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DEPARTMENT: Law

COURSE: Peace and Conflict (GST201)

QUESTION: write an essay of not less than 2 pages on violent conflict on the geo-political zone that you are from.

Conflict and violence are two different ideas, but a violent conflict can simply be seen as the use of physical force that leads to harm and destructiveness, to solve competing interest. A violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests. While a violent conflict may involve only non-state actors, often, the term is used as a synonym for war which involves at least one government. SouthWest Nigeria is one of the geopolitical zones of Nigeria that have experienced a violent conflict in most of its states like; Ekiti, Ibadan, Ondo, Oyo, and Osun. However, the SouthWest consists of the following states; Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Oyo, and Ogun state. It is majorly a Yoruba speaking area, although there are different dialects even within the same state.

The first violent conflict that occurred in the southwest was the operation “wet e” riot which eventually led to the first military takeover of Nigeria's government in 1966. The riot took place over the struggle for political power during the western regional elections of October 11, 1965. It arose due to the NNPP determination to remain in power, and in the face of overwhelming odds against the NNPP should the election be free and fair, it was left with one alternative - to rig the election. Whether or not the NNPP was following precedence established by previous political parties, the massive rigging of the western regional elections of October 11, 1965, was flabbergasting. The methods of electoral fraudulence employed were the familiar ones, but the scale to which they were used was overwhelmingly much more severe which unfortunately led to the formation of operation ‘wet e’. The electoral Commission led by Mr. Eyo E Esua publicly admitted that electoral officers were kidnapped and therefore, could not carry out their duties while some refused to accept nomination papers of certain candidates and others failed to report for duty. Many candidates who had obtained validity papers were elected ‘unopposed’. The inability of the candidate to register aside, there were questions of ballot paper floating around in the west, despite the precautionary measures of giving the ballot papers to the police. The use of party agents and thugs camouflaged as members of the local government police was employed in every conceivable means, counting was not completed in some stations before the results of these stations were broadcast over the radio. Some candidates were declared elected, although their opponents scored higher votes. As a result of the grave irregularities, the NNPP won the election, 16 of its candidates having been returned unopposed at the close of nomination. It was publicly charged that the NNPP victory was due to fraud. The political atmosphere in the western region looked bleak and dismal, and the after-effects of the elections were even more severe and devastating. Defeated political candidates had in the past run to the courts to challenge irregularities at elections. This time, they did not go to court, instead, the people took the law into their hands. Riot, looting, arson, and murder, were the rule of the day. Party thugs poured gasoline on opponents and set them on fire, a situation then known as operation wet e. Properties, bags of cocoa and other produce of opponents awaiting shipment were also set ablaze. Without a doubt, the destruction of properties was not as brief as setting human beings on fire.

Another similar violent conflict that occurred in SouthWest Nigeria was the 1983 Ondo political conflict. Crisis started brewing in Ondo State when the deputy governor, Akin Omoboriowo, could not get the approval of the governor, Adekunle Ajasin, Obafemi Awolowo and the machinery of the ruling party in the state for his governorship ambition. The United Party of Nigeria (UPN), which Obafemi Awolowo headed and which was also a major opposition party in the country, preferred that Adekunle Ajasin would go on a second term in office. Akin Omoboriowo, like any other opportunistic and ambitious politician, weighed his options of staying put in the UPN. The opposition party in Ondo state, which was also the national ruling party, National Party of Nigeria (NPN), under the leadership of President Shehu Shagari, saw Akin Omoboriowo's disappointment as a golden opportunity to infiltrate into the ranks and stronghold of the Pan-Yoruba political party and establish itself further in the South West. Omoboriowo switched to the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and ran against his old boss, Adekunle Ajasin in the 1983 elections. This came on the heels of the latter's refusal to step aside from the gubernatorial race as previously allegedly agreed between Omoboriowo and Ajasin. Omoboriowo and certain other stalwarts of the party including Chief S.A. Akerele against popular sentiment, left for the ruling NPN under which he ran for the guber seat. When the federal Electoral Commission declared Omoboriowo the winner on 16 August 1983, the announcement sparked deadly riots. The riots were reportedly the most violent in the history of post-independence Yoruba-land second only to the "Wet è" riots. The riots, particularly aimed at NPN stalwarts. Chief Omoboriowo and Akerele were spared though Akerele's house was razed to the ground by irate rioters (Akerele had at the time fled with his family to Kwara state). In the same riots, Chief Olaiya Fagbamigbe of Fagbemigbe publishers was killed as well as Hon. Kunle Agunbiade.

Finally, another violent conflict in SouthWest Nigeria occurred in 1877 in Ekiti state. This civil war was known as the Kiriji war. The Kiriji war also known as Ekiti parapo war was a sixteen-year conflict mainly between Ibadan and the combined forces of Ekiti and Ijesha. The civil war saw one of the most technically advanced and decisive wars in Western Africa, with the use of cannons and imported guns from Hamburg, Germany. Weapons were also imported through the Lagos Harbor and Benin. The Ekiti-Parapo also used several modern tactics like the building of trenches and platoons, a spy network with the headquarters in the town of Ilara-Mokin, and the use of animal behavior and symbols as signals in the war. The fall of the Oyo Empire, which had dominated the region for 500 years left a gap in the government of Yorubaland. Many city states, which were previous provinces of the empire, rose up to replace the dominant Oyo Empire, including Ibadan. Ibadan had won the 1840 Osogbo War and the Battle of Ijaiye in 1862 and had grown in immense power, almost rising to that of its predecessor, hence, her desire for a unified Yoruba nation similar to that of the Oyo Empire, meanwhile the Ekiti wanted a loose confederation of cities that had existed in the Ekiti region. The war broke out as an attempt to halt the expansive efforts of the Ibadan city-state, which attempted to replace the Oyo Empire as the dominant region in Yorubaland. According to Latoosa, "the kiriji war ended all wars in Yoruba land". The Kiriji

war or Ekiti parapo war was unarguably the most protracted war, the last that plagued the Yoruba nation.