celebrating the country's diversity, highlighting stories of resilience, reconciliation, and the strength of the human spirit. Mannell et al. (2019) discussed the importance of such responsible media practices, especially in the context of addressing IPV and HIV. By choosing to highlight positive narratives and constructive approaches to societal challenges, these media outlets contribute to shaping a more

hopeful and united public discourse. This responsible approach to journalism serves to inform but also inspires and uplifts, so creating a more positive and cohesive societal outlook.

The strategies, while diverse, share a common thread: the emphasis on communication, understanding, and empowerment. Whether through community dialogue, empowerment initiatives, or responsible media practices, the goal is to create a society where differences are resolved through dialogue and mutual respect, and not violence. Eagle and Kwele (2021) stressed the importance of such strategies, especially in providing safe and supportive environments for young black women in public spaces. Their study on the experiences of violence in public transport use in Johannesburg highlights the everyday challenges faced by vulnerable groups and the need for comprehensive approaches to ensure their safety and dignity.

5.8 Conclusion

The comprehensive content analysis illuminated the intricate tapestry of South Africa's political landscape, which cannot be divorced from its historical roots, social intricacies, and complex power dynamics. As underscored by the findings, political violence is not just an arbitrary eruption of discontent, but an intricate form of communication deeply embedded in the nation's socio-political fabric.

South Africa's tumultuous history has ingrained socio-economic disparities and divisive narratives that continue to shape the country's current realities. These historical legacies are not just shadows of the past; they are alive, continuously moulding perceptions, attitudes, and actions of both the oppressed and the oppressors (Cornell et al., 2022). The media sources analysed poignantly underscored how past injustices and systemic inequalities serve as fertile grounds for the manifestation and perpetuation of political violence.

It is pivotal to recognise political violence not merely as acts of destruction but as profound statements of discontent, alienation and a desperate clamour for justice and recognition. The sender–receiver dynamics unearthed in the research underscore this, revealing how violent acts transmit potent messages about socio-political grievances,

with the feedback loop reflecting the cyclical nature of this communication (Webber et al., 2020).

Yet, amid the unsettling narratives of division and violence lie glimmers of hope. There are concerted efforts to rewrite South Africa's narrative, from grassroots movements aiming to bridge societal divides, to media outlets championing reconciliation, to educational initiatives targeting systemic change. While the challenges of historical baggage and systemic inequalities are profound, these emerging narratives and initiatives signify a resilient nation's quest for cohesion, inclusivity, and peace.

For South Africa to genuinely transition from its tumultuous past to a harmonious future, it is imperative to continually analyse, engage with, and address the underpinnings of political violence. Only by understanding the communicative essence of such acts can policymakers, civil society, and citizens collectively foster dialogue that heals, reconciles, and builds a nation defined not by its past traumas but by its shared aspirations and united vision. While South Africa's journey is fraught with challenges, the nation's indomitable spirit, reflected in its endeavours towards cohesion and inclusivity, offers hope. The path ahead, informed by the findings, necessitates a blend of acknowledgement, engagement, education, and collective action towards a brighter and unified future.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In the multifaceted landscape of South Africa, political violence and its manifestation as communication have become a crucial research area. The following discussion interprets, contextualises, and deliberates on the research findings. This synthesis elucidates the intricate dynamics of political violence in South Africa, highlighting key revelations, constraints, and avenues for future exploration.

6.2 Summary of the Findings

In the comprehensive analysis of political violence in South Africa, abundant intricate and interwoven elements emerged. Key thematic areas revealed the multifaceted nature of the country's socio-political dynamics.

6.2.1 Historical Echoes

The enduring legacy of apartheid in South Africa profoundly influences the nation's current socio-political landscape. It is not a relic of the past but a living, palpable force that continues to shape interactions and perceptions in the country. Apartheid established a society deeply divided along racial lines. Cornell et al. (2022) emphasised this point, arguing that the contemporary episodes of violence in South Africa are not random or isolated incidents. Instead, they are manifestations of unresolved historical grievances; a society grappling with the consequences of its divided past. These outbreaks of violence are more than just physical altercations. They are symptomatic of a nation still struggling with the profound psychological, social, and economic scars left by apartheid.

6.2.2 Interplay of Inequalities and Violence

The interplay between inequalities and violence in South Africa is a crucial aspect of understanding the nation's current challenges. The study reveals that entrenched societal inequalities and power dynamics are significant contributors to political violence. In a country characterised by stark disparities in wealth, access to resources,

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and opportunities, violence often emerges as a means for the marginalised to assert their presence and demand change. This phenomenon transcends mere resource acquisition; it is a deep-seated call for dignity, equity, and social justice. The marginalised communities may view violence as a necessary tool to bring attention to their plight and to challenge the status quo, as they often feel ignored or oppressed.

Moreover, these acts of violence are not just responses to current conditions but are also deeply rooted in historical contexts. Apartheid has left a society where inequality is not just an economic issue but a racial and social one. These deeply ingrained disparities create an environment where violence can be seen as a form of communication – a way for those who feel voiceless to express their frustrations and demands. The study aligns with the perspectives of scholars like Cornell et al. (2022), who argued that understanding the historical roots of these inequalities is crucial in comprehending the nature of contemporary political violence in South Africa.

6.2.3 Communication Dynamics

The dynamics of communication in the context of political violence in South Africa reveal a complex and multifaceted landscape. Violence, often perceived merely as a destructive force, emerges as a nuanced form of communication in this setting. It serves as a language, conveying discontent, resistance, or demand for change. This form of communication involves senders (those who initiate violence), messages (the intentions or grievances behind the violence), receivers (the targeted audience or victims), and feedback mechanisms (responses to the violence, which may include further acts of violence or other forms of reaction). Webber et al. (2020) highlighted this cyclical nature of violence as communication, emphasising how one act of violence can trigger another, so creating a continual loop of action and reaction. This cycle often perpetuates itself, driven by the perceived messages and reactions from various societal segments.

6.2.4 Media's Dual Role

In the digital age, the role of the media in shaping narratives on political violence has become increasingly significant and complex. The study shows that media outlets play a dual role in this context. On the one hand, some media entities amplify polarising narratives, so contributing to the escalation of tensions. These outlets often focus on

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sensationalism or partisan reporting, which can exacerbate conflicts and deepen societal divisions. On the other hand, other media platforms adopt a more responsible and reconciliatory approach. They focus on promoting social cohesion, offering balanced and nuanced perspectives on events, and highlight narratives encouraging understanding and peace. This responsible approach to reporting is crucial in a country like South Africa, where the media's influence can significantly affect public perception and societal harmony.

The power of the media in this context is profound. It can shape perceptions, mould opinions, and influence events. The media can fan the flames of conflict or contribute to dousing them, depending on how it portrays incidents of political violence and the narratives it chooses to emphasise. This dual role of the media underscores the need for ethical journalism and responsible media practices, especially in a country grappling with the legacy of apartheid and ongoing societal challenges.

6.2.5 Intersectionality and Oppression

This study found that the intersectionality of various societal factors critically influences the manifestations and experiences of political violence in the socio-political environment of South Africa. Cornell et al. (2022) provided a foundation for understanding how these intersecting identities and societal positions shape individual and group experiences of violence in a politically charged context.

The intersection of race, gender, and socio-economic status determines the likelihood of experiencing political violence and the nature of that violence. For instance, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often living in marginalised communities, may find themselves more vulnerable to becoming both perpetrators and victims of political violence. This vulnerability is a result of economic hardship intertwined with historical and racial legacies, which have perpetuated a cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement.

Similarly, racial identity in South Africa continues to influence the experience and perception of political violence. Apartheid has left indelible marks on the social fabric, influencing how different racial groups engage with and are affected by political violence. This intersectionality extends beyond simple categorisations, revealing

complex layers of privilege, oppression, and resistance woven into the daily experiences of South Africans.

Moreover, gender also intersects with these factors, influencing the ways in which political violence is experienced and perpetrated. While the study focused on political violence rather than gender-based violence, the two are often interlinked, with gender norms and inequalities playing a role in both the perpetration and experience of political violence.

In understanding the intersectionality of these factors, the study highlights the need for nuanced and targeted approaches to addressing political violence in South Africa. Policies and interventions that fail to consider the complex interplay of race, gender, and socio-economic status may not fully address the root causes and manifestations of political violence. This intersectional approach emphasises the importance of understanding political violence not just as a singular phenomenon but as a symptom of broader systemic issues that require holistic and inclusive solutions.

6.2.6 Non-violent Potential

The analysis of the socio-political landscape in South Africa reveals a complex tapestry of challenges and opportunities, especially in addressing and mitigating political violence. Amid the backdrop of recurrent violence, there are emergent narratives and initiatives that highlight the potential for NVC and conflict resolution.

The data underscores the significance of community dialogue and grassroots movements in fostering a culture of NVC. These initiatives provide vital platforms for individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds to express grievances, share experiences, and engage in constructive dialogue. By facilitating understanding and empathy among conflicting parties, this dialogue can diffuse tensions and cultivate a sense of community and shared purpose. Such efforts align with the observations of Tholaine and Calvino (2022), emphasising the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches in addressing the roots of violence.

Educational endeavours and initiatives for change emerge as powerful tools in the fight against political violence, especially those focused on promoting critical thinking, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. Programmes that emphasise the importance of

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understanding and respecting diversity, and those that empower marginalised communities through skill development are found to have a significant impact in reducing tendencies towards violence. These findings resonate with Ranganathan et al. (2021) and Mannell et al. (2019), so highlighting the role of education in shaping attitudes and behaviours conducive to NVC.

The study reveals a dual role of the media in shaping narratives on political violence. While some media outlets have been found to amplify divisive and polarising narratives, others commenced dialogue promoting social cohesion and unity. Responsible media practices focusing on celebrating diversity, highlighting stories of resilience and reconciliation, and providing a balanced and nuanced coverage of events can contribute significantly to a shift towards NVC. It aligns with insights by Webber et al. (2020) underscoring the media's power in influencing public perceptions and attitudes.

6.2.7 Interpretation of Newspaper Findings

The findings of the investigated newspaper articles stress the deep-rooted character of political violence in South Africa and its many causes. With "a total of 131 assassinations in 2023 related to organised crime, the minibus taxi industry, political assassinations, and personal killings," a notable count of political assassinations emphasises the frequency of targeted killings as a means of political communication (*Comins, 2023*). This aligns with the theoretical premise of the study, which maintains that violence is a strategic tool used to influence political outcomes, eliminate competitors, and intimidate rivals. According to further research, political killings primarily target local government officials – especially municipal councillors. This captures the enormous risks associated with local political power over municipal resources.

The Mail & Guardian (2023) claimed that "political killings mainly target individuals holding political and occasionally administrative positions in government". The vulnerability of these leaders reflects the great competition for financial incentives and resources, therefore highlighting the socio-economic elements of political violence. Political violence is further complicated by the rise of structured criminal gangs like the "construction mafias". These groups extort money from upcoming construction

projects and are frequent targets for the harsh removal of competitors or whistleblowers (Mail & Guardian, 2023). In keeping with the findings of the study on the systematic nature of political violence in South Africa, this confluence of criminal activity and political power emphasises the role of organised crime in maintaining violence

6.3 Conclusion

This study examined political violence from a communications perspective. Whether by non-state or state actors, violence was investigated in this study as a means of communication interacting with other social and political communication. By examining how violence fits into the greater framework of social and political life at the national level, the study sought to better grasp how violence results from other social or political activities and how it can be one tool in a political or social struggle, viewed through this perspective. This study has established how one can investigate violence as a legacy of South African history. This study therefore sought to provide a forum for learning why people chose violence when confronted with societal failures. It also proposed an efficient means of peaceful communication in the South African setting.

These results have great ramifications for practice and policy. The ubiquitous character of political violence and its effects on democracy and government call for thorough and varied policy measures. As Tandwa (2023) emphasised, "this violence not only violates political and civil rights but also undermines democracy by allowing criminal elements to influence or control government functions." Policies, therefore, must deal with the underlying and immediate reasons for political violence.

Protecting local government officials and other weaker political players is one vital area of engagement. Essential are improved security policies along with strong legal systems to punish offenders. Furthermore, measures that support fair resource distribution and economic possibilities – especially at the local government level – help to solve the economic incentives driving political violence.

The participation of organised crime in political violence demands deliberate attempts to destroy these systems. Fighting transnational crime entails enhancing law enforcement capacity, improving intelligence gathering, and promoting international collaboration. The way the Mail & Guardian (2023) described political violence as part of a "system of collaborative criminal governance" emphasises the importance of concerted measures to destroy these networks.

6.4 Recommendations

Understanding political violence's intricate dynamics in South Africa requires multifaceted solutions that target both the root causes and their manifestations. The following recommendations, when holistically implemented, could foster a climate conducive to unity, understanding, and peace.

6.4.1 Promotion of Grassroots Journalism

Grassroots Journalism: By nurturing and promoting grassroots journalism, communities gain a platform to share their lived experiences, so counteracting prevalent biases. This form of journalism emerges from communities and provides a more authentic, unfiltered, and holistic view of ground realities. We can amplify these critical voices that are often stifled in mainstream narratives by investing in training, resources and platforms for grassroots reporters.

6.4.2 Education and Awareness Campaigns

Holistic Education: The quality of education is important. The curricula should emphasise critical thinking, conflict resolution, historical understanding, and empathy beyond traditional academic subjects. The goal is to foster informed societies that have the tools to examine, challenge, and constructively engage with divisive narratives. Furthermore, extracurricular programmes that promote inter-community understanding and solidarity can help break down barriers.

6.4.3 Inclusive Dialogues

Platforms for Genuine Engagement: By creating platforms for genuine, inclusive political dialogue, we offer avenues for grievances to be addressed constructively.

These platforms should prioritise marginalised voices and ensure a fair representation of all community strata. This will address immediate concerns, fostering a culture where non-violence becomes the preferred mode of expression.

6.4.4 Media Literacy

Empowering the Public: Media literacy is not just about discerning fake news from genuine articles. It is about understanding media mechanics, recognising bias, and developing skills to critically engage with content. By introducing nationwide media literacy programmes, we can equip citizens with the tools to navigate this digital landscape discerningly. can drastically reduce the potential for violence incited by manipulated narratives.

6.4.5 Reinforcing Accountability in Media

Regulation and Monitoring: We can ensure that media fosters unity rather than division by establishing clear media ethics guidelines and ensuring their strict adherence. Periodic reviews, transparent reporting mechanisms for the public to report grievances, and strict penalties for violations can uphold these standards.

6.4.6 Cross-sector Collaboration

For the effectiveness of these recommendations, collaboration between government bodies, NGOs, educational institutions, and media houses is imperative. Joint initiatives, resource pooling, and shared platforms can magnify the impact of individual efforts.

6.4.7 International Partnerships

Collaborating with international entities that are experienced in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and media can offer fresh perspectives, resources, and expertise in addressing South Africa's unique challenges.

6.4.8 Future Studies

- **Longitudinal Studies:** A longitudinal analysis could offer insights into changes over time and potential triggers to help understand the evolving patterns of political violence and its portrayal.

- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing the South African context with other regions experiencing political violence could provide a wider perspective and highlight unique versus shared challenges.
- **Qualitative Deep Dives:** Through interviews or ethnographic studies, personal narratives can provide a richer and more textured understanding of the experiences and sentiments driving political violence.
- **Local Government Dynamics:** The analysis of newspaper articles has highlighted several areas for future research that can deepen our understanding of political violence in South Africa. First, there is a need for more granular studies on the role of local government dynamics in political violence. Given the high incidence of violence targeting municipal councillors, future research should explore the specific factors that make these positions so contentious. This includes examining the intersection of local politics, resource control, and community dynamics.
- **Organised Crime Influence:** The impact of organised crime on political violence warrants further investigation. As noted by the Mail & Guardian (2023), the rise of groups like the "construction mafias" illustrates the complex interplay between criminal organisations and political actors (Mail & Guardian, 2023). Future studies should investigate the mechanisms through which organised crime influences political processes and the effectiveness of different strategies to combat this influence.
- **Media's Dual Role:** In addition, the role of the media in shaping and influencing political violence requires more in-depth analysis. The media's dual role as both a catalyst and a mitigator of violence, as discussed in the newspaper articles, suggests that responsible journalism and media literacy are critical areas for intervention. Research should explore how media coverage affects public perception of political violence and the potential for the media to either exacerbate or alleviate tensions.

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