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**ASSIGNMENT: WRITE AN ESSAY ON VIOLENT CONFLICT ON THE GEOPOLITICAL ZONE YOU’RE FROM.**

**What is conflict? Conflict is a process in which one party suggests that its interests are being opposed by another party. It is also about opposing ideas and actions of different entities, thus resulting in an antagonistic state. Conflict is inevitable in this world because as humans we have to interact with one another. In Nigeria, there are six geopolitical zones. They are; North-Central, North-West, North-East, South-South, South-East and South-West. In this essay I will be focusing on conflict in the South-West geopolitical zone. In this area, political conflict is the most common out of all the various types of conflict. Now, what is political conflict?**

**Political conflict is the conflict relating to electoral process, including conflicts among political parties, politicians and voters. Political conflicts appear rampant even in single party or dictatorial political systems where rival factions and administrative departments within the same political organization battle for position and power. Historically, in Nigeria, this type of conflict was predominant in the South-Western Nigeria, due probably to relatively higher educational and political enlightenment of the westerners in the early days of Nigeria. An example of this political conflict is the one between Adedibu and Ladoja.**

**Chief Lamidi Adedibu has been involved in Oyo politics since the 1950s. His many detractors allege that he got his start as a small-time organizer of political thugs for the Action Group party of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. By the late 1980s, however, he had emerged himself as a powerful political force through a combination of populist politics, patronage, violence and extortion. Adedibu’s power flows primarily from his tremendous ability to mobilize violence and money in support of the politicians he sponsors. He also distributes cash and food to supplicants on a daily basis from his Ibadan home, a brand of patronage frequently referred to as ‘amala politics,’ after a traditional dish common to Nigeria’s south-west.**

**Rashidi Ladoja served as governor of Oyo state from 2003 to 2007. Adedibu supported Ladoja as the PDP candidate in the 2003 elections. Adedibu helped to rig partly by providing the muscles needed to fix the polls. Ladoja confirmed this fact to Human Rights Watch but said that once he was in office, he tried immediately to break free of Adedibu’s influence. Ladoja also told them he fell out with Adedibu shortly after coming into office because he refused to allow him (Adedibu) access to the treasury. Ladoja also refused to allow him to name the commissioners that would serve in his cabinet.**

**By August 2005 tensions between Ladoja and Adedibu had caused the state house of assembly to split in two, with a majority of 18 out of 32 members publicly supporting Adedibu in every matter relating to his struggle with Governor Ladoja for control of the state government. The legislature largely ceased to function as a single house.**

**At the end of 2005, the so-called ‘G-18’ of pro-Adedibu law makers set about trying to impeach Governor Ladoja. The first attempt failed and resulted to an armed melee on the floor of the state legislature when one pro-Adedibu law maker stabbed one of his rivals with a knife and several others were wounded. Just over one week later, armed police officers escorted the G-18 lawmakers to the State House of Assembly for a second try at moving the impeachment motion. An hours-long gun battle erupted between the police men and the thugs supporting Ladoja who sought to prevent the pro-Adedibu lawmakers from entering the house. This crossfire and the fighting caused panic to spread throughout Ibadan. Eventually, the G-18 legislators broke into the locked House of Assembly to vote on their own and constituted a panel of inquiry to investigate allegations of misconduct including corruption against Ladoja. Immediately following the vote, a large group of anti-Ladoja thugs stormed the Government House and ran rampant through the premises, looting and destroying the Governors’ office and these thugs also made videos of themselves. The police made no arrests in connection with the sponsorship of any of this violence. Three weeks later, the G-18 lawmakers voted unanimously to remove Ladoja from office, replacing him with deputy Governor and Adedibu loyalist, Christopher Alao-Akala.**

**The attempt to impeach Ladoja ended in failure as the Supreme Court reversed the move as illegal because his removal was not supported by the required two-thirds majority of the legislature. After Ladoja resumed office in late 2006, the political struggle between the Governor and Adedibu was waged mainly in the streets through regular battles between proxy gangs. The depredations of those groups exacted a very heavy toll on ordinary civilians who were subjected to violent crime and looting, while few of the thugs and none of their sponsors were ever held accountable.**

**In the months leading up to the 2007 elections, Ladoja and Adedibu factions fought each other regularly. On the weekend of February 4, 2007, the two factions at a PDP rally in neighbouring Osun State when the party hierarchy formally awarded the ticket to Akala. Atleast 4 people were killed. Adedibu and Ladoja both blamed each other for instigating the clash. Violence and insecurity became the norm in Ibadan and other parts of Oyo in the run-up to the April polls. On several occasions, thugs loyal to Adedibu rampaged through the streets of Ibadan, attacking motorists and looting shops along the road. According to media and other sources, clashes between the two factions in the run-up to the elections claimed more than a dozen lives, with many more wounded.**

**Oyo’s 2007 elections saw the same open vote rigging and intimidation of voters that derailed the exercise across most of Nigeria. Observers and journalists reported attacks by thugs on polling stations who stole ballot boxes and several voters were reportedly shot or stabbed while trying to cast the ballot in Ogbomoso and Ibadan. Especially in Ibadan, Adedibu’s proxy thugs from NURTW and elsewhere were implicated in much of this violence. The end result was a comfortable victory for PDP candidate and Adedibu protégé Christopher Alao-Akala.**

**Political conflict in Nigeria is mostly as a result of different political parties or individuals fighting to gain ultimate power and to embezzle the funds meant for the citizens to satisfy their own selfish gains. Unfortunately, the citizens are always at the receiving end when these conflicts arise, because they would be the ones to lose their lives and properties due to riots, looting of shops, killing, etc. whereas, the politicians that instigate this violence would be in the comfort of their homes guarded by the police officers that should be arresting them and protecting the citizens. There are ways to resolve political conflict some of which are;**

1. **More determined and bold leadership to set aside differences entrenched in political positions to prevent and end conflict.**
2. **The government at its different levels should be more proficient in identifying early signs of human rights violation and deteriorating situations and be willing to act before situations further deteriorate.**
3. **Governments and the international community must invest in dedicated and sustained capacity to handle more than one crisis at a time.**
4. **Robust engagement of people and civil society in political and governance processes is critical to sustained conflict prevention and resolution.**

**In conclusion, it is important to note that not all conflict situations are negative, some often facilitate a transition, which creates opportunity for change and even development. It just depends on how we handle it.**