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FROM VIOLENCE TO PEACE: THE NATIONAL UNION OF ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS AND POLITICAL THUGGERY IN IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA, 1999-2015

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Abstract

The activities of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Ibadan, Oyo State in the Fourth Republic culminated to severe acts of political thuggery and violence especially during the period preceding the emergence of Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi as the governor of the state. During the reign of terror of the Union, residents of Ibadan witnessed violent clashes among members of the Union almost on daily basis. These resulted into scores of deaths and injuries inflicted on both the members of the Union and residents of the city. This study examines the NURTW in relation to political thuggery in Ibadan, Oyo state from 1999-2015. The major objectives of the study are to examine and analyze the NURTW as a principal source of political thuggery and violence in Ibadan from 1999 to 2015, to examine the factors which induced members of the Union to perpetrate acts of political thuggery and violence and to find out the implications of political thuggery and violent acts of the Union on peace and stability in Ibadan. This paper was situated within a theoretical framework of the culture of violence theory. Data was however, derived from both secondary and primary sources. Sources of secondary data included journal articles, textbooks, newspaper articles and organizational publications while primary data was collected through interviews conducted with some members of NURTW in Ibadan. Findings revealed that the activities of NURTW from 1999 generated acts of political thuggery and violence which affected public order in Ibadan and peaceful co-existence of the members of the Union. It was also discovered that the nature of party politics among others induced political thuggery and violence in Ibadan. It was however, suggested among other recommendations that shelving politics of acrimony and bitterness will go a long way in curbing political thuggery and violence in the NURTW.

Keywords: Crime; Culture of violence; Godfatherism; Political thuggery

Introduction

The National Union of Road Transport workers (NURTW) is a union of individuals, mainly males who make use of different types of medium of transportation such as motor cycles, buses, taxi cabs and tricycles for moving passengers and goods from one destination to the other, both intra and inter-state (Olubomehin, 2012:235). As a Union under the transportation sector, the NURTW today occupies an important position in the county's economic sector. The NURTW is one of the highest employers of labour in the economy with about 1.5 million members throughout the country (The NURTW Diary, 2011). With these, the NURTW forms a sound basis for economic development and prosperity in the country. The NURTW has Secretariats in the 36 states of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory. For easy administration, the

Secretariats are established in units, branches, zones and states. For easy coordination and administration, the Secretariats are managed by Secretaries and appointed officers headed by a Chairman (Olubomehin, 2012:235). Each of the secretariats has between ten to twenty officials who oversee the day-to-day coordination and administration of local branches under each state's council's jurisdiction (Olubomehin, 2012:235). The Union contributes to the growth of the national economy through the payment of various duties for hackney permits, drivers' license, vehicle licenses, plate numbers (Olubomehin, 2012:235) and the sale of tickets to members of the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN). The major of objective however, behind the creation of the NURTW is to promote the economic welfare of its members. The activities of the Union since its inception have contributed to the positive development of the union itself in particular and the economic development of the country in general.

However, events leading to the emergence of the Fourth Republic particularly the protest which trailed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the politics of godfatherism in the Fourth Republic changed the dimension of the operations and activities of the NURTW. The activities of the NURTW in Oyo state, most especially in the years preceding the emergence of Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi as governor of the state was particularly brutal and turbulent. The activities of the Union were majorly characterised by political thuggery which revolved around killing, maiming, abduction and other social vices. Major parts of Ibadan, the Oyo state Capital were kept under siege during clashes between rival groups of the Union (Akinola, 2015). As a matter of fact, innocent citizens who are found around the area usually fall victim of attacks. An intense observer of the activities of the NURTW in Ibadan, Oyo state since 1999 cannot but conclude that the activities of the Union have been antithetical to peace and political stability. This paper examines the NURTW vis-a-vis political thuggery in Ibadan Oyo state Nigeria form 1999 to 2015. The major objectives of the study therefore, are to (1) examine and analyse the NURTW as major source of political thuggery in Ibadan from 1999 to 2015, (2) to examine the factors which motivates members of the Union to perpetrate violence and political thuggery (3) to find out the implications of the activities of the Union on peace and stability in Ibadan. This paper is divided into four parts. The first part consists of the introduction and conceptual discourse of violence and political thuggery. The second part consists of the theoretical framework. The third part consist of discussion of the NURTW and political thuggery in Ibadan from 1999-2015 and the factors which motivates the Union to perpetrate violence and political thuggery. The fourth segment focuses on the implications of violence and political thuggery on peace and stability in Ibadan, Oyo state and conclusion.

Violence and Political Thuggery: A Conceptual Discourse

Violence

Violence as a concept is vague. The vagueness of the concept may have accounted for its multi-dimensional nature. Violence is multi-dimensional. Violence can be domestic, criminal, interpersonal, proactive or reactive (Meadow, 2009:232). Based on these typologies, the concept suffers from lack of definitional consensus. As a result of this, scholarly perspectives offered on the concept are largely dependent on the socio-

cultural milieu of the scholars who attempt to define the concept. Violence as a concept has been found to be synonymous with social disorder (Babawale, 2003; Aniwofose, 2000). Social disorder according to Erumke (2008) can manifest in the state of mind of groups or people vis-a-vis their actions, inactions and a times their reactions to the system. Violence to Corsini (1999:4) is "the manifestation of hostility and rage through physical force directed against persons or property". Violence in another perspective signifies the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (Krug, 2002). It has also been seen as the use of force to achieve compliance and obedience in a particular system (Akinbade, 2004:214). Hook (1934) cited in Nwolise (2007:158) viewed violence as the "illegal employment of methods of physical coercion for personal or group ends". In a similar perspective Audi (1971) cited in Nwolise (2007:158) lamented that violence whether legitimately or illegitimately used is "the unjustified use of force". This definition connotes the fact that violence under any circumstances cannot be seen as reasonable. It has been observed by Nwolise (2007:158) that common to all the definition above is that whether violence is seen as legal or illegal, reasonable or unreasonable, the fact remains that violence is the use of physical force against persons or objects. The definitions above suggest that violence majorly manifest in physical form.

Conversely, however, violence according to some scholars does not manifest in physical terms alone. Galtung (1991:10) described violence as manifesting in physical, psychological and structural forms. He described physical violence as consisting of physical attacks such as actual attacks on properties and persons. Psychological manifestations of violence take the form of causing and living in fear, terrorising people and the use of and publishing of derogatory materials to blackmail people. Structural dimension of violence involves political oppression, deprivation of citizens' rights (such as freedom of speech and choice) and economic exploitation (Galtung, 1991:10). It was further claimed that structural violence is in most cases indirect and can be more destructive than the physical and psychological dimensions of violence (Galtung, 1991:10). Nwolise (2007:158) opined that violence should not be perceived in physical terms alone, instead it should be viewed wholly as comprising physical, psychological and structural forms. For the purpose of this paper however, violence is defined as the use of any form of physical, psychological or structural use of force or threat of it by a social group or individual against people to cause harm or blackmail in order to achieve a particular aim or ambition.

Political Thuggery

Political thuggery is a concept closely related to violence. Violence does not just occur in a vacuum, it is perpetrated by a set of people who are mostly of deviant character. They are perpetrated by thugs who are people hired to treat other individuals in a brutal and merciless manner. Thuggery as a deviant behaviour is related to social vices such as killing, assassination, kidnapping, maiming, hooliganism, gansterism, touting and wanton destruction of properties. Political thugs perpetrate violent acts which are usually directed political opponents to achieve perceived political aim. Therefore, political

thuggery as a concept connotes the ''illegitimate and violent means of seeking political power with a view to subverting national opinion for parochial ends through self imposition'' (Howell, 2004). In another conceptualization political thuggery is defined as ''any negative behaviour associated with violence, hooliganism, kidnapping, murder, assassination, gang action and ''troubleshooting', that is connected or related to any political process'' (Esiri, 2016:1). It observed that political thugs are often criminals or social delinquents who are strongly instrumental to the distortion of electoral results, snatching of ballot boxes, and assassination of political opponents. These they do under the influence of drugs and supernatural powers (Esiri, 2016:1). In a similar vein, Shankyula (2011:29) defined political thuggery as implying acts of thuggery relating to the political process. By this, he meant that political thuggery refer to ''any act of intimidation violence, hooliganism, brutality or gangsterism, whether leading to death or not, calculated to pose a threat or scale political opponent or perceived political opponents before, during or after elections and aimed at achieving an undue political result or advantage'' (Shankyula, 2011:29).

According to Shankyula (2011:29) political thuggery is mostly perpetrated during elections and may take the forms of acts aimed at inciting and causing others to act in a disorderly and violent manner, possession or usage of offensive weapons with the aim of scaring away or intimidating voters, snatching or destruction of election materials, ballot stuffing and acts of undue influence such as that which compels any person to vote or refrain from voting against his or her will (Shankyula, 2011:29). From the forgoing however, political thuggery can be described as acts or forms of violence perpetrated by a social group comprising deviants who are mainly hired and sponsored by political godfathers during election periods to attack people, destroy properties and disrupt the electoral process so as to achieve their selfish and parochial ambition.

The NURTW, Ibadan and the ''Culture of Violence Theory''

The culture of violence theory is one of the sub-cultural theories of violence. The proponents of the theory (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967) contend that ''within large, complex, and pluralistic societies, sub-groups learn and develop specialized norms and values through differential associations and organizations that emphasize and justify the use of physical force above and beyond that which is regarded as "normative" of the culture as a whole''. The culture of violence theory views violence on the basis of larger societal norms and structure (Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky, 2003:47). This according to Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky (2003:47) entails two perspectives, namely; the cultural approval of violence and the sub-culture of violence. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) argued that criminal violence may be reflective of an inconsistency between a sub-cultural norm and the norm of the larger society. They further argue that violence is more pronounced among those social groups whose sub-cultural behaviour, norms and values dictates aggressive solutions to problems (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). It is further argued that ''members of any social group establish their self-images and then their relationship to others through the use of one another as reference'' in this respect, sub-cultural values are strengthened (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967:102). To buttress this, Brookman (2005:145) lamented that ''In-group affiliation leads to internalization of group values and norms of behaviour''. It is contended that complex societies is made up

of heterogeneous and groups in completion with one another and whose perception of right or wrong are not the same. Based on this therefore, some groups will sanction illegitimate behaviour to a larger extent than other people who associate with the values and norms of such group and who may approve illegitimate acts including violence through the process of socialization (Brookman, 2005:108).

Culture of violence according to Jones (2003:145) may provide the rationale for the structural and direct forms of violence. Direct violence refer to what is usually judged as case of criminality i.e. phenomenon that happens in a specific time and place while structural violence has to do with inequalities and discriminations which are inherent in social system and legal frameworks which are capable of imposing serious negative effects on lives of people (Galtung, 1991). Violence in relation to Ibadan and the NURTW is not a completely new phenomenon. The historical antecedent of the ancient town is embedded in what can be described as culture of violence. The phenomenon of violence seems to have been incorporated in the socio-political culture of the city since it was established in the 1820's. The city of Ibadan located on the coordinates of 7^0N 23^0E/7, 23 of the Equator derived its name from the phrase ''eba odan'' literarily meaning that city which was founded near the Savannah (Ademowo, 2015:91). Ibadan in the nineteenth century emerged as a city of warlords building its political domain around military structure and warfare and rapidly expanded its empire to major parts of what is today known as the South-Western part of Nigeria. A major factor in the formation of Ibadan, Ifa, (a powerful Yoruba oracle consulted every year to predict what the next year will look like) when consulted it predicted that Ibadan will breed violence and hostility (Ajala, 2006 cited in Animasawum, 2013). Ever since, city-disorder (Ija igboro) has become a norm in the city's socio-political life and mark of political identity of Ibadan (Animasawum, 2013). According to Ayokunle (2007:6) the institutionalization of violence in Ibadan pre-colonial socio-political relations was so much embedded in the Ibadan social consciousness that it reflected in the town's praise song. He further commented that as reflected in the praise songs, Ibadan's political strength and power were based on social disorder and warfare. This, in his view, accounted for continual social disorder and warfare with neighbouring settlements (Ayokunle, 2007:6).

The NURTW and Political Thuggery in Ibadan, 1999-2015

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic the members of the NURTW has been notorious for violence and political thuggery. The NURTW in Ibadan is a professional association formed in the Second Republic to liberate transport workers from extortion and oppression by the traffic wardens and policemen (Animasawun, 2009: 16). The size, membership and the command structure of the Union according to Animasawun (2009: 16) have been factors which have made the Union a force to reckon with in terms of socio-political mobilization and mass action. Taking into consideration the role the Union played in the democratic struggle from the mid-eighties to the late nineties, Animasawun (Undated: 16) observed that whenever the members of the union worked in concert with pro-democracy groups, protest had far reaching impact on the economy. However, the Union which was formed to protect the interest of members soon became instrument of violence and political thuggery in the hands of politicians and political godfathers alike. This according to Animasawun (2013:17) arises from the fact that

thuggery as a concept connotes the "illegitimate and violent means of seeking political power with a view to subverting national opinion for parochial ends through self imposition" (Howell, 2004). In another conceptualization political thuggery is defined as "any negative behaviour associated with violence, hooliganism, kidnapping, murder, assassination, gang action and "troubleshooting', that is connected or related to any political process" (Esiri, 2016:1). It observed that political thugs are often criminals or social delinquents who are strongly instrumental to the distortion of electoral results, snatching of ballot boxes, and assassination of political opponents. These they do under the influence of drugs and supernatural powers (Esiri, 2016:1). In a similar vein, Shankyula (2011:29) defined political thuggery as implying acts of thuggery relating to the political process. By this, he meant that political thuggery refer to "any act of intimidation violence, hooliganism, brutality or gangsterism, whether leading to death or not, calculated to pose a threat or scale political opponent or perceived political opponents before, during or after elections and aimed at achieving an undue political result or advantage" (Shankyula, 2011:29).

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"whoever is the Chairman of the Union has absolute powers and commands unqualified loyalty and obedience from members throughout the state". This makes the Union readymade source of political foot soldiers for anyone who aspires to become the Governor of the state (Animasawun, 2013:17). The 1999 gubernatorial election in the state however, produced Alhaji Lam Adesina as the governor of the Oyo state. Prior to the 1993 when Alhaji Lateef Akinsola took over the reins of affairs of the NURTW from Chief James Ojerinde who succeeded Alhaji Bashiru Adigun, Tokyo was chairman of inter-state unit at Agodi Gate, Ibadan and was deputy to Ojewunmi. During this period the activities of the union were not inimical to the society. During the reign of Chief James Ojerinde members of the Union enjoyed loan facilities approved by Ojerinde. Generally, his tenure was relatively peaceful (Akinola, 2015).

However, from 1993 when Alhaji Lateef Akinsola assumed the position of the Chairman of the Union, violence became a norm of the Union. Immediately he assumed office, "Tokyo" banned commercial vehicles belonging to his former boss Ojerinde and those of his loyalist. Tokyo's thugs wandered the streets searching for the loyalist of the former Chairman. They destroyed and towed vehicles of those perceived to be loyalists to the former Chairman (Akinsola, 2015). The reign of "Tokyo" as the Chairman of the Union was particularly turbulent, violence was the order of the day. Members of the union forcefully and brutally overthrow the leadership of garages and motor parks at the slightest provocation. By the time preparations started for the 2003 elections, the NURTW been factionalized into two opposing camps (Animasawun, 2013:15). One camp was led by "Tokyo", while the other was led by Alhaji Wasiu Abubakar (also known as Tawa), a loyalist of Ojewumi and one of the few who frowned at Tokyo's misuse of power. However, "Tokyo" enjoyed the support of the then governor Lam Adesina. The support Tokyo enjoyed from Lam Adesina has been attributed to the fact that both Lam Adesina and "Tokyo" shared the same cell when they were both detained for their involvement in pro-democracy struggle in the late 1998 by the then Military Administrator of the state COMPOL Amen Oyakhire during the regime of the late Military Administrator, General Sanni Abacha (Animasawun, 2013:15). However, Alhaji Wasiu Ạbubakar got the support of the then People's Democratic Party Gubernatorial, Senator Rasheed Adewolu Ladoja. With the fictionalization of the Union and the politicians supporting opposing camps, the battle line was drawn for a tense struggle for the leadership of the NURTW. Consequently, the two camps resorted to violence as they became instruments in the hands of the politicians for politically tormenting one another.

After series of violent battles between the two factions of the Union which at one point or the other disrupted social and economic activities in the city and with the eventual triumph of Ladoja at the polls, Alhaji Wasiu Abubakar became the Chairman of the Union. His tenure was however, short-lived. The reign of "Tawa" was put to an end by the "Tokyo" led faction of the Union barely after about 30 months in office (Akinsola, 2015). He achieved this fit with the assistance of the self acclaimed strong man of Ibadan politics, the late Chief Lamidi Adedibu who was the godfather of Senator Rasheed Ladoja. After the 2003 gubernatorial elections, the romance between the leadership of the NURTW and Chief Adedibu became solidified. Adedibu who have succeeded in making sure that his political godson Ladoja became the governor of the state had the leadership of the Union on his side. The Union stood as his standing army

and dealt seriously with opponents of Chief Adedibu. However, the cordial relationship which existed between the then incumbent governor, Senator Rasheed Ladoja and his political godfather soon turned sour when the former reneged on what can be described as breach of agreement between the two. According to the Human Rights Watch (2007) Adedibu described Ladoja as an ingrate. In Adedibu's view Ladoja is an ingrate because he refused to reward him for the role he played in the emergence of Ladoja as the governor. The Human Rights Watch (2007) asserted that "Adedibu supported Ladoja as the PDP candidate in the 2003 elections. Adedibu helped to rig, partly by providing the muscle needed to fix the polls". Ladoja while confirming his fact lamented that once he assumed office, he tried to break away from the shackles of his godfather (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Ladoja claimed that the relationship between himself and Adedibu turned sour because he did not allow Adedibu to have access to the State's Treasury. He alleged that Adedibu had earlier requested that 25% of the government's security vote be paid to him every month (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In addition to this, Ladoja did not allow Adedibu to have any input in the nomination of candidates for commissioner. Ladoja's actions were however, criticised. Chief Christopher Alao Akala (who later became governor) blamed Ladoja. He claimed that: "Ladoja should have involved him in forming the government and that "You cannot exclude this man from decision-making." In a similar vein, former governor of Oyo state, Chief Kolapo Ishola in blaming Ladoja said that: "the problem with Ladoja is that he did not consult Baba on appointments, he did not ask whether he had candidates for appointments, for patronage, for contracts. Adedibu did not have a say, he was angry" (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Based on the above, bitter rivalry broke out between the two. Adedibu withdrew the support he had been giving to Ladoja and consequently Ladoja seizes to be his Political godson. The scenario got to a crescendo when attempts were made to impeach the Governor in 2005. Tensions between the two political figures led to the division of the State House of Assembly. 18 out of the 32 members of the state legislature pitched their tent with the Lamidi Adedibu while the remaining took side with the governor. The first attempt to impeach Ladoja was a fiasco and it ended in armed melee on the floor of the State House of Assembly. Members of the state legislature freely used all sorts of arms either to avoid been armed or to inflict injury on opponents. It was however, observed that no arrest was made by the police (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The second attempt to impeach Ladoja met with fierce resistance from political thugs in support of Ladoja. The thugs tried to prevent the pro-Adedibu lawmakers from securing access to the State House of Assembly. The ensuing gun battle between the police team which escorted the pro-Adedibu lawmakers to the Assembly lasted for about one hour it was reported that at least one civil servant was wounded in the shootout which caused panic throughout the Ibadan city (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Eventually when the pro-Adedibu legislators gained access into the Assembly, they voted to constitute to constitute a panel of enquiry to investigate allegations of misconduct including corruption against Ladoja. Immediately the panel was constituted a large number of pro-Adedibu political thugs stormed Government House causing pandemonium, looting and destroying the governor's office. The report of the panel indicted the governor. He was consequently impeached and replaced by his Deputy Alao Akala. However, in December, 2006 the Supreme Court nullified the impeachment claiming that it was done in the most

unconstitutional manner partly based on the fact that it was not supported by the required two-thirds majority of the legislature (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Before the reinstatement of Ladoja the entire city was thrown into confusion and commotion as a result of the frequent violent clashes which was majorly fuelled by members of the NURTW. The Akala administration accused the factional leader of the Union, Lateef Akinsola of the murder of an Ogbomoso-based leader of the Union. As a result of this Lateef Akinsola was remanded in prison custody. During his stay in the prison, Akala gained the support of Alhaji Lateef Salako (Eleweomo) and Alahji Mukaila Lamidi (Auxilliary) (Akinsola, 2015). After Ladoja won the battle against his unconstitutional impeachment, he made sure the release of 'Tokyo' was fast tracked and eventually he was able to secure is release from prison. This development infuriated Adedibu, therefore, the battle line was drawn between the supporters of Adedibu and those of Ladoja. During this period 'Eleweomo' and 'Auxiliary' had taken over the leadership of the Union. Due to this development political struggle between the governor and his former political godfather was renewed. The political figures resorted to the various camps of the polarised State Chapter of the NURTW in Ibadan to draw political thugs. The Union was a primary and readymade source of political thugs to both Ladoja and Adedibu. The battle between the political stakeholders was fought majorly on the streets of Ibadan and major motor parks. The thugs freely made use of all sorts of weapons including cutlasses and locally made guns which were believed to be provided by their sponsors or godfathers. A former Oyo state Senator, Chief Lekan Balogun who tried to mediate in the dispute between Ladoja and Adedibu in 2007 fell victim of the violent acts of the members of the Union. Senator Lekan Balogun was almost beaten to death by the members of NURTW who were loyal to Adedibu (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

The build up to the 2007 gubernatorial election was particularly characterized by violence and political thuggery. Both Ladoja and Adedibu sought political relevance. While Ladoja was striving to win his party's ticket to contest the 2007 gubernatorial election, Adedibu sought Federal might to claim the sole ticket for his adopted political godson Alao Akala. The conflicting interest of these political bigwigs resulted to violent clashes and bloodshed between the supporters of Adedibu and those of Ladoja. The violent clashes were spearheaded by the by the two factions of the Union each led by 'Tokyo' and 'Tawa'. However, at a PDP rally held on the 4th of February, 2007 in Osun state, Akala emerged as the flag bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party in what can be described as a violent political rally where at least four people were reportedly killed. Having lost the hope of contesting and in a bid to ensure that Akala did not win the gubernatorial election, Ladoja implored all his supporters to cast their vote for the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) governorship flag bearer, Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi. However, through a gubernatorial poll that was characterised by massive rigging, fraud, ballot box snatching, Akala emerged as the governor of Oyo state in the 2007 gubernatorial election held in the state (Oyekanmi. 2011:177). It was reported that thugs freely attacked polling stations, stole ballot boxes and attacked voters who were waiting to cast their votes. Several voters were shot or stabbed while trying to cast their ballots in Ogbomosho and Ibadan. Pro-Adedibu's political thugs were reported to be at the fore-front of the violent attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Abiola Ajimobi

challenged the victory of Akala at the tribunal but lost. According to (Oyekanmi, 2011:177) after the tribunal ruled in favour of Akala, the governor went after notable indigenes of Ibadan including the paramount ruler, the Olubadan of Ibadan. It was discovered that Adedibu ensured that the salaries, allowances and subventions meant for Olubadan and his Council of Chiefs in the local government areas were not paid during his lifetime. A foreign election observer claimed that "the elections were stolen." The end result was a comfortable victory for PDP candidate and Adedibu protégé Christopher Alao-Akala'' (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

During the tenure of Akala as the governor of Oyo state, 'Elewe Omo' and 'Auxiliary' controlled the affairs of the Union. They did this with the support of Alao Akala. 'Tokyo' who has falling out of favour with Akala based on the secret meeting he had with the then Senate Ledaer Senator Teslim Folarin in Abuja was despised by Akala. The meeting was held to strategise for 2011 when the former Senator wished to contest the governorship polls. 'Tokyo' who attended the meeting in company of 'Elewe Omo' was surprised to have heard that the purpose of the meeting was leaked to Akala. Akala immediately withdrew his support for 'Tokyo' (Ogunsola, 2015). 'Tokyo' was however, fingered in what can be described as the orchestrated murder of Elewe Omo's guards who incidentally were later found alive (Ogunsola, 2015). The embattled factional leader of the Union, 'Tokyo' resisted 'Elewe Omo' and 'Auxiliary's claim to the leadership of the Union in the state. However, with the backing of the governor, 'Elewe Omo' and his accomplice 'Auxiliary' took control of the activities of the Union. Shortly before preparation started for the 2011 gubernatorial election, Akala, in order to render 'Tokyo' inactive proscribed the activities of the Union in August 2010 and ordered the demolition of the NURTW State Headquarter building located at Olomi Area in Ibadan. Akala claimed that the proscription of the Union was necessary in the light of the fact that the violent nature of the crisis rocking the union had degenerated into destruction of lives and properties (Adesuyi, 2010). This decision however, met with fierce resistance from Tokyo's supporters who stayed put at the building to prevent the destruction of the building by the state government demolition squad. After the announcement of the proscription of the Union's activities, the leadership crisis rocking the Union took a new turn. Members of each faction took on each other in bloody clashes which occurred at major areas where the activities of the Union were concentrated (Adesuyi, 2010). The clashes were reported to have occurred as a spontaneous reaction to the preparation by the factional leader of the Union, Alhaji Lateef Akinsola (Tokyo) to allegedly take over power at the Union State Headquarters from the Chairman, Alhaji Lateef Salako (Eleweomo) who the National Industrial Court, Abuja had ordered in its judgment to relinquish power (Adesuyi, 2010).

'Eleweomo' however, vowed that he could not be removed from office by anyone. Based on this, ''Dangerous weapons such as guns, cutlasses and charms were used by the members of the union in the clashes, while sporadic gun shots continued for a long time in areas like Olomi, the union's secretariats on Iwo Road, Academy, Ojoo, Beere, Idi-Arere and other parts of the city where NURTW members are concentrated'' (Adesuyi, 2010). As the build-up to the 2011 gubernatorial election became intensified so was the rivalry between the 'Tokyo' led group of the Union who were opposed to the re-election ambition of Akala and the 'Elewe Omo' led group who supported the re-election

bid of Akala became intensified. Members of both factions frequently engaged another in violent clashes. However, the battle between the two factions got to the p when 'Elewe Omo' was murdered on the 30th of November, 2010 at the L Government Congress of the Peoples Democratic Party held at the Ibadan Dis Primary School, Olunloyo, Akanran Road in Ona-Ara Local Government area of the s (Ogunsola, 2015). In another bloody clash in August 2011, over 10 people were repo killed in a brawl which occurred between the two factions of the Union. This includec President of the Nigerian medical association (Akinola, 2015). However, after losing re-election bid to Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi of the then ACN (Action Congres Nigeria), Akala de-proscribed the activities of the NURTW. According to the outgoing Akala administration, the de-proscription was necessary based on the "p and tranquillity" that was being enjoyed in the state (Adeseri, 2011). It was also clai that "the de-proscription order became imperative as a result of the readiness o members of the Union to abide by law and order in the state" (Adeseri, 2011). In rea to this, Lateef Akinsola (Tokyo) the embattled factional leader of the Union lamentec the Akala administration was merely seeking cheap favour at the tail end of his rei the governor of the state. He was quoted as thus: "although he did his worse to frus us but God did not support him so he has turned around to seek our favour" (Ad 2011). It was however, claimed that the de-proscription of the Union's activities w set the stage for a violent scenario for the incoming administration of Senator I Abiola Ajimobi.

On resumption of office, the Union was still engulfed in violence. The crisi time around was between 'Tokyo' who was determined to claim his former positi the Chairman of the Union and Mukaila Lamidi (Auxiliary) who was not rea relinquish power. The crisis continued for several days after Senator Ajimobi was s in as the governor. At the night of the 5th day after the assumption of office memb the factions engaged one another in violent clashes. It was reported that, Iwo Road 'theatre of war'. Many innocent people were reportedly killed including a fina medical student of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria (Akinola, 2015). Again background, Senator Abiola Ajimobi proscribed the activities of the Union and e that both factional leaders were not allowed to operate. The proscription lasted fo than a year rendering the Union powerless and without leadership. It took the interv of influential people in the state to persuade the Ajimobi administration to lift t (Akinola, 2015). Since the inauguration of the Ajimobi Administration ar installation of 'Fele' as the new Chairman of the Union relative peace seems t returned to the state. Motor parks which were formally harboured by violent th now peaceful hubs for transport business. The new administration of the Unio drastic steps to rid the Union of violent activities and political thuggery.

People and neighbours who once feared to move close to the building now building to fetch borehole water provided as a corporate social responsibility (C the Union (Oladele, 2015). It was however, stated that even though the admini have not achieved 100 percent success in ridding motor parks of violent activitie moved away from the 'age long tradition' (Akinola, 2015). The new administrat also embarked on the execution of corporate social responsibility. It was noted tha the inauguration of the present Union's administration small arms and weapons

guns, cutlasses and other dangerous instruments were bought with the income of the administration and were distributed among the members to violently attack other members who do not belong to the same camp. In order to put a stop to this, the Union's administration decided to embark on cooperate social responsibility such as sinking of bore-holes, patching of potholes and renovation of schools which according to the new Chairman align with the restoration agenda of the governor, Senator Abiola Ajimobi (Oladele, 2015).

Factors Motivating Political Thuggery and Violence in the NURTW in Ibadan

Various factors are responsible for perpetration of political thuggery and violent acts by members of the NURTW in Ibadan. One of the major factors which serve as a potent driver of political thuggery and violence among members of the Union is the nature of party politics in Oyo state in general and Ibadan in particular. The nature of party politics in Oyo state can be described as been based on acrimony and enmity. According to Akingbade (2011:267) "the nature of dirty practice of party politics played by political parties in Oyo State in the Nigeria Fourth Republic, no doubt, gave room for political violence to ensue". Politicians usually make use of political thugs majorly recruited from the NURTW to get rid of political opponents. It has been observed that the way through which politicians uses their parties to achieve their selfish interests often result to violence (Akingbade, 2011:267). Indeed, political parties tend to treat their members with intense scorn and disregard. This however, lead to a political relationship that is based on patron-client relationship were the clients are often mobilised towards pecuniary, ethnic and regional basis (Jibrin and Hassan, 2013:3) and consequently, towards violence. This motivate members of political parties to employ violent means including arson, maiming and violent repression (Olasupo, 2003: 39) usually orchestrated by political thugs who are employed by politicians within the party. The controversy, intrigues, acrimony and disdain that surrounded politics in Oyo state since the beginning of the Fourth Republic have been responsible for the increased spate of politically motivated killings in Ibadan. Politics in Ibadan was played in such ways that required the use of political thugs to silent or eliminate political opponents. This made the NURTW in Ibadan to become instruments of political thuggery and violence to politicians (Agbaje, 2016). Politicians in Ibadan organize and sponsor political thugs who are majorly made up of members of the of the NURTW whose leaders and members become the 'foot soldiers' of the politicians and are always ready to perpetrate thuggery and violent acts whenever they are called upon.

The absence of laid down rules ad regulation to guide the process of selecting or electing executive officers to control the affairs of the Union for a specified period of time also serve as a causal factor of violence and political thuggery within the Union. Indeed, the Union in terms of nominating executive officers is devoid of any form of democratic norm or ethos. Occupying executive (most especially the post of the Chairman) of the Union depends on the ability to mobilize members of the Union to instigate violent acts against perceived opponents who may also be interested in the same post. It can be asserted that lack of internal democratic practices within the Union leads to internal violent wrangling. It would be recalled that the jostle by 'Tokyo', 'Elewe Omo', 'Tawa' and 'Auxiliary' at one time or the other in the Fourth Republic for the leadership

position of the Union was largely responsible for the occurrence of violent acts which engulfed the Union. The leaders of the Union enjoy unfettered access to the government of the day. Based on this they serve as 'die hard' supporter of such government. Because for the government to be voted out of office is for them to be replaced by members of the Union who are loyal to the incoming government. As a result they go to any length to ensure that such government does not lose its re-election bid. According to Ojo (2011:106) the violence which engulfed Ibadan shortly after the inauguration of the Ajimobi government came as a result of the fact that the ruling party (PDP) was voted out of office. He asserted that "the loss of the ruling party in the state translated to the loss of the ruling elite in the drivers' Union too" (Ojo, 2011:106). This largely explains the rationale behind the sit- tight syndrome usually exhibited by the leaders of the Union once they get the mantle of power.

The daily activities of lumpens in and outside motor parks often lead to violence and thuggery. These lumpens popularly known as 'agbero' in the course of extorting money from bus and taxi drivers usually spark off violence. The lumpens who usually work for the leadership of the Union through the daily collection of compulsory payment of dues from the drivers of commercial vehicles, before getting to work usually consume more than enough dose of local gin and at times Indian hemp. These usually make them effective in collecting dues from the drivers' especially those who are reluctant to pay (Olaosebikan, 2016). This claim was buttressed by another member of the Union when he stated that:

> We get to the park as early as 4:30 and 5am everyday to take this 'ogogoro' before we resume work. We have to take it on daily basis because an ordinary look of an 'agbero' cannot be used to collect money from the drivers. This is because some drivers can be stubborn and adamant in paying their daily dues. That is why the consumption of 'ogogoro' aids our ability to collect dues from drivers. At times we have to forcefully collect the dues after engaging them in fights with their conductors (Odetola, 2016).

Ayokunle (2007:17) however, notes that collection of dues for onward passage to the leadership of the Union is not supposed to be the task of the 'agberos'. He lamented that they are suppose to assist drivers in conducting passengers into their vehicles, whereby drivers are expected to pay them certain amount of money as compensation for the service rendered. He further observed that the issue of 'agbero' emerged "out of the deplorable economic situation to provide means of livelihood for unskilled and unemployed individuals around motor parks and have been hijacked over the years by the leadership of the NURTW who have made it into a system peopled by hardened miscreants, street urchins, thugs and other categories of people of questionable character" (Ayokunle, 2007:17). The composition of the type of people in the category of the 'agbero' shows that there is high tendency for the 'agbero' to be violent in the course of discharging their duties.

To buttress this, Akinola (2015) observed that the ability of the Union to finance its activities largely depend on the dues collected from its members. He further observed that owing to its large membership and the tough manner in which it enforces compliance

with payment of dues, the Union is often regarded as one of the richest Unions in Nigeria. This is often reflected in the luxurious way of living of its leaders (Akinola, 2015). According to Akinola (2015) "drivers pay two levies. Interstate vehicles pay N300 to the government through Park Managers while the NURTW takes N200 per day. Inter-state car drivers deliver N1, 500 while inter-state buses deliver N2500 depending on the distance which determines the fare. For intra-city buses, drivers pay N250 union due per day. It was learnt that the union takes the due and share appropriately". Money realised from the collection of dues from the drivers are paid into the Union's account on daily basis. This however, culminates to increase in financial reserve of the Union. The bulging account of the Union, the paraphernalia attached to the office of the Chairman of the Union as well as the support of the government the Chairman enjoys make the post of the Chairman of the Union very attractive and a post worth dying for, such that an aspiring Chairman will not mind spilling blood and even losing his own life to realize his ambition of becoming the Chairman of the Union. Another member of the Union reiterated this when he explained why they mostly acted violently. He said this in the following words:

> This type of work is not meant for ordinary people. It is not meant for those that are soft and gentle. It is meant for those who can foment trouble any time when called upon. That is why we have to be at alert all the time. This is because we can be called upon anytime to resist an attack on our garage by another group.

This serves as one of the reasons why the leadership succession in the Union is always characterised by bloodshed, loss of lives and destruction of properties.

Violence and Political Thuggery: Implications for Peace and Stability in Ibadan

Indeed, the activities of the NURTW in Ibadan since the commencement of the Fourth Republic has negatively impacted on the peaceful co-existence among of members the Union in particular and the city in general. Political thuggery and violence as perpetrated by members of the Union have grievous implications for the people living Ibadan and the state in general. One obvious and disheartening consequence of these menaces is the loss of lives and properties. Lots of lives have been lost and properties worth millions have been destroyed during the turbulent years of the Unions activities in Ibadan. According to statistics released by the Oyo state Police Command between 2003 and the time Ajimobi took over as governor the number of recorded murder cases was 121. The number of recorded cases of arson between this period was 35 while the number of reported cases of bodily harm was 1,119 (Anifalaje, 2014). It is a known fact that scores of lives may have been lost and properties destroyed worth millions may have been destroyed due to the incessant occurrence of political thuggery and violent activities of the Union. More disheartening is the killing of final year medical students one of whom happens to be the President of the Nigerian Medical Students' Association. The youths lost their lives to the collapse of public order which usually occur during the period when members of the Union engage one another in free for all fights. Secondly, political thuggery perpetrated by the members of the Union generates a feeling of insecurity especially during election periods. Political thugs during election periods

forcefully snatch ballot boxes, disrupt election process and scare away voters in areas which they perceive as opposition strongholds. This they do with arms and other dangerous instruments provided by their godfathers. The implication of this however, is that, voters for the sake of not losing their lives abstains from political activities within the state. This can lead to political apathy and consequently, low voter turnout during elections which is inimical to the development and advancement of democracy. Apart from this, political thuggery sabotages the will of the electorate during elections. In this regard, election results do not reflect the wishes of the electorate.

In addition, political thuggery and violence usually orchestrated by the members of the Union increases crime rate in the Ibadan in specific terms and the state in general. Political thugs who are hired by politicians to perpetrate violent acts during elections are provided with arms which include guns and other dangerous weapons such as cutlasses and machetes. After the elections, the weapons still remain in the possession of the thugs who are hired for election purposes. Once election have been completed, the thugs make use of the weapons in their possession to commit heinous crimes such as murder, armed robbery, robbery, kidnapping, maiming and all sorts of social vices. This however, increases crime rate within the society. Serving as appendage to this scenario is the proliferation of small arms within the Union. The absence of laid down procedures for leadership succession within the Union encourages violent change of leadership. Therefore, members of the union ensure that weapons and arms used in dislodging a particular executive of the Union are kept for future purposes. Out of the fear of reappraisal attacks more weapons are procured in order to withstand and curtail such impending attacks. These weapons are utilized by the members to perpetrate sinister motives both within the Union and in the society in at large. Funds which are supposed to be used for other productive ventures are diverted to the procurement of arms and weapons. The incumbent Chairman of the Union Alhaji Taofeek Oyerinde lamented that this was the order of the day before he became the Chairman. He lamented that: "Before now, guns, cutlasses and other dangerous weapons were procured with the union's daily income and same were distributed to motor parks to unleash violence on rival union members and hapless citizens. Scores of innocent citizens of the state and visitors have been killed, a development that peaked in 2011 culminating in the killing of a medical student and others at Iwo Road Motor Park" (Akinola, 2015). The culture of political thuggery and violence has implications for issues not related to elections. Members of the Union attack people living within the state and who are perceived to not be in support of the government they derive their support from. According to Human Rights Watch (2007) on the 27th of June 2007, a group of thugs of the Union in possession of machetes and clubs attacked a group of civil sergeants who were peacefully protesting against the then Akala' administration's resolve to reduce their salaries. It was reported that 20 protesters suffered machete and club wounds while at least three were hospitalised.

Conclusion

The activities of the members of NURTW since 1999 when the country returned to democracy has been particularly turbulent, not for the members of the Union alone but also for members of the society in general. Political thuggery and violence as perpetrated by the members of the Union manifested during election periods in form of ballot box

snatching, scaring away voters with dangerous weapons on Election Day in opponents strongholds, killing, maiming and generating both psychological and structural forms of violence. Thuggery and violence after election periods manifested in the form of armed robbery, murder, kidnapping and assassination. It was however, discovered that the blame of the involvement of the members of the Union in perpetrating acts of political thuggery lies at the doorstep of the members of the political class in Ibadan. The members the Union became instruments of manipulation and violence in the hands of the political elites. With the backing of these political elites, members of the Union perpetrated all forms of crimes without being brought to book. This is as a result of the fact that the leadership of the Union are supported and backed both financially and otherwise by the political party in power. This implied that officials of the security apparatus of the state who should carryout arrest and the consequent charging to court of those found guilty of instigating violence are mere appendages of the political party in power. This explains why security officials look the other way even when serious crimes are committed by the members of the Union. In reaction to the attack on civil servants on the 27th of June 2007 believed to have been initiated by the members of the Union, the then Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr. Jonathan Johnson was quick in defending the members of the Union by blaming the civil servants of being the first to initiate attack on the Union members.

However, with the inauguration of the Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi government, peace (though not immediately) was restored in the Union. The governor made it known that violence and political thuggery was antagonistic to his peace initiative, as a result of this, the administration of Abiola Ajimobi banned the activities of the Union. For close to a year the Union was without a leader. While governor Ajimobi's peace initiatives must have been successful to a reasonable extent, there is still the need to rid the Union completely of political thuggery and violence. For this to be achieved there is the need for politicians in the state to shelve politics of acrimony and enmity. It was observed that the way and manner party politics is played in the state generate tensions and violence during electioneering periods. To avoid these politicians need to respect rules governing the conduct of party politics and elections. In addition to this politicians should see vying for public offices as a call to serve and not an opportunity to amass wealth at the expense of the poor masses. Once this norm is imbibed political office seekers will not consider winning elections as a do-or-die affair. Secondly, the NURTW as an organized Civil Society Organization need to be sensitized on the imperatives of democratizing the process of leadership succession. It was observed that the absence of rules and regulations to guide the change of leadership of the Union is one of the major factors which induce political thuggery and violence both within the Union and Ibadan in general. Democratizing the process by which leadership of the Union is changed will go a long way to reduce if not totally put an end to leadership crisis within the Union. To realize this, elections to elect new executives of the Union can be conducted on regular basis depending on the number of years agreed upon. Furthermore, laws can be passed to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol around motor parks and most importantly in the garages and motor parks where the 'agberos' usually converge every morning to drink and smoke before going to their designation. Such laws however, should be backed by stiff sanctions in case of violation. Lastly, the

paraphernalia attached to the office of the executive members of the Union should be reduced so as to make the offices of the executives of the Union less attractive. In this regard, members of the Union may be discouraged to employ violence means in their bid to occupy executive posts in the Union.

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