

# The Political Instrumentalization of Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Case of Ibadan

Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale

Department of Sociology Faculty of  
the Social Sciences University of  
Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

[ao.omobowale@mail.uni.ng](mailto:ao.omobowale@mail.uni.ng), [muyiwaking@yahoo.com](mailto:muyiwaking@yahoo.com)

DOI: 10.36108/NJSA/8002/60(0101)

Vol. 6 Issue 1, 2008

---

## Abstract

From May 29 1999, Nigeria joined the comity of 'democratic' nations once again, with the commencement of the Fourth Republic. Whereas, democracy is expected to be a platform for order, fairplay, justice, equality, the protection of human rights, etc., Nigeria's democracy has, however, not been devoid of violence, which invariably seemingly negates its very essence. Focusing on happenings during the 2007 general elections, the paper investigates the political instrumentalization of violence in Ibadan, Nigeria. Both secondary and primary data were collected for the study through the review of relevant literature and oral interview with selected political actors identified through purposive sampling method. The signal that political events in Ibadan show is that of a pseudo-democratic system 'sustained' by violence rather than one primarily aimed at improving the welfare of the people. It is a system the political class craves for in order to gain access to state resources to finance patronage, patrimonialism and for personal gains. This is why violence has to be used to silence the opposition and actualize primitive and exploitative acquisition. Thus, what the 2007 General Elections have brought forth for Ibadan in particular, and Oyo state in general, is a system sustained by hoodlums for the sake of the political class and not the electorate.

**Key words:** *democracy, politics, violence, agbero, OPC, Ibadan.*

## Introduction

With the weakening of the Soviet Union from the late 1980s, its eventual collapse in 1990, and the subsequent 'triumph' of capitalism over socialism, the stage was set for the global 'enthronement' of democracy designed along Western lines (Obi, 2008; Ryzhkov, 2004; Mayall, 2000). As military/ autocratic regimes that refused to democratize were thenceforth grouped among the comity of pariah states, to be sanctioned and treated as *leprosic*, military/ autocratic regimes across the Developing World were forced to democratize. In Nigeria, the military government of General Babangida that was seemingly reluctant to put in place democratic structures likewise designed a transition-to-civil-rule programme, which produced a diarchic structure with civilian administration at the local and state levels and military government at the federal level in 1990.

This arrangement was supposed to last until 1993 when the Military President would hand over to a democratically elected government. However, the burgeoning Third Republic was truncated as the military government

cancelled what has often been described as Nigeria's freest and fairest presidential election that Chief M.K.O. Abiola was set to win (Abubakar 2001). Thenceforth, Nigeria fell into the doldrums of pervasive military dictatorship under General Abacha<sup>1</sup> until June 8 1998, when General Abubakar took over the reins of power following Abacha's death and organized a transition programme, which brought about democratic governance once again at all levels on May 29, 1999.

Of course, considering the often identified and discussed ideals of democracy, which include justice, equality, fair play, the ability of the electorate to choose its leaders through elections, etc. (Manent, 2003; Williams, 2003; Creighton, 2000), democracy should be the ideal system of government that every society should crave for. However, along with its success story, liberal democracy has not been devoid of violence in developing countries where it has been introduced alongside free market economy. In the words of Buvinic and Morrison (2000: 63):

*The spread of market-based economic policies and the freer movement of goods and capital often are considered among globalization's greatest triumphs. However, these trends have not lifted all boats and may have sunk some further into the depths of poverty. And as more people perceive that they are worse off than others, the ensuing strain and frustration become powerful instigates of violence.*

Indeed, inasmuch as violence may result from socio-economic 'strain and frustration' as posited by Buvinic and Morrison, it is important to also note that the ensuing social reality brings about new forms of social relations, which entails the political utilization of violence. For example, Pereira and Davies (2000) discussed the case of Latin America where widespread democracy and market reforms have also led to extensive poverty and rising income disparity. As socio-economic imbalance increases within the population, formal coercive institutions (i.e. the Military and Police) alongside informal/non-governmental coercive groups, such as veterans, drug traffickers, ethnic militias and guerrillas, have been able to utilize violence unconstrained, to influence socio-political affairs.

In the case of Africa, Chabal and Daloz (1999) claim African nations are unable to maintain institutionalized structures in line with Western/Weberian ideals because, in Africa, the state is not emancipated from society (i.e. embedded local informal social relations). Thus, state officials act based on non objective rationales favouring informal relations as they carry out their duties. And so, in order to maintain the status quo and remain in power, what

---

<sup>1</sup> General Babangida installed Chief Ernest Shonekan as Interim President. He was largely a titular head as General Abacha ruled as de facto Head of State. Chief Shonekan was eventually removed after about 90 days in office through a palace coup by General Abacha.

subsist are violence, patrimonialism, religion, witchcraft and perverse civil society influenced by the political elite. Hence Chabal and Daloz submitted that:

*...the state has been utilized as the instrument of ‘primitive accumulation’ achieved through the monopoly seizure of the means of production by political elites. (p.10)*

They continued:

*The failure of the state to be emancipated from society has profoundly limited the scope for ‘good government’ in sub-Saharan Africa. Equally, such a poorly institutionalized state has not had the means seriously to spur sustainable economic growth on the continent. Nevertheless, the very weakness and inefficiency of the state has been profitable to the African political elites...The instrumentalization of the prevailing political (dis) order is thus a disincentive to the establishment of a more properly institutionalized state of the Weberian model. (p. 14)*

As Chabal and Daloz posit, the state of disorder in Africa inevitably sustains the political elites in power. The manifestations of this has been further accentuated through ethnicity, proliferation of arms on the continent, leading to and acting as catalyst to violent conflicts such as civil wars, ethnic, religious and political conflicts, which repeatedly occur in alarming proportion through-out the continent (Ibrahim, 2006; Nolte, 2004; Kalyvas, 2003; Mueller 2003; Bates, Greif and Singh, 2002; Craft and Smaldone, 2002; Newsbury, 2002; Abubarka, 2001; Braathen, Boas, and Saether, 2000).

Specifically, in the case of South Africa, Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998) illustrated how the Xhosa dominated African National Congress (ANC) and the predominantly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (with support from the Apartheid government) utilized violence to acquire and sustain political influence sequel to Mandela’s release from prison and the beginning of preparations for majority rule. In the words of Percival and Homer-Dixon:

*The events of 1990 radically changed the opportunities for political violence in South Africa. As the ANC and Inkatha became fully fledged political organizations, battling for control of the institutions of power, they mobilized huge numbers of people and substantial financial resources for their political ends. Meanwhile, the apartheid state attempted to control the transition process through its support--both financial and armed--of Inkatha. The ANC and Inkatha mobilized large numbers of alienated and underemployed young men for their political battle. The battle took place within a deeply aggrieved society, brutalized for generations, and well rehearsed in fighting the system of apartheid. It resulted in the worst outbreak of violence in the country’s history. (p.293)*

Of course, violence may be utilized as a political instrument to acquire and sustain power. Nevertheless, those utilizing violence may also fall victim as the oppressed/populace gains consciousness and act to change the status quo. Nevertheless, just as violence is politically utilized especially in developing nations as shown above, Nigeria too has had instances of such happenings right from the nation's First Republic. Following repeated military coup d'états, the earlier Republics have collapsed while the country is now in its Fourth Republic, which commenced in 1999. Between 1999 and 2007, Nigeria conducted three general elections. The focus of this paper therefore is political instrumentalization of violence in Ibadan; a city which has remained a hot spot of political violence in Nigeria right from the First Republic (Hart 1993). Hence the study sought to (1) investigate the place of violence in socio-political relations in Ibadan, (2) find out the network for the utilization of political violence and finally (3) examine the political utilization of violence during the 2007 general elections in Ibadan.

### **Materials and Methods**

The data for the study were collected through both secondary and primary methods. Secondary data were collected through the reviews of relevant scholarly literature and media resources (such as newspapers and periodicals) while primary data were gathered through oral interview and personal discussions. The oral interviews were conducted with purposely selected political actors that cut across the three main political groups in Ibadan (i.e. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress (AC) and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)), while personal discussions were also used to generate data from two members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). The data generated were subjected to content analysis.

### **Violence and Socio-Political Relations in Ibadan**

Right from the First Republic, violence has remained a veritable tool in political relations in contemporary Nigeria in general and Ibadan in particular (see for example Omobowale and Olutayo, 2007; Agbaje, 2002; Post and Jenkins, 1973). Just as posited by Chabal and Daloz (1999) for Africa as a whole, it is germane to examine deeply the utilization of violence in socio-political relations in Ibadan. Just as MacGaffey (2000) reported about the BaKongo and other tribes in Central Africa where violence is so much entrenched in the political culture such that the validity of a Chief's authority is dependent on his ability to utilize violence, from historical records, political violence is not novel in Ibadan too. Though it might be fueled by the prevalent socio-economic situation, it is a phenomenon that is associated with Ibadan socio-political culture. This can be traced right from its inception in the nineteenth century when it emerged as a city of warlords, bandits and vagabonds, built its political arrangement around military structure and warfare and quickly expanded its empire to an area that covers the bulk of present day

South-Western Nigeria (Omobowale, 2006; Watson, 2005; Akinyele, 1981; Awe, 1964). The institutionalization of violence in Ibadan's pre-colonial socio-political relations was so much embedded in its consciousness that it was/is even reflected in the towns praise song. Two of the most popular ones are presented below:

*Ibadan Omo Ajoro sun  
Omo a je gbin yo  
Omo a fi ka'rahun fo'ri mu  
Ibadan maja, maja bi ojo kini  
Eyiti o ja aladugbo gbogbo l'ogun*

Akinyele, 1981:18

Meaning:

*Ibadan who takes wild mango as super<sup>2</sup>  
The one who eats snails to satiation  
The one who takes pap in snail shell  
Ibadan do not fight, do not fight  
Like in the former days  
That it (you) terrorized all its (your) neighbours*

*Ibadan kure  
Ibadan bere ki o to wo o  
Ibadan mesiogo n'ile Oluyole  
Nibi ole gbe jare oluhun  
Ibadan ki gbe onile bi ajeji  
Aki 'waiye k'a ma l'arun kan lara  
Ijagboro larun Ibadan*

Akinyele, 1981:26

Meaning:

*Ibadan greetings  
Ibadan, ask before you enter therein  
Ibadan that knows the right answer for a fool, the home of Oluyole<sup>3</sup>  
Where thieves are vindicated at the expense of the owner  
Ibadan does not favour the natives as much as it does the non-native  
We do not come into the world without a disease  
Social disorder is the disease of Ibadan*

---

<sup>2</sup> The first three lines of this praise song briefly describes the experience of Lagelu; the first political of Ibadan, when the city was sacked on the orders of the Alaafin of Oyo and Lagelu escaped to the Oke Ibadan hill where he survived on wild mango, snails and pap.

<sup>3</sup> Reference to Oluyole may be because Ibadan expanded the frontiers of its Empire under Oluyole's political/military leadership.

Just as reflected in the praise songs above, Ibadan's pre-colonial political strength and power were predicated on social disorder and warfare and thus continual domestic social disorder and warfare with neighbouring settlements by the City-Empire continued until the imposition of colonial rule in 1893. However, by the time party-politics was introduced in the 1950s, political relations once again took up a violent posture with the late Alhaji Adelabu taking the lead against what was interpreted as perceived dominance by Ijebu<sup>4</sup> strangers who were regarded as long time enemies of the Ibadan (Post and Jenkins 1973). Even, after political independence, Ibadan was also the centre of the political violence generally referred to as the *Wild, Wild, West* political imbroglio, which destabilized Nigeria's First Republic in the 1960s (Jackson, 1972; Sklar, 1965). In all, right from the pre-colonial period, the history of Ibadan, shows a political class that utilizes violence for political gains. Thus during the Second Republic Alhaji Adelakun emerged as a political leader utilizing violence for political gains, while Chief Adedibu's dominance was more evident during the Third and the present Fourth Republics (Omobowale and Olutayo, 2007).

Hence, in an interview with a journalist and stalwart of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Ibadan, Chief Dejo Raimi stated:

*Everything that is bad in Nigerian politics today emanated from Ibadan...In the Western Region of those days, rigging, violence and money elections [politics] started here. And these are the products of those bad things...*

Ajayi 2007

The political class within the city is obviously aware of the violent nature of politics in Ibadan as they make claims and counter claims about who is responsible and why. For example, Mr. Akinyo, a politician under the auspices of the ANPP, claims that PDP is synonymous with violence (Mbui, 2007), while Chief Raimi of the PDP states:

*Let me tell you, the target of the election was PDP and the reason is not far fetched. It is the party in power. So, those carrying cutlasses were doing so to smash PDP people and its structures. I have told you that the violent unit of the former AD<sup>5</sup> is now the AC...When you see*

---

<sup>4</sup> This was because the Action Group which politically controlled South-Western Nigeria was dominated by the Ijebu.

<sup>5</sup> AD means Alliance for Democracy. It was considered a resuscitation of Awolowo's Action Group because it was dominated by former stalwarts of Awolowo and the Action Group. AD was largely weakened by widespread loss during the 2003 General Elections. Many of its stalwarts formed alliance with disenchanted members of the PDP to form AC. In fact AC's Presidential Candidate for the 2007 General Elections was elected as Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 and 2003

*people with cutlasses, it is the PDP they are using the cutlasses against. Most of them were recruited from Lagos to go and fight in Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti.*

Ajayi 2007

Beyond these claims and counter claims, however, violence stands as a veritable tool in socio-political relations, especially among members of the political class. It is important to note that its use may not be limited to the ruling party even though its members who are engaged in violence may escape prosecution as the ruling party may influence police investigation and the judicial process. Vivid examples in Ibadan include those of Alhaji Gbolarunmi, Deputy Governor under Chief Alao Akala<sup>6</sup> who led violent attacks against the opposition in 2006 during Governor Ladoja's impeachment imbroglio (Omobowale and Olutayo 2007) and the case of the newly sworn in Deputy Governor - Honourable Arapaja<sup>7</sup>, who personally led the attack on Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission, where the establishment's personnel were macheted and government property worth millions of Naira destroyed. Whereas, Alhaji Gbolarunmi was never prosecuted because of the supposed immunity he enjoyed, Honourable Arapaja was arrested and kept in protective custody until he was sworn in as Deputy Governor on May 29, 2007. And so, he too cannot be prosecuted until he leaves office; this may not even happen. At least there has been precedence in the case of Gbolarunmi who has not been prosecuted even after he was removed from office following Ladoja's reinstatement as Governor by the Supreme Court in December 2006.

The examples above are just some of the instances where members of the political leadership have openly utilized violence to settle scores. Describing what happened under Governor Ladoja in relation to the instrumentality of violence an interviewee states:

*...violence definitely plays a decisive role in so many forms... Physical violence is a manifestation of other forms of violence. I mean in many*

---

respectively on the platform of the PDP. He remained Vice President even after he abandoned PDP in spite of pressures for his removal or resignation by President Obasanjo and the leadership of the PDP. He was largely saved by the judiciary, which interpreted Nigeria's constitution as regards his position and abandonment of the party on whose platform he was elected in his favour and the Parliament, which refused to impeach him despite pressures from the Presidency and PDP leadership.

<sup>6</sup> Governor Ladoja's deputy—Alao Akala was sworn in as Governor after Ladoja was impeached after a flawed process on January 12 2006. The impeachment brought about heated protest from Ladoja who opted to seek redress through the judiciary. The violent attacks were sequel to Ladoja's victory at the Appeal Court.

<sup>7</sup> Arapaja led the attack after he had become Deputy Governor Elect under the auspices of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in April 2007.

*cases, it is a reflection of an instigated weapon...In Oyo State<sup>8</sup>; physical violence did not characterize the conflict at the beginning. It started through verbal exchange. After that it became somehow structural... in the sense that most of the people that Ladoja knew to be men of Molete<sup>9</sup> were sidelined. They were not beaten, their houses and vehicles were not vandalized, but in the structure of things, in the mainstream so to say, they were externalized and these are people who have a lot of political interest in the state. Besides a lot of them have no verifiable means of survival, thus making their dependency on state resources total and absolute...With their exclusion from the mainstream, directly or indirectly, there was a threat to their survival. So the exclusion created a forum for them to strategize against Ladoja. These are people who believe in using force because they have seen the efficacy of violence...Unfortunately, our politicians have shown that when it comes to argument and counter-argument, only few of them can rely on their power of persuasion and superior argument to have their ways. Many of them know that ordinarily they cannot convince a rational person to do what they want, so the only thing they can do is to employ violence.*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (a)/ June 15 2007

Yet, another interviewee puts it this way:

*...There are many factors responsible for violence in Ibadan politics. They include poverty, joblessness and bad economy among others. Someone who cannot afford three square meals, if you give him N 500<sup>10</sup> and tell him to kill, will he not? This is because those people are poor and have no hope for tomorrow...When Ladoja was there, thuggery reduced in Oyo State, but when these people took over, a lot of people who did not go to school, jobless persons and thugs were used to have their selfish ways. They armed them with dangerous weapons such as guns, cutlasses and UTC<sup>11</sup>...if you are not on their side, you will be attacked and nothing will be done to redress the situation. Violence is their mainstay for having their ways...they cannot do without thugs because they are not acceptable to the people*

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibadan is the capital city of Oyo State. Hence, reference to Oyo State encapsulates the situation in Ibadan as well.

<sup>9</sup> Molete is the political headquarters of Chief Lamidi Adedibu, the acclaimed political patron of Ibadan, who was in strong contest with Ladoja for political power (see Omobowale and Olutayo 2007).

<sup>10</sup> This translates to 500 Naira (3.8 Dollars)

<sup>11</sup> UTC is a butchering/kitchen knife. It is also often called *Ake UTC* (UTC Axe) in local parlance. It became a popular butchering/kitchen tool in South-Western Nigeria in the 1980s when it was introduced to the Nigerian market by the UTC Stores. Unfortunately it has become a dangerous weapon in the hands of miscreants and criminals during violent actions.

*and they want to force their way in... During the last election period, when these thugs invaded the government secretariat, I saw one of the arrested thugs who said: 'Tion<sup>12</sup> sir, please it is not my fault. I have been paid N 5000<sup>13</sup> and I must kill somebody today'.*

Oral Interview/ANPP supporter/ June 17 2007

According to another PDP supporter:

*There are three main reasons why violence is predominant in contemporary political affairs. The first is the bad state of the economy, which has left many able bodied people without work and do not forget that an idle hand is the devil's workshop. The second is our poor political culture and perception. We are products of a system that believes when the Baba (i.e. political patron) talks, everybody bows. Anybody who says otherwise will be seen as an enemy who has to be resisted. The third is the over attractiveness of political offices for economic reasons. That is why people want to put in everything they have whether moral or immoral to get to office using Machiavelli's approach with the conviction that getting to office will justify whatever means used.*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (b)/June 25 2007

Still another interviewee states:

*Politicians use thugs to cause violence in order to wreck havoc and impose their own candidates on the masses. They do this because of their lust for power... Since they know they are not going to deliver but just to siphon the treasury, they know the masses will not follow them based on their antecedents. And so what they do is to intimidate them. Since the average man on the street ultimately seeks to feed himself and his family, he will not even contend with them so as not to lose his life for nothing.*

Oral Interview/AC supporter/June 17 2007

Indeed what the data presented above have shown is the utilization of informal coercive force to achieve political victory. It is a system that is deeply informally institutionalized in the socio-political structure that it has remained and it is used among politicians under the various political parties. Just as stated by the respondents, members of the political class hardly possess the pedigree and qualities of politicians who could convey their argument convincingly without resort to violence. Power is seen as a resource that must

---

<sup>12</sup> 'Tion' is a corruption of 'attention'; a form of greeting from a junior uniformed officer to a superior. Nigerian police officers are known to shout this aloud at the approach of a senior officer.

<sup>13</sup> This translates to 5000 Naira (38.7 Dollars).

be taken by force irrespective of the channels of popular participation through elections. Thus the retinue of jobless and poverty stricken individuals who have turned brigands and are on the pay roll of politicians, are turned against opponents and the populace to intimidate them to subjection most especially during election periods.

Of course, politicians on the different political divides in Ibadan utilize violence. Nevertheless, it is usually the one who enjoys federal support, though usually covertly, that gains the upper hand. This has been demonstrated under the regime of Governor Ladoja when the Police only watched, when thugs attacked the Governor's Office in 2005<sup>14</sup>. At another instance, when thugs went on rampage following court ruling for Ladoja's reinstatement in 2006, those arrested 'escaped' just a few kilometers away from the point of arrest while the Police Commissioner came on air to say that they were not thugs but party supporters. Meanwhile, the so-called party supporters intimidated and harassed innocent citizens with dangerous weapons while protesting court judgment for Ladoja's reinstatement. They were not just party supporters, of course, but party thugs used as agents of violence.

The situation on ground is one of crude contest for power, not for the sake of the masses in order to bring about the improvement of life and development, but to gain access to economic resources of the state to finance patronage and enhance politicians' self-comfort and acclaim. Since power acquisition must be achieved at all costs in order to sustain personal and patrimonial gains, a recourse to primitive acquisition takes over as politicians build an 'army' of 'foot-soldiers' among miscreants who do their bidding upon the transfer of meager material inducement. For this class of political actors, non-violent action (Schock, 2003; Solway, 2003), is rather useless. Actualization rather comes via the use of violence and the spill of blood in order to bring the opposition to subjection and subjugation.

Definitely, the political class uses 'foot soldiers' to perpetrate acts of violence against the opposition even as some of the data presented above show. It is, however, also important to examine the modus operandi/network of the political use of violence. To this we now turn.

### **The Network for the Utilization of Political Violence**

Political violence might often be seen within the precincts of social disorder with erroneous feeling that it happens spontaneously in reaction to particular political issues. However, it is important to note that political violence, as social action, is actually embedded within social interactions which actors have interpretive understanding about. Both political actors and the individuals who carry out the action on the streets do understand why they are doing so and for

---

<sup>14</sup> The Nigeria Police is under the full control of the Federal Government. In effect, state Police Commissioners are not answerable to State Governors but the Inspector General of Police who is an appointee of the President.

what purposes they are meant (Kalyvas, 2003; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). And thus, even in societies not experiencing civil wars, there may be both formal and informal structures of coercive force, which may be utilized by the political/power elite to perpetrate its will over the opposition. A case in point was Nigeria's example under the Late General Abacha, when the opposition was terrorized by specialized forces (e.g. The Strike Force, which was said to be under the direct control of Abacha's Chief Security Officer, Major Al Mustapha) and other covert groups (Okonkwo, 2007; Osaigbovo, 2007; Egwaikhide and Isumonah 2001; Reno, 1999; Ihonvhere, 1996).

In the case of Ibadan under the contemporary democratic structure, the political class that is not in direct control of state coercive apparatuses is able to build an army of foot soldiers and cause violence seemingly with impunity. Who are the personnel used and how do politicians contact and employ them? Are they just a bunch of miscreants on the streets that could easily be engaged with money? To understand the modus operandi and network used, an interviewee gave an insightful lead that was very revealing. He states:

*From observation and reliable sources, to a large extent, the display of violence in Ibadan is structured. It cannot be separated from the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC). Due to internal factionalization, the OPC broke into splinter groups under the leadership of Dr. Fasehun and Mr. Ganiyu Adams. These splinter groups engaged in violent actions against each other and perceived enemies. However, the splinter groups have been reconciled and OPC is now harmonized. Gradually, its influence is going down and most of these men will have to survive. Getting support and funds by either groups is now highly unlikely and do not forget these people have been trained and armed. They have been mobilized for violence, to demobilize and de-conscientize them has now become a problem. Thus politicians now have a pool of men to draw from. You will observe that there is hardly any party that does not use them. Even during party rallies, they are armed and used as guards...However; here they do not work as OPC members. They only utilize the training they have received under OPC. Also, the leadership of the NURTW has come under the control of politicians and they use them to cause violence in order to have their ways.*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (a)/ June 15 2007

The same interviewee also stated that prominent gang leaders controlling certain neighbourhoods are also engaged by politicians for political support and utilization. And thus when gang leaders engage one another in violent actions, they tend to be identified with political trends in Ibadan. The interviewee gave the illustration below:

*For example the violence at Popoyemoja<sup>15</sup> was actually a fight for supremacy over the local drug (Indian hemp) market. But it took up a political dimension in the eyes of the people because one of the contenders was working for PDP while the other was for ANPP.*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (a)/ June 15 2007

Still, another interviewee also claimed that:

*Lamidi Adesina was the first Governor of Oyo State to use members of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) to perpetrate violence to accomplish his selfish will...*

Oral Interview/ANPP supporter/ June 17 2007

Yet, another interviewee further stated:

*Political violence in Ibadan is becoming more and more structured. It is such that the NURTW is now being used. The NURTW is becoming an instrument in the hands of politicians to clinch and remain in power. And any party the NURTW supports, it is ready to support even with violence. This is because NURTW leaders need politician's support to remain in power while politicians need NURTW's support to foment trouble against opponents. During Ladoja's tenure, there was polarization of the group as Ladoja made Tawa the chairman of the Union. The other faction led by Alhaji Akinsola (Tokyo) was in hot contention with Tawa. He therefore supported Ladoja's opponents. Tokyo came back to office when Ladoja was impeached only for him to leave the stage again for Tawa when Ladoja was reinstated. Upon Ladoja's relinquishment of power, there has been series of violent clashes between the two groups even as the new Governor Akala's government supports Tokyo. Beyond this, you also find out that political patrons play host to a lot of jobless people who also serve as potential tools for violence.*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (b)/June 25 2007

The data above show the network for the utilization of political violence in Ibadan. Indeed the Oodua Peoples'Congress (OPC) came into existence as a Yoruba pressure group following the annulment of the June 12 1993 election. It soon took up violent tendencies against perceived enemies of the Yoruba race with a vision for social and political independence for the Yoruba nation (Adebanwi, 2005; Nolte, 2004; Agbaje, 2003; Akinyemi, 2003; Babawale, 2003; Akinyele, 2001). As the call for Yoruba supremacy and political independence gradually whittles down, and with relative peace among the two main OPC splinter groups as rightly stated by an interviewee quoted above, there is a surplus reserve of potential foot soldiers that could readily provide

---

<sup>15</sup> Popoyemoja is a community spread between Ibadan South-East and South-West Local Government Areas.

services to contending members of the political class. They may not necessarily work as OPC members, but since they have been equipped with the training and other necessary wherewithal to foment trouble to subjugate the opposition, they become veritable tools in the hands of interested politicians, and former comrades may therefore fall under different political interest groups.

Likewise, members of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) have also become particularly instrumentally useful for political violence in Ibadan. This is made possible by the political factionalization of NURTW especially under Governor Ladoja. In reaction to the support of NURTW chairman, Alhaji Akinsola (popularly called Tokyo), for former Governor Lamidi Adesina, Governor Ladoja attempted curtailing Tokyo's powers, by putting a loyal man in place. He, therefore, propped up another prominent NURTW official, Tawa, as a replacement to Tokyo. Ever since, there have been contest for supremacy between the two leaders and their supporters over the control of motor garages where union<sup>16</sup> executives make large amount of funds that they do not have to account for.

Meanwhile, data gotten through personal observation and informal interaction with transport workers also show that firmly connected to the NURTW is a class of money extractors popularly called *Agbero* who work in close conjunction with the leadership of NURTW to extract funds from commercial vehicle drivers for onward delivery to union leaders. Ideally, this was not supposed to be the work of *Agbero* as they were only supposed to assist drivers in calling passengers into their vehicles. Drivers are expected thereafter to compensate them financially for their efforts. It was a system which may have emerged out of the deplorable economic situation of the country to provide means of livelihood for unskilled and unemployed individuals around motor parks. However, the system has been hijacked over the years by the leadership of the NURTW who has made it into a system peopled by hardened miscreants, street urchins, thugs and other categories of people of questionable character. As the *Agbero* goes to work, he has a certain target he has to remit, out of which his stipend will be paid by the NURTW boss that employed them. Otherwise, the *Agbero* loses his 'job' and may also be physically assaulted with attendant injury and possible death. In order to forestall this, he too goes all out to make sure he forcefully extracts the required 'fee' from recalcitrant drivers, who are made to part with as much as N300<sup>17</sup> each per day (personal discussion with commercial drivers). This indeed translates to multiple millions of naira accruing to the coffers of the leadership of the NURTW per day. Inasmuch as this system seems exploitative, it has remained with the NURTW, while drivers only make subtle and inaudible protest for fear of reprisal attack.

Thus the enormous amount of economic resources readily available to NURTW officials makes their offices/positions very attractive, such that they

---

<sup>16</sup> 'Union' as used here and elsewhere in the paper means the NURTW

<sup>17</sup> This translates to 300 Naira (2.3 Dollars).

have to fight, kill and secure the support and protection of the government in power to remain in office. Hence, whereas Governor Ladoja favoured Tawa, his opposition, led by Chief Adedibu, opted for Tokyo. Thus these two factional leaders are used not only to fight for supremacy at motor parks, but also to terrorize opposing political elements. The violent clashes that Ibadan witnessed since the impeachment impasse up to the 2007 General Elections period witnessed the active participation of NURTW members. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the sophistication of their actions may not be unconnected with the training many of them may have received through OPC<sup>18</sup> tutelage. This is indeed a clear case of 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society...' as postulated by Augustine (2001).

What happens, therefore, is that the political class organizes its violent arm around organized groups dominated by underprivileged members of the society in dire need of social and economic survival. It thus secures the loyalty of the leadership and/or individual members who become 'foot soldiers' when they are called to arm. The police is hapless since it is also under the firm control of the political class which uses violence to gain dominance. The Police may only work against actors of violence when it is the opposition that seems to gain the upper hand. This was particularly the reality during Ladoja-Adedibu imbroglio when Ladoja's opposition to former President Obasanjo's Third Term bid pitched him against Obasanjo. Hence, the violent excesses of Adedibu were simply overlooked while law enforcement agents acted against Ladoja's men who tried to engage in counter-violence for self-defense. This definitely has implications for the just completed 2007 General election. The next section discusses how violence was used for political gain during the 2007 General Elections.

### **Violence and the 2007 General Elections**

With recourse to violence for political domination among Ibadan political elite, the approach to the 2007 General Elections increased the propensity of violent actions around the city. The political tussle was principally between governor Ladoja and his erstwhile patron and deputy governor, Chief Adedibu and Chief Alao Akala respectively, who ironically belonged to the same party with Governor Ladoja. It largely involved attacks and reprisal attacks on lieutenants of both political divides. The attacks were carried out not only out of the need to curtail each other's coercive force and/or for vengeance, but also to limit opponents' political coverage and influence. According to an interviewee:

*Thugs were used as a sort of instrument to punish or correct politicians and opponents. They would just say e re naa, e ree gbe wa (go and beat him; go and bring him)<sup>19</sup>... The use of violence was not*

---

<sup>18</sup> OPC had a large number of its members most especially from the low class, unskilled, semi-skilled and unemployed members of the society.

<sup>19</sup> 'Go and bring him' actually means go and kidnap him'.

*limited to one party, but it was utilized by all the major contending groups. For example, when you know that if Alhaji Lagbaja<sup>20</sup> is not there on the day of the election, your chances of winning is certain, few days to the election, you get him kidnapped to have your way in that ward...However, due to the strong presence of the military on the election day, most of the people who would have caused violence were cubed. There was more violence in the build up; during campaigns, violence played a very significant role...*

Oral Interview/PDP supporter (a)/ June 15 2007

Another interviewee states:

*I, personally, was neither surprised nor shocked. The masses initially wanted to come out enmass to vote for the candidates of their choice, based on the awareness that had been created. But on the Election Day, thugs went around snatching ballot boxes and wielding dangerous weapons to attack and scare people away. The police only looked on; they did nothing to save the situation. In fact, where I live, I witnessed how ballot boxes were snatched, people were chased away and the police did nothing to salvage the situation. They only watched as events unfolded. In this kind of situation, you do not expect people to stick their necks out and be killed. The people who died for Abiola during June 12 crisis have died in vain. Meanwhile, Abiola's family members are still enjoying. Even Abiola's Vice Presidential candidate is the new Secretary to the Government of the Federation. So nobody is ready to die for this country again because at the end of the day, there would be no compensation.*

Oral Interview/AC supporter/June 17 2007

Simply put, the machinery put in place by the political class was not only to intimidate the opposition, but the citizenry as well. In a situation of widespread insecurity and possible loss of life, the will of the electorate to curtail rigging, preserve and save the democratic process is put in shambles. The electorate whose welfare, interests and concerns should be of primary concern in the democratic process is itself cut off out of fear of the unknown. She/he is therefore forced to view the electoral/political process as the preserve of politicians, which she/he is not supposed to delve into to avoid pain, injury and possible death. And so the party that has greater violence to unleash is allowed to carry the day.

This was unfortunately the case in Ibadan during the 2007 General Elections. Indeed, the elections had been conducted with the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) securing victory while opponents have gone to the

---

<sup>20</sup> *Lagbaja* is a pseudo name used among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria to make illustrative reference to personalities that a speaker may not want to name or is non-existent.

Election tribunal to seek redress; it is important to note, however, that what has come out as electoral result may actually be a caricature or outright false representation of the people's will. This definitely has negative implications for Nigeria's democratic process.

### **Conclusion**

Indeed, Nigeria has joined the comity of democratic nations with the hope that the ideals of democracy will be upheld and sustained. However, the signals that political events in Ibadan are showing are that what we actually have is a pseudo-democratic system 'sustained' by violence. It is not one primarily aimed at improving the welfare of the people. Rather, it is a system the political class craves for in order to gain access to state resources to finance patronage, patrimonialism and for personal gains. This is why violence has to be used to silence the opposition and actualize primitive and exploitative acquisition. Thus, what the 2007 General Elections have brought forth for Ibadan in particular, and Oyo state in general, is a system sustained by hoodlums for the sake of the political class and not the electorate.

### **References**

- Abubakar, D. 2001. 'Ethnic Identity, Democratization, and the Future of the African State: Lessons from Nigeria' *African Issues*, Vol. 29 No.1/2 pp. 31-36.
- Adebanwi, W. 2005. 'The Carpenter's Revolt: Youth Violence and the Reinvention of Culture in Nigeria' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43 No. 3 pp. 339-365.
- Agbaje, A. 2002. 'Personal rule and Regional Politics: Ibadan under Military Regimes, 1986-1996' in J.I. Guyer, L. Denzer and A. Agbaje (eds.) *Money struggles and City Life: Devaluation in Ibadan and other Urban Centres in Nigeria, 1986-1996*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Agbaje, A. 2003. 'The Historical Antecedent of The Phenomenon of Ethnic Militias in Nigeria' in T. Babawale (ed.) *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, pp.1-15.
- Ajayi, O. 2007. 'AC is Behind Violence in South West'—Raimi *Vanguard* (June 8) Retrieved on June 12 from [www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/politics/june07/08062007/p308062007.html](http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/politics/june07/08062007/p308062007.html)
- Akinyele, I.B. 1981. *Iwe Itan Ibadan Ati Die Ninu Awon Ilu Agbegbe Re Bi Iwo, Osogbo ati Ikorun*. Ibadan: Board Publications Ltd.
- Akinyele, R.T. 2001. 'Ethnic Militancy and National Stability in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Oodua People's Congress' *African Affairs*. 100: 623-640.

- Akinyemi, B.A. 2003. 'Ethnic Militias and the National Question in Nigeria' in T. Babawale (ed.) *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, pp. 16-23.
- Awe, B.A. 1964. *The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power in the Nineteenth Century* A Ph.D. Thesis in Sommerville College, Oxford University.
- Babawale, T. 2003. 'The State, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Governance in Post Military Nigeria,' in T. Babawale. (ed.) *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, pp. 201-211.
- Bates, R., Greif, A. and Singh, S. 2002. 'Organizing Violence' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 46 No. 5 pp. 599-628.
- Braathen, E., Boas, M. and Saether, G. 2000, (eds.). *Ethnicity Kills? The Politics of War, Peace and Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Buvinic, M. and Morrison, A. 2000. 'Living in a more Violent World' *Foreign Policy*, No. 118 pp. 58-72.
- Chabal, P and Daloz, J. 1999. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Craft, C. and Smaldone, J. 2002. 'The Arms Trade and the Incidence of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1967-97' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39 No. 6 pp. 693-710.
- Creighton, A.L. 2000. Democracy in E.F. Borgatta and R.J.V. Montgomery (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA., Vol. 1. 601-609.
- Egwaikhide, F. and Isumonah, V. 2001. 'Nigeria Paralysed: Socio-Political Life Under General Sani Abacha' *African Development*, Vol. XXVI Nos. 3&4 pp. 219-241.
- Hart, C. 1993. 'The Nigerian Elections of 1993' *Africa*, Vol. 63 No. 3 pp. 397-418.
- Ibrahim, J. 2006. *Transforming Elections in West Africa into Opportunities for Political Choice* Keynote Address, Nordic Africa Institute Conference on Post-Conflict Elections in West Africa: Challenges for Democracy and Reconstruction, Accra, Ghana, 15-17 May 2006.
- Ihonvbere, J. 1996. 'Are Things Falling Apart? The Military and the Crisis of Democratisation in Nigeria' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 2 pp. 193-225.
- Ikelegbe, A. 2001. 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society: Evidence from Nigeria' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39 No. 1 pp. 1-24.
- Jackson, L. 1972. 'Nigeria: The Politics of the First Republics' *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 3 pp. 277-302.
- Kalyvas, S. 2003. 'The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars' *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 1 No. 3 pp. 475-494.
- MacGaffey, W. 2000. 'Aesthetics and Politics of Violence in Central Africa' *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 1 pp. 63-75.

- Manent, P. 2003. 'Modern Democracy as a System of Separations' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 114-125.
- Mayall, J. 2000. 'Democracy and international society' *International Affairs* Vol. 76 No. 1 pp. 61-75.
- Mbui, F. 2007. 'PDP Synonymous with Violence—Rep Candidate' *Daily Sun* (Feb. 8) Retrieved on June 12, 2007 from <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/politics/2007/feb/08/politics-08-2-2007-003.htm>
- Mueller, J. 2003. 'Policing the Remnants of War' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40 No. 5 pp. 507-518.
- Newsbury, C. 2002. 'States at War: Confronting Conflict in Africa' *African Studies Review*, Vol. 45 No. 1 pp. 1-20.
- Nolte, I. 2004. 'Identity and Violence: The Politics of Youth in Ijebu-Remo, Nigeria' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42 No. 1 pp. 61-89.
- Obi, C.I. 2008. *No Choice, But Democracy: Pricing the People Out of Politics in Africa?* Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University and Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala.
- Okonkwo, O. 2007. 'Abacha: Lessons from Hell' *Saturday Independent* (June 10) Retrieved on June 23 2007 from <http://www.independentngonline.com/?c=139&a=28118>
- Omobowale, A.O. 2006. *Political Clientelism and Rural Development in Selected Communities in Ibadan, Nigeria* A Ph.D. Thesis in the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Omobowale, A.O. and Olutayo, A.O. 2007. 'Chief Lamidi Adedibu and Patronage Politics in Nigeria' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 45 No. 3 pp. 1-20.
- Osaigboye, N. 2007. 'Will Yar'Adua free Al-Mustapha?' *Nigerian Tribune* (Feb. 06) Retrieved on June 23, 2007 from <http://www.tribune.com.ng/06022007/mosaic%20.html>
- Pereira, A. and Davies, E. 2000. 'New Patterns of Militarized Violence and Coercion in the Americas' *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27 No. 2 pp. 3-17.
- Post, K.W.J. and Jenkins, G.D. 1973. *The Price of Liberty: personality and politics in colonial Nigeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reno, W. 1999. 'Crisis and (No) Reform in Nigeria's Politics' *African Studies Review*, Vol. 42 No. 1 pp. 105-124.
- Ryzhkov, V. 2004 'The Liberal Debacle'. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15 No. 3 pp. 52-58.
- Schock, K. 2003. 'Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists' *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 36 No. 4 pp. 705-712.
- Sklar, R. 1965. 'Contradictions in the Nigerian Political System' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 2 pp. 201-213.
- Solway, J. 2003. "'In the Eye of the Storm': The State and Non-Violence in Southern Africa (Botswana) *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 76 No. 3 pp. 485-495.

- Watson, R. 2005. *Civil Disorder Is the Disease of Ibadan: Ija Igboro Larun Ibadan*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Williams, G. 2003. ‘Democracy as Idea and Democracy as Process in Africa’ *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 88 No. 4 pp. 339-360.