SOCIAL PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, SOCIETAL CONFLICTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The broad task of this paper is to find out the relationship between societal conflictual and violent behaviour and construction and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. This paper interrogates the popular notion and use of democracy as civilian rule. It proceeds from the stand point of democracy as authoritative decision making in a polity by at least a majority of the electorate and explores the link between societal conflicts and violence, particularly urban and rural conflicts and violence and democracy. A theoretical framework of social production and reproduction is used to explain the link between the number of those involved in authoritative decision making in a polity and the conflicts and violence in a polity. The inference is that more of democracy as conceptualiz d here means more people involvement in authoritativ. decision making and therefore determining and producing their own needs and minimizing the sources and basis of societal conflicts. Conflicts and violence can therefore be pro or anti democracy. The paper explores this relationship in Nigeria from pre-colonial time to date. It recommends the popularization of control of knowledge, skills and physical resources so that many more Nigerians will be in a position to participate in authoritative decision making in the Nigerian polity and thus minimize urban and rural violence.

INTRODUCTION

Looking at Nigeria since the advent of civilian rule in 1999 one would think that the late Bob Marley had Nigeria in mind when he sang the song with the title," War".[1]. Everywhere there is war. Of course, he proceeded to prescribe a credible solution. This solution still appears as valid today as it was when he sang the song. It is also valid for Nigeria and in respect of

urban and rural violence, ethnic, religious, economic and political conflicts and wars, whether fought by religious, secular or ethnic militia or regular armed forces. Violence may serve different contradictory purposes namely: to destroy and/or weaken democracy, or to usher in, broaden and/or strengthen democracy or any other form of rule [2].Violence may be used to usher in/strengthen/broaden/deepen democratic order and space when pro-democracy forces fight to over throw anti-democratic order [3]. It may also be deployed by anti-democracy forces to destroy/weaken/roll back democratic practice and space already in existence [4]. The major task of this paper is to explain and interpret the current manifestations of violence in the Nigerian polity and the prospect for democracy and from that make some projections and prescriptions. It is our considered opinion that current urban and rural violent activities have a long history and can only be properly appreciated by understanding the dynamics of societal violence from pre-colonial times till date. And these violent activities can be reduced to a tolerable level if the causes of such activities are eliminated. There is less emphasis on a catalogue of facts and statistics of violent behaviour and conflicts which assail attentive observers but more emphasis on relationships and interactions.

The paper consists of : 1. an Introduction, 2. a Statement of the Problem, 3. a Theoretical Perspective, 4. Clarification of Terms, 5. Propositions, 6. Issues of Relationship between Societal Conflicts and Violence and Democracy, 7 Application of the Theoretical Perspective in the presentation of arguments and evidence, and 8., a Concluding Summary and Recommendations

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Pre-colonial societies in the area now known as Nigeria were not devoid of violence. There were interstate, inter kingdoms, dynastic feuds, inter village, and inter communities conflicts and wars many of these erroneously referred by the British colonialists as inter- tribal wars when many were, in fact, inter state or international wars.

The colonization of the territories which became Nigeria and the enforcement of British rule resolved the bases and motive forces for some of these conflicts, escalated some, eliminated that of some others and yet suppressed that of others. While rural conflicts predated the colonization of Nigeria, recorded urban violence of any significant scale came with British colonization of Nigeria. Urban and rural conflicts and violence have been occurring in various forms such as religious, ethnic, economic, political, and sociological or in mixed forms. By and large urban violence was also fairly well contained during the colonial rule period.

More years of post-colonial rule witnessed more violence in the country which culminated in the violent overthrow of the elected civilian rule and the first post-colonial so-called democratic experience. Decades of military rule by violence has reproduced pervasive violent behavioural pattern of life in the Nigerian polity.

What we are witnessing currently in the form of urban and rural violence is the outcome of many years of social production and reproduction: the ascendancy of capitalism over communalism or more accurately, the clash between communalist and capitalist social production and reproduction in the Nigerian context. It is this dynamics which generates the various types of conflicts and the quality of rule or governance in the country. An understanding of this dynamics is a prerequisite for finding adequate solutions to these violent conflicts and the problem of governance in Nigeria. We shall try to explore this dynamics in this paper.

Those who talk about "the challenge of Democratic Consolidation" assume that there already exists Democracy which may be consolidated or eroded or destroyed. This paper does not share this view. What is a fact is that there is civilian rule with legislative bodies (assemblies made of civilians selected through perverted elections). Some forms of legislative assemblies through some kinds of elections can and do also exist in non-democracies such as in some emirates and kingdoms. For example, the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida at one time presided over elections and civilian legislative assemblies both at the national, state and local government levels yet we did not have democracy. The core of democracy which is direct people's rule, or at least the rule of all the people who have the franchise, not the rule by their representatives no matter how freely and fairly chosen [5] has never taken place in any modern nation state, including Nigeria, and is unlikely to take place in Nigeria in the near future. The dominant liberal scholarship now takes democracy to mean rule by people chosen in competitive periodic free and fair elections. The present Nigerian civilian regime did not meet even the perverted, capitalism –system- serving notion and standard of democracy. The rulers were not freely and fairly chosen by the people of Nigeria.

The big question then becomes: Is there a any direct relationship between urban and rural conflicts and violent activities (especially those of ethnic militia and religious groups) on the one hand, and the struggle for democracy (its construction and/or consolidation) on the other hand? To minimize the difficulties of multivariate analysis we can analyze the relationship of each of these respective global variables namely: urban violence, ethnic militia activities and religious conflicts, as an independent set of variables and the construction and/or consolidation of democracy as a dependent set of global variables. The other option is to regard conflictual and/or violent behaviour as a global independent set of variables on the one hand and on the other hand struggle for democracy (its construction and

consolidation), as the dependent set of variables. The other variants of violence and conflicts namely: ethnic militia violence and/conflicts, urban and rural conflicts and/or violence, and religious conflicts and/or violence, become components of the global variable of violent conflicts while the construction of democracy and consolidation of democracy become components of the struggle for democracy. For these and other reasons we wish to simplify matters by addressing the question: what is the relationship between societal conflictual and violent behaviour and the construction and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria? Within this question we can then explore the relationships of conflictual and violent ethnic militia behaviour and democracy; religious conflictual and violent behaviour and democracy; and other forms of rural and urban violence and democracy. All these will be done within the context of the Nigerian Political economy or appropriately the Nigerian social production and reproduction system theoretical perspective.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Many words which are in everyday usage like, "conflicts", "violence", "rule", "democracy", "religion", and "ethnic group", and many more, are subject to many meanings. This makes it difficult to carry out a scientific study of what a word means, particularly when the word donates processes, structures and institutions. While one user cannot decree other users out of order it may be more helpful for one to specify clearly what one is talking about. This makes it easier for other users to know what one means even if they may disagree with one's usage.

Conflict and Violence: By conflict we mean "A prolonged battle; a struggle; clash; 2. A controversy; disagreement; opposition; 3. (psychology) Opposition or simultaneous functioning of mutually exclusive impulses, desires or tendencies. 4. A crashing together; collision."[5a]. We use conflict in all these senses. Conflicts assume violent character when physical force is exerted for purposes of violating, damaging or abusing [5c]. Most conflicts and violence are social in character and arise as human beings pursue their survival and security needs along with other human beings particularly when these needs are not or can not be met simultaneously for all concerned. We shall return to why this state of affairs occurs later.

Rule: In this discussion, the term, to rule, means to control or govern a political entity or polity. By control or governance of a polity one means the making of choices and the enforcement of authoritative or binding decisions in a polity. Virtually every ruler rules in his/her favour. He/she does not make choices that hurt and humiliate him/her. The same is true for any

number of people that rule. Different classes of people choice according to their class interests. By forms of rule we mean the class (es) and status (es) of people that rule. From this point of view we shall adopt and adapt the classical forms of rule[6] such as Monarchy(rule by a monarch or king), Despotism(rule by a despot, usually a king), Gerontocracy (rule by elders), Aristocracy (rule by nobles/aristocrats), Oligarchy (rule by a small group of People), Plutocracy (rule by the wealthy/rich), Theocracy (rule by the clergy), Democracy (rule by the people/adult male citizens),and Dictatorship (rule by a dictator). These days we can include, howbeit controversial, communalistocracy (rule by communalists), capitalistocracy (rule by capitalists), socialistocracy (rule by socialists) and communistocracy (rule by communists), Militarocracy (rule by soldiers), etc. A change of government personnel (a president and his cabinet) or the replacement of politicians by another set of the same class of politicians should not be mistaken for a change of form of rule. How the person or persons make the binding decisions and how the person or persons emerge as rulers may be important but not the most critical in knowing who is ruling or not. A person(s) may kill other people in order to become a ruler(s) or be begged by the people to become their ruler(s). Whichever way, the person(s) does not rule if binding decisions are not made by such a person. We shall return to this point later.

Democracy: Very few words have evoked much more controversy in the discuss of politics than the word, democracy [7]. While we may not avoid this controversy we suggest that it may be much more academically and practically rewarding to use the term in the way it was used and it meant to the Athenians who first used the word to refer to one of their known forms of rule rather than in the current dominant very liberal sense in which democracy has been reduced to rule by a comparatively few representatives elected periodically. We can then use a new term to refer to this form of modern rule or any other distinct form of rule.

Democracy, derived from the Greek words Kratos (rule) and Demos (the people), [8] was the name given to the form of rule in ancient Athens in which all adult citizens of Athens, about 22,000, were free to participate in the city-state authoritative decision making and hold political office on the basis of ballot and lot [9]. The masses had overthrown their kings and despots and taken over self-governance. This form of rule did not take place over night after the termination of the rule by a few. We are informed that a proportionately small number of these citizens actually turned up: to make these binding decisions, and to hold office [10]. The point that ought to be made is that those who had these rights but did not show up for the decision making did so on their own volition. The rule was not by representatives nor were there periodic elections of these rulers. Another point that needs to be made is that women, children, and slaves (who formed a reasonable part of

the labour force) were excluded from this form of rule. This gave the adult citizens more time to deliberate and make authoritative decisions. Of course this practice also put a limit on the type of people that ruled. This dimension is a manifestation of the social production system at the time. Although slave labour was used and was important, the production system was still basically communal. Productive forces were fairly simple. Most able-bodied adult citizen were agriculturists and potential soldiers at the same time. Most people had the knowledge and skills to produce a great deal of their daily needs including some weapons of war and their own security [11]. This period of democracy in Athens was regarded as the golden age of Athens both in terms of comparative domestic peace and material culture while externally they went to build an empire through wars which became their undoing. Since governance is about the control and choices over what to produce, how, when, where, by who and for whom, most adult citizens were fairly knowledgeable about public affairs and could meaningfully participate in authoritative decision making. The polity was small and every adult citizen more or less knew every other adult citizen. Athenian democracy was later overthrown and replaced by aristocracy and despotism. Even at this time democracy was regarded as a degenerate form of rule by Aristotle who preferred aristocracy [12] but was praised by Pericles [13]. Fuller democracy (fuller people's rule), according to the meaning of the term, ought to have included at least women who were people too. And there should have been no slavery: for slaves are people too. Although literal meaning of the people means everybody, for practical purposes of decision making it can only include human beings that are of the age of reason and on matters they are capable of taking decisions about and responsibilities that follow from such decisions. As children who are of the age of reason and above become more knowledgeable and responsible so the age limit from which they must have to be involved in authoritative decision making must be lower. Athenian democracy, in spite of its limitation of the concept of the people, embraced comparatively more people in authoritative decision making in a polity than any other form of rule before it and after it, at least, in the history of Athens. This limited degree of democracy is similar to what many small scale societies (villages and clans) in sub-Saharan Africa, at the communal levels of production, had prior to their colonization by the Europeans. The point that ought to be noted from this is that forms of rule inhere from the social production system. Most peoples with communal and slave social production system often operate direct popular rule by adult males or all elders. The nearest to Athenian democracy model in modern times is in Strafford, and in some other villages and towns in the state of Vermont, in the United States of America [14]. The same still subsists in many African villages which until they were colonized were independent polities. However, none of these towns or villages is an independent polity today.

The name democracy has become very popular in modern times [15]. Several reasons are advanced for why direct people's rule by all adult citizens is not possible and/or is not to be recommended [16] even in wards, and villages. Representative governments of all types are now given the name democracies. The emphasis is now on a comparatively small proportion of citizens in a polity being competitively elected, periodically, by secret ballot, in what is regarded as "free" and "fair" elections. Very little thought is given to how fair an electoral contest is when an unemployed citizen is to contest an election against a millionaire and to what extent any person can truly and faithfully represent, in every decision to be made, all those who elected him let alone those who did not elect him and whom, nevertheless, he represents. Today, representative plutocracies, oligarchies, aristocracies, gerontocracies, theocracies, autocracies, dictatorships, have appropriated the name democracy, yet these are historically well known forms of rule with their names which ought to really retain those names. Even the United States of American plutocracy/capitalistocracy (rule by the wealthy/ capitalists) and British mixture of aristocracy and plutocracy/capitalistocracy call themselves and/or are regarded as leading democracies.

One suspects that the reasons for this pervasive and perverse appropriation of the term, democracy, by those who ought to know better are essentially ideological [17] and psychological. All kinds of rulers want to be seen as democratic: meaning that they have been popularly selected by the people or rule on behalf of people, or in the people's interests, and/or that when they rule the people are ruling. Rulers do not want to be seen as self-serving, concerned with preserving privileges or amassing wealth and/or protecting the wealthy these days. Few people are willing to declare that they are the state like the Sun King. It is, therefore, pertinent to note the relationship between social production and the forms of governance including democracy if we are to understand whether or not the various forms of violence and conflicts in Nigeria are likely to bring about, strengthen, or prevent the emergence of democracy.

If democracy just means everything to every body then it is not worth any serious academic or practical attention. However, if the term is to be restricted to people's rule, at least to a majority of the people in a polity ruling themselves (making decisions and implementing decisions that are binding on themselves) as tried out in ancient Athens, howbeit in a limited form, then it can be constantly improved upon to include the categories of people that were hitherto excluded when the then dominant world view justified slavery and the exclusion of women from political decision making. In this way it is possible for academics to inquire into and know the problems and prospects of democracy anywhere, including Nigeria, devoid of the self-serving views of the powers-that- be and their agents.

Since the current dominant concept of the people and who are fit to rule is wider than that of the ancient Athenians then people's rule must really be by the people if we must use the term, people's rule or democracy, meaningfully. It will then be worthwhile knowing the prospects of democracy in large scale societies. If all we can have for now, as much as we cherish or dislike it, can only be representative government then the proper name should be, rule by representatives or representativocracy, if we like. We may even qualify it with elective representativocracy as distinct from non-elective representativocracy. Other known forms of rule can be equally qualified as elective aristocracy, plutocracy, gerontocracy, etc, if elections have become the significant difference in these forms of rule since Aristotle classified them. The point of all these is that the core of governance is authoritative choosing or decision making and enforcement of such authoritative decisions, and not elections and/or representation and/or influence. No knowledge is advanced on the nature of people's rule by playing with words or engaging in obfuscation.

The universal impulse of human beings for freedom may still, in future, really move mankind towards fuller democracy or fuller people's rule. Human beings want freedom to do whatever they think will ensure their survival and security: they want to be free to decide what to do with their own labour, to decide for themselves what to produce, how, when, where and for who. In an interpersonal or a group matter this translates into joint or collective decision making by all in the group. The rule of the people does not begin by mere legislation to that effect or by declaration. Although it must start at a particular point in time when it replaces another form of rule, it is an arrangement that does not develop over night. It may proceed like this: a particular actor or set of actors takes authoritative decisions for some other actors. Then some of these other non-decision makers, for a number reasons, begin to aspire to be involved in the decision making. They make the demands or force themselves on the others, or they are invited, then more and more make similar demands or moves, and they are accepted or rejected, this process goes on until one day everybody or at least all sane adults are accepted in this process. This process may take years or centuries and suffer set backs or reverses. It may also involve violence and bloodshed before it comes to fruition. After it starts, the manner in which all are involved in decision making could be improved, strengthened, weakened or abolished. Many polities may have forms of rule in which different proportion of the people make the authoritative decisions. This means some polities may be nearer democracy or rule of the people than others. Those which have already reached the majority level where at least fifty-one percent of the sane adults across board of the population are rule makers can be called democracies. Such polities may become fuller democracies by getting more and more people, sixty, seventy, eighty percent, etc, in authoritative decision

making. One can also imagine a situation where the polities that have attained the rule of the people (at least a majority of sane adult citizens) have different ages of those who may rule and different qualities of people's rule. Some of such polities may have people of the age of fifteen rule while some others may have people of the age of seventeen, etc, rule. It may take many days in some of such polities to reach a simple decision which some others reach within a day. Below a certain age there may be educational requirement or some kind of test of capacity for meaningful participation in ruler ship. The subjects for decision making may be few or many and the days devoted to debates and decision making may differ, etc, from polity to polity.

There is no doubt that human governance has come a long way from monarchy/despotism through aristocracy to plutocracy or capitalistocracy or even socialistocracy. No modern polity that goes by the term democracy today officially keeps or approves slave labour (the United States of America maintained slavery up to the 19th century and was still regarded a democracy). Slavery has been abolished and various freedoms have been won over the centuries at great cost of lives and materials. Representation through periodic elections, has and can, in many instances, further improve human governance. Many rights and freedoms have been gained in these countries. Many more people in Britain, France and the United States of America than in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, may influence authoritative decision making yet the point is that only a few people still make the authoritative decisions in these countries. None of these polities excludes women from political office. However, virtually all polities still exclude children below the age of seventeen, no matter how reasonable, and all adult citizens are not free to participate in authoritative political decision making and/or hold political office by election and lot. The assembly of at least a majority of the adult citizen population do not have the right to take, and are not yet taking the authoritative decisions in these polities that call themselves or are called democracies. If this a fact then we need not call a plutocracy or a capitalistocracy or a socialistocracy a democracy, its achievement notwithstanding. The rich are not the people/masses, and the masses are not making the authoritative decisions. It makes a big difference whether the rich rule alone or the masses rule or a combination of both rules. The masses can not rule in any polity and hand over public wealth to the few while they remain poor. Besides, nobody rules against his own interests. We re-iterate that when somebody is a ruler he takes authoritative decisions and has the legitimate right to enforce such decisions. Insisting that there is no polity that is currently a democracy does not underrate the level of achievements in self-governance, since the time of the Magna Carter, in countries like Britain, the United States, France, etc, that regard themselves as democracies which are not democracies. We must not imagine that when we elect periodically,

people who seek political office, we have by so doing become the direct authoritative decision makers or rulers like adult citizens of Athens when they had democracy. The current practice in Britain, the USA, France, etc, may be nearer people's rule or democracy than a monarchy is to democracy yet these forms of rule are not yet democracies. Periodically, freely and fairly elected representative assemblies may be the best we have been able to get or likely to get under the current social production of capitalism and/or socialism. (Never mind how free unemployed citizens without money/or ruling party support can travel round their countries to canvass for votes or how fair an election is in which only the rich and/or party members or the sponsors of the rich /party members win). These assemblies must not be mistaken for or taken as democracies if democracy is ever to be attained and the conditions for attaining it understood and/or created. The current dominant usage in western scholarship serves capitalist social production which the- powers-that-be want to preserve [18] and/or give the impression that it is the best social production system that human beings can ever achieve or should hope for [19]. Employing a term to mean another thing which already has its own well-known name is unacceptable scholarship. Calling an aristocracy a democracy, or an oligarchy a dictatorship or a democracy, is unwarranted. At the time the ancient Athenians called a particular form of rule "democracy" they knew and had had other forms of rule which were known by their different names such as monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, despotism, etc.

Of course, there is a cynical sense in which we can talk of different types of democracy if we take it that anytime that any set of people, not angels or devils, governs there is people's rule or democracy. Since the rich, aristocrats, the old, the women, etc, are people, then we can, like the Athenians, who restricted democracy to adult citizens, not women and slaves, have the democracy: of the adult male citizens, of the rich, of the elders, of the nobles, of the women, etc, since these are people not angels or devils. We can then argue that each of these types of democracy should be expanded to include other categories who we believe are people. The problem with this sense of talking about democracy is that these days, the sense of the people is everybody, at least, a majority of the people who have the right to vote. We can, therefore, not pretend that the meaning of the people is not clear or is a matter of choice.

The general and lose sense these days is to equate or regard any act of authoritarianism, suppression, oppression and violation of person's fundamental rights as anti democracy (anti people's rule) and any struggle for liberation from any form of suppression and oppression of any fundamental right of any person and/or enforcement of any persons right as pro democracy. This loose usage we have rejected as incorrect and unhelpful. The attainment or enforcement of every right is not necessarily pro-

democracy and vice versa. Although the extension of the scope of what is considered fundamental human rights and/or the extension of specific rights to many more people have improved the quality of life of millions of people, the enjoyment of certain rights can be pursued and have been sustained for centuries under forms of rule far from democracy such as monarchies and even dictatorships.

The more accurate view of the people's rule or democracy, which is the rule (authoritative decision making and authoritative decision enforcement) by the majority, not their representatives, is the sense in which we shall use democracy. Only a process, function, structure, event or action which gives more people the right to authoritative decision making in a polity, can be rightly considered as pro democracy, democracy friendly, democracy beckoning and vice versa, not just free speech, not period elections, not the right to vote and be voted for, as useful as they have been..

How long it may take a polity to reach the majority point (above fifty percent of sane adult citizens' direct participation in authoritative decision making) is hard to tell and has to be worked for.

The rule by elected representatives may serve certain polities at particular points in history but we must not distort democracy for self-serving purposes or imagine that the prevailing forms of rule are the best that mankind can ever evolve. In this way we can know how far away or near we are to a democracy or whether or not it is achievable in large scale groups and polities.

At each point in time we can know the proportion of people who are qualified and have the right to rule. For example, we currently know the number of elected people who are members of the national assembly, the state assemblies and councilors of local governments who make authoritative decisions at different levels as a proportion or percentage of those who are qualified to vote and be voted for but who are not the authoritative decision makers. We know how far away we are from democracy.

Finally before we leave the concept of democracy for now we wish to state that issue is not that direct majority rule is the best form of rule which it may well be but that for there to be people's rule the people must rule and that only when the people rule that the rule is likely to best serve their interests. We shall now examine the concept of religion and religious conflicts/violence and governance

Religion: Religion is one of the phenomena that is often misunderstood in the analysis of interpersonal activities especially violent conflicts in Nigeria. It is pertinent to also locate the origin of religion in the social production system in order to understand religious conflicts and violence. Religion like other human social activities is an outcome of human social production [20]. It arose as a result if limited knowledge of human beings in ways and means

of ensuring their survival and security through production. This limited knowledge generates the fear of the unknown including the fear of people, plants, animals, things and forces. This is more so when the unknown in question (death, natural disasters, ailments, accidents, etc) overwhelms our efforts. Every effort is often geared to finding ways to make such unknowns our allies and friends. Submission, supplication, felicitation, gifts, etc, are often employed. Most prayers to these perceived superhuman and/or supernatural forces or being(s), by whatever name, are for protection and survival. We pray to enhance our positions in the production and reproduction system. We pray for daily bread, shelter, health, children, knowledge, skills, employment, promotion, control of more resources, in short, for long life and prosperity, which we generally and normally attain through production and reproduction. Sometimes, we pray for shortcuts to the production and reproduction of our needs or what is generally known as miracles. People rarely pray for those things they can produce effortlessly. The higher people are in the production system, the greater the surplus the system of production generates for them, the greater their sense of survival and security, and the less they are likely to pre-occupy themselves in offering prayers to the supernatural forces or beings.

Religion is, therefore, social production and reproduction directed and oriented. In many instances adherents of different religions occupy distinct positions in the social production system and thus constitute classes and sub-classes, status groups, occupational or even professional groups. Such groups become identities for struggles and violence for enhanced position in the production system. Certain religious activities, rituals and observances are expected to enhance protection and well being in the socio-economic system. Religious conflicts are not often about the nature of supernatural being but about who and what productive activities are appropriate and are to be involved in our survival and safety, how, when and for who. For example, women must remain at home, they must not be fully seen in productive activities versus women must be fully engaged in productive activities with men both at home and elsewhere; whatever a ruler does in the social production process is ordained by God and must be endured versus misdemeanor in social production by a ruler is against the rule of God and must be resisted. Only co-religionists must be leaders of the polity versus anybody of any religion can be leaders of the polity; Friday is a holy day versus Saturday versus Sunday, etc; no work on a holy day when there should be rest from reasonable production versus no prohibition of work on any day; certain food items are unholy versus such food items are not unholy; and one's position in the production system is God ordained versus not God ordained, to just cite a few sources of religious conflicts. Religion as a way of life is at once economic, political, sociological and psychological in content and objective. When co-religionists engage in

conflicts with some other groups it is pertinent to realize that religion, is like any other category or means (class, ethnic group, profession, etc) through which people who are dissatisfied or satisfied with their position or lot in the social production system often organize and fight for a change or for the maintenance of the status quo. People must use one platform or the other to get what they want. In many instances, religious riots provide grounds for economic, political, psychological and sociological redress: for the looting of goods and property, intimidating, and controlling the affairs of co-religionists and non-co-religionists and even that of the hated co-religionists. Religious militia/crusaders/jihadists are agents for waging the struggle for a better deal within the social production system or even to overthrow the production system for a desired one using the identity of religion (the Ayatollah Khomeini revolution in Iran). When the aims and effects of a religious violence are fairness and justice or the perpetration of injustice and oppression we can not say for certain whether or not it is pro-democracy or anti-democracy if such violence does not enhance or diminish the number that rule in spite of the importance of issues of fairness, justice, and oppression. Removal of oppression and the enthronement of justice and vice versa, need not enhance or diminish the form of rule and can even take place under a dictatorship.

Ethnic Group: All social groups and institutions emerge out of the social reproduction process [21]. An ethnic group is a few families loomed large. Just as the family has remained, for centuries, the basic unit of production, the tribe, and later the ethnic group, has for centuries remained a coherent, fairly self-sustaining large group of social production and of fairly independent co-operating groups of related families and clans. They are also security communities when in contact with some other kinship groups with a different language and other attributes. The bond of kinship is often maintained by common language and /or religion, contiguous or virtually contiguous land space. Most existing ethnic groups generally have an ethnic homeland where most members reside. Ethnic and national identity is, therefore, not only economic and political in content it also has lingual and security dimensions [22]. An ethnic group like a class is, therefore, a rational entity in human development.

Most people in the world are born into and remain in the same or fairly the same language, status and occupation of their parents/ancestors. In a number of instances an ethnic group constitutes or corresponds to a class, sub-class, a religious or an occupational group and/or occupies an economic region producing grains, roots, cattle, fish, palm oil, timber, rubber, cocoa, etc. More often than not people of the same ethnic group feel the effect of political, economic and sociological problems in the same way and respond to them in the same way, particularly when they occupy the same homelands,

and differently from other ethnic groups in other homelands. This congruence of economic, political, linguistic, and religious affinities in ethnic identity can mask the core of ethnic struggle: namely the struggle for survival and security of life within a social production system. Nepotism, the root of ethnic discrimination is a tendency to first take care of relations or those one is familiar with. Ethnic discrimination is nepotism on a larger scale. When stronger forms of political, economic, and sociological affinity are not created across families and ethnic groups nepotism and ethnic discrimination become mechanisms of defence against the competition in the social production system from other families and ethnic groups. In any case, the obligation to take care of the interests of one's relations demands it. After all no other person(s) will be and/or is duty-bound to take care of kith and kin except kith and kin. Is one's charity expected to begin elsewhere, the ethnic champion would ask his critics? Yes, one has an obligation to help one's kith and kin but not contrary to the rules and regulations governing public offices, their critics would retort.

Where a social welfare scheme for all is absent or very rudimentary, and where hitherto self-governing ethnic groups are under one new or fairly new political entity people are bound to stick together according to kinship. The corollary is also true. The former Soviet Union was one example where the ethnic and nationality question was answered very conscientiously and meaningfully as long as it lasted. The state took care of people from the cradle to the grave thus diminishing the tendency to depend on one's parents, siblings, cousins, nephews, aunts, uncles and remote relations for survival and security. However, soon after the break up of the Soviet Union national/ethnic problems increased and degenerated into wars. Ethnic militia are security, defence and offence outfits and mechanisms of waging the struggle within the social production system when access to the surplus of the production system is based on ethnic identity and/or when there is loss of confidence in the common security system, that is the state's security apparatus, to be fair-minded and even-handed to all ethnic groups and/or religions.

Whether or not ethnic militia violence propels society towards or away from democracy depends on the aims and the effects of the militia which can only become clear after the event. An ethnic militia that fights successfully for the legitimate rights of members of its ethnic group or the protection of the legitimate rights of members of its ethnic group propels the polity towards democracy only in so far as more people in its ethnic group get included in the authoritative decision making of the political entity. Fighting for a particular right or rights is not necessarily synonymous with fighting for democracy. However, an ethnic militia that fights violently to dominate/subjugate other ethnic groups or any other people or to deny them of their legitimate rights propels a polity away from democracy only in so far

as it excludes more people in authoritative decision making of the polity. We shall now present the theoretical perspective for our analysis

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Dynamics of Social Production: The theoretical perspective we employ in studying the relationship between conflictual and violent behaviour and the struggle for democracy, for want of a better term, is the social production and reproduction system, akin to what in Marxist scholarship is known as socio-economic system [23]. The social production and reproduction system perspective employed here posits, among other things that:

- The fundamental concern of human beings, and perhaps of other living things, is survival and security [24].
- And that for the human being to survive and have security he/she must produce and reproduce human needs, including the production and reproduction of the humankind. It is also accepted as self-evident that meaningful production and reproduction of human needs is essentially social (interpersonal), not individual.
- Every social relation (interpersonal relation) tends to be a full or partial social production and reproduction relation in full and/or in part of tangibles and intangibles such as food, shelter, medicine, weapon, new human being, pain, pleasure, sorrow, joy, security, insecurity, violence, offence, defence, etc.
- These tangible and intangible values and interests revolve around life processes such as respiration, nutrition, excretion, locomotion, sensitivity to stimuli, reproduction, growth and repair and decay. These vary in their perceived importance to various people at various points in time.
- Complete social production and reproduction of any value often entails political, economic, sociological, religious, psychological, physical and technical factors and dimensions almost at the same time or sequentially. For example, people may pray, be polite/rude, friendly/hostile to one another, educate or confuse/deceive others, find efficient ways and means, employ physical strength, marry, divorce, have some entertainment and relaxation, etc, in order to produce and reproduce their needs. This means that a social production and reproduction system involves virtually every aspect of life. It is only for purposes of emphasis and brevity that an analyst tries to enumerate only the main factors of production.
- The family is the first basic and fairly complete unit of social production and reproduction including that of the human being, values, beliefs, cultures and remains the last bastion and safety net for survival and security. Historically, interacting families have

expanded into kindred families, clans, tribes, and cores of nations and ethnic groups. These extensions of the family, like the family, are to varying degrees simultaneously political, economic, sociological, religious, language and geographical entities.

- Religion like other human values and activities has emerged from the social production and reproduction and takes the character of social production at each point in time and space. It is predicated essentially on human psychology and limited capacity to satisfactorily know and produce human survival and security needs as well as the fear of death and the unknown. It is an all-purpose and ever-ready part of the tool kit for production and reproduction. It is at once economic, political, psychological, sociological and environmental in nature.

- Ethnic and religious considerations are important in so far as they enhance or inhibit or are perceived to enhance or inhibit people's positions in the social production system.

- What can be produced and reproduced at each point in time depends on a combination of the quality of labour power (physical strength, knowledge, and skills), non-human physical resources for production (tools and objects for applying the tools) and interpersonal relations of production (who decides what is to be produced, exchanged, distributed and consumed, as well as who does what and gets what is produced). A change in any of these aspects affects the other aspects.

- In every social production and reproduction system there must be some one or people to make binding decisions on what is produced, distributed, exchanged, and/or consumed by who and for who.

- Those who decide/choose what to produce when, how, where, by who and for who, also control the social production process and in their favour. They generally have the most of what is produced and they are often more satisfied than the others within the production system and tend to protect.

- Those who do not decide/choose what to produce (goods, services and other values) are generally at the receiving end of the social production system. They generally have the least of what is produced and they are often not satisfied or less satisfied than those who make the decisions and they, therefore tend to want to change the system in their own favour.

- It is those who choose what to produce and for who, who control the production process and who also rule or determine who rules. It is perhaps for this reason that each human being tends to want to determine/decide/choose what himself or herself wants to produce. He or she wants and tends to work for/labour for what serves his or

her needs and his/her needs which are likely to be best known to him/her and often tend to be produced when he/she decides and controls what to produce. This is the impetus for self-rule, people's rule (democracy) and the resistance against other people's rule/foreign rule, particularly, domination and dictatorship.

- Each human being endeavors/struggles to attain and remain in a favourable position in the social production process so that his needs can be met. ·

- It is in this struggle for survival and security that human beings find and/or define allies and opponents, be it within or outside their family, clan, tribe, nation, class or profession, etc. This struggle precedes and informs and is likely to outlive class, religion and other group formations and exists within and outside classes and other social identities [25]. It is in the course of the struggle for personal interests that clashes or conflicts of interests occur in a social relationship.

- This struggle to change/improve or retain/preserve ones position in the scheme of things is the direct and indirect basis of virtually all social behaviour such as co-operation, conflicts, violence, allies and alliances, friendships, enmities, within, between and across classes, families, clans, tribes, nations, ethnic groups, race, religions, and occupational groups, in fact, in all social groups.

- In this struggle for acceptable/preferred positions in the social production system tangible and intangible, violent and non-violent means of all kinds are directly and/or indirectly employed. These tangible and intangible, violent and non-violent means include, among others: bare hands, sticks, bows and arrows, boomerangs, machetes, axes, guns, jet fighters, thermonuclear weapons, force, persuasion, manipulation, blackmail, ideology, propaganda, creed, ideas, truth, lies, discrimination, recognition, distortion, and misrepresentation; all kinds of qualifications such as, age, height, education, merit, geographical locations such as continent, region, country, province, county, town, village, ward, north, south, east, west, etc, are used in the struggle. Other means evolved and deployed in the struggle are social structures, associations, organizations, institutions based on language, sex, religion, class, occupation, profession, identities and kinship of all sorts such as family, clan, tribe, ethnic group, nation, and race.

- Conflicts and violence arise when there are different perceptions of what to produce, how, where, when, by who and for who particularly when these differences can not be harmonized or reconciled. This is at the root of societal conflicts and violence. Violence is generally deployed against a perceived opponent but it

can even be used within the same group to maintain discipline or
against non opponents in order to call attention to the user's
demands or needs or to deter/warn potential opponents.

An individual may be in conflict with himself/herself. Most of such
conflicts are social in nature and origin. These kinds of conflicts are
about what another person or persons, groups of persons (real or,
imagined, parent, sibling, friend or enemy, etc) may think, say or do
or may have thought or said, and/or done. Conflict is inevitable yet
most human beings tend to prefer less conflict especially less violent
conflicts to more violent conflicts.

More often that not the conflicts and violence in society occur
between those whose interests or perceived interests are satisfied in
the production process and those whose interests or perceived
interests are not satisfied in the production process, or when some
people seek to satisfy their own needs at the expense of some others
(be they friends, spouses, members of the same family, relations,
enemies, clans, tribes, ethnic groups, classes, nations, countries, co-
religionists, different religions, etc).

As long as the interests of all have not been satisfied there are bound
to be conflicts.

The more the harmony of interests in social relationships the less the
level of conflicts and violence and vice versa.

People rarely knowingly make choices against themselves or against
their own interests. The more collective the discussions and
decisions on what to produce, how, where, when, by who and for
who within an entity, the more the needs of those involved in the
collective discussions and decisions in the entity are produced and
met by that entity, and the less the conflicts and violence within that
entity. By extension, the more people are able to authoritatively
decide what to produce and for who the more they tend to control
the social production process in a polity, the more they are: a) likely
to produce and reproduce their needs, b) the more the form of rule
is informed and controlled by the same set of people,   c) the more
secure they are likely to be, d) the more they are likely to accept
their positions in society, and e) the less the levels of conflicts and
violence

The more the number of people that participate in group decision
making the greater the tendency to met the interests of a greater
number of people in the group and vice versa. This, therefore,
suggests that the greater the number of people that participate in
discussion and decision making in a polity, the greater the tendency
to harmonize interests, and the greater the degree of harmonization
of interests, the lesser the degree of conflicts and violence in a

polity. <u>This is how we may also link more democracy to less conflicts and violence in the long term on the ground that people's rule means more people making authoritative decisions which entail more harmonization of people's interests and therefore less conflicts and violence</u>.

- Due to the changing pattern of satisfaction of interests of various people over time and the fact that very few interests are ever permanently secured, people who have harmony of interests now may develop discordant interests later which may subsequently lead to violent confrontation among them.

- Those whose survival and security interests are satisfied in their social production and reproduction relationship tend to defend such a relationship and want it to continue to be so, while those who perceive their survival and security needs unsatisfactory in a social production and reproduction relationship tend to oppose it and want it to change in their favour, their religious and ethnic identities notwithstanding.   For example, American federalists and Confederalists (both Christians) fought a bitter civil war, Christian European countries fought one another for centuries as viciously as Moslem Iraq fought Moslem Iran or the Somalis of more or less the same ethnic and religious identities fought one another.

- Different social production and reproduction systems have different quality of labour power, tools of labour, objects of labour and social production relationships. All these factors are very interactive. A change in one aspect tends to produce a change in another aspect. A social production system in which social production relations are skewed in favour of a few tends to generate much more conflicts and violence, is much more conflicts and violence prone, and is more likely to be maintained by the use of armed forces and police than a social production system where the social production relationships are less skewed. This is again irrespective of common religious and/or ethnic identity.

- A social production and reproduction system in which all accept their positions in it is unlikely to be violent and vice versa. People are likely to accept their positions in the scheme of things if they feel secure. They feel more secure when they control the social production system. This is why people's sense of security is a function of their place in the production system. When, therefore, all, the masses or at least a majority of the people in a polity control the production process, the polity or unit becomes a democracy, when the aged control the production process a gerontocracy emerges, when the wealthy dominate the production system plutocracy emerges as the form of governance, when the clergy and

religious leaders control the social production a theocracy emerges, when the nobility controls the social production of a polity aristocrats rule, etc. Therefore, no form of rule can be wished or decreed into existence or sustained if it is not in consonance with or does not evolve from, the social production that determines who has the means to govern. Those who are foisted into political office by others must do the bidding of those who foisted them or get thrown out, neutralized or liquidated by those who foisted them. However, if they hope to act independently or do their own bidding they must quickly and/or skillfully neutralize, dominate and/ or liquidate their sponsors if they can. This is what military regimes do. Such a task is not often easy particularly if there is great disparity in the means possessed by the sponsored and the sponsor.

- Violence and conflicts in any social production system can help popularize knowledge, skills and control of material resources of a polity or further restrict knowledge, skills and control of the material resources of a polity in a few hands. The former takes a polity towards democracy as more and more people develop and have the capacity to make relevant decisions in the production system and the latter takes it further away from democracy as fewer and fewer people have the capacity to make relevant decisions in the social production system. The scale of conflicts and violence are also expected from our theoretical perspective to be greater the greater the quality of the tools of production. We shall limit our illustrations to two social production systems: communalism [26] and capitalism [27] which are pertinent to the understanding of the Nigerian situation. There is disagreements as to whether feudalism as witnessed in Europe ever took place in other continents.[28] Although emirates existed in parts of pre-colonial northern part of what became Nigeria and were often regarded as feudal systems of production, the bulk of the people under those emirates engaged in communal production.

Communal Social Production: Within a communal production and reproduction system the family is the basic unit of production. Communities and polities are generally small in scale. Related families become clans and related clans grow into tribes and ethnic groups. Most families decide what to produce for themselves. Production is essentially for direct consumption needs not for sale or exchange. Very little surplus is produced and that which is produced and consumed is produced and consumed considerably equitably. Most members of society are agriculturists/ hunters and live on communal land. Families and/or adults form work units that exchange labour in their various farms and other production locations. Most communities produce

most of their needs. There is virtually no unemployment: everybody is engaged in one form of agricultural and/or handcraft activity or the other. Everybody has shelter, howbeit inexpensive, which is often communally constructed. Exchange is often by barter or by some crude currency.

Conflict over land, where there is land scarcity, is between one village, group of villages or clan and another and generally of short duration. Wars are fought with sticks, bows, arrows, spears, machetes, axes and or crude guns and are also communal affairs. The amount of damage done by warfare is very limited when compared to modern warfare.

There is little disparity between the labour of adults. Communities own land collectively and decide collectively what to do with land. Other tasks beyond the scope of a family are decided upon and undertaken collectively. People accept their positions in the production system because by and large there is considerable parity in the attainment of the basic needs of survival and security. There is considerable harmony of interests and little or no disparity in the positions that most adults occupy in the production system. These adults have communal and fairly the same access to land. This kind of social production often generates a form of rule near real people's rule, at least, successive rule by adults of a particular age or limited democracy. Historically, it is in the communal mode of production that human beings have gone nearest to peoples' rule or democracy. This tends to be so because in spite of very limited knowledge and skills available production is communal in nature and most people have access to knowledge, skills and the physical resources for making competent decision making and did participate in making decisions on production and the attendant governance. The basis and means for large scale conflicts and violence namely exploitation and sophisticated instruments for violence, did not exist. Most adults also have direct stake on what is produced and feel obliged to engage in such production.

Capitalist Production: Capitalism is an advanced stage of social production which replaced feudal social production in Europe. In other parts of the world which had different social production systems it produced various effects that were not exactly the same as it produced in Europe. Within a society dominated by capitalist social production system a few own and control what is produced by many. Thus a few take advantage of the many making capitalism inherently exploitative, conflictual and violent. The dominant ethos is I not we. Everybody tries to take advantage of everybody. The deriving force for production is profit. Employers only engage labour if they can make profit. Most people are no longer farmers and no longer live on communal land (communal land is privatized during the early stages of capitalism). They also no longer live in their own houses and depend on employed labour for their livelihood. They tend to live in their employers

houses or in rented houses. Exchange is generally by the use of money. The products of the production system are many and diverse but skewed in favour of a few. Many people are generally unemployed in spite of their willingness to work because it is not profitable to employ and pay all that are willing to work. In addition many people no longer possess the tools for labour even when they have the knowledge and skills. Many others also do not even have the relevant knowledge and skills, which have become increasingly sophisticated and specialized, to gain the desired employment. Under this state of disparities in knowledge, skills, control, ownership, exchange and consumption in the production system it is no longer possible and even efficiently and effectively productive to have the masses of the population or a majority to rule. The armed forces and police have also become professionalized and standing forces. They are no longer part time and a citizens' army of all able-bodied adult males. These armed forces do the bidding of those who control and/or pay them.

In this state of affairs many are dissatisfied with their positions in the production system but the armed forces and police and other paid private armies are increasingly used to inflict violence on the masses to check their restiveness in the face of increasing dissatisfaction. The dissatisfied struggle individually and/or collectively, under all kinds of identities such as classes, ethnic groups, religious groups, ideologies, etc. to change or at least improve their positions. They steal, cheat, fight, murder, engage in distortion, propaganda, strikes, conspiracies, revolts, and rebellion, warfare and revolutions in order to get what they need or want, which ordinarily they do not get. Those who are satisfied with their position in this kind of system often still feel insecure because of the activities of the unemployed and the employed who are also dissatisfied with their lot in their employment. The satisfied thus organize to counter the activities of the dissatisfied often employing suppression, reforms, lies, distortion, propaganda, threats, murder, assassination, the armed forces and the police, the educational system and mass media to keep the order of their preference. Violent conflicts are endemic in a capitalist society just like in other forms of social production systems where the majority has lost out in the decision of what to produce, how, when, where and for who. With increased quality of productive forces (knowledge, skills, physical strength of workers, means of production), violence becomes more devastating for humankind.

Mere reform of the capitalist system is unlikely to automatically lead to democracy or any other form of rule other than the rule by capitalists because capitalists will continue to control the production system and the polity and a majority in a polity are unlikely to be capitalists. It requires considerable transformation of the system whereby both labour and the products of labour are socialized or communalized. Even a socialized and/or communalized production system does not automatically become a

democracy when advanced knowledge, skills and control of the physical resources of the polity is with a few, at least with less than the majority or if a high level, scale and quality of production already attained under capitalism must be maintained. It is, not the fair share of output of production that makes a democracy even though it is likely to move society towards democracy. It is the decision making: who rules, that defines a democracy or any form of rule. Even in an advanced socialized social production system the available knowledge and skills must be continually popularized rather than specialized if democracy is to emerge. This has to be so in a polity with advanced science and technology because it is only when all, at least most adults, have common knowledge and skills for production as in a communal system of production before they can meaningfully participate in authoritative decision making. Perhaps, this is why a capitalist society by its very character of production on the basis of privatized advanced knowledge and skills can not automatically yield democracy. At best it can improve the quality of life of many and the quality of representative government of the capitalists.

Since a polity based on capitalism is inherently conflictual and violent, if such violence is not system transforming, that is, one that moves from capitalism to advanced communalism it can not immediately lead to democracy. Such violence at best leads to more concessions to those who are dissatisfied with their place in the production and reproduction system if they can not be out rightly suppressed or neutralized.

The capitalist social production has become dominant globally and produces different levels of conflicts and violence and their effects in different parts of the world. These conflicts and violent activities may take racial, ethnic, nationalist, class, religion, or other characters and must be properly understood for what they are. Their motive force remains the same, namely: the struggle for survival and security within a social production system. This is, therefore, the context in which to understand societal conflicts and violence in relation to forms of rule and their different dynamics, means and manifestations in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world in the year 2004 and in the near future.

PROPOSITIONS

We can make the following deductions from the foregoing theoretical perspective.

a)   That the current spate of urban and rural conflicts and violence are only indirectly related to the struggle for democracy in the polity.

b)   That the current urban and rural violence are directly related to the quality of rule in the country.

c)   The more unacceptable the quality of rule and life for a majority in a
        polity the more the likelihood of the intensification of violent
        activities.
d)   The more the various groups or identities in a polity employ
        violence to fight for the rule by the people in the social production
        and reproduction system the more likely the chances for more
        people to be involved in authoritative decision making in the
        country.

The paper takes the position that the current civilian rule cannot be
transformed into a democracy by the current rural and urban violence and the
activities of the ethnic and religious militia because the current spate of
violence is unlikely even in the near future to led to the control of the social
production and reproduction system in the country by the people, the pre-
requisite for the emergence of the rule of all that are qualified to vote (limited
form of democracy). At best the current urban and rural conflicts and
violence are likely to lead to some more concessions such as improved
representation for and political appointments of the aggrieved groups of
people, citing of more government sponsored projects in the areas of the
aggrieved, etc, provided that these activities and groups are coordinated and
directed at pursuing their legitimate rights. When these rights are attained
and/or granted the various groups may then develop a more positive attitude
towards Nigeria and other Nigerians. This may lead to the development of
more common ties and shared values. Such common bond and values may
lead to a common front for common causes including the right of people to
form political tparties unconditionally, increase in the number and classes of
people who participate in authoritative decision making, etc. Hopefully, this
in the long run, will move the polity nearer to the attainment of genuine
people's rule over themselves. The reverse could also happen. If the violent
activities of these groups are not coordinated and directed at obtaining
legitimate rights they are likely to be disorganized, subverted and/or
suppressed. The persistence of urban and rural conflicts and violence may
even provide justification for military rule or some form of dictatorship, the
reverse of the long journey to people's rule. We, wish to use the theoretical
perspective already presented to explore the dynamic relationship between
societal conflicts, especially violent conflicts and the prospects of democracy
in Nigeria.

ON ISSUES OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIETAL CONFLICTS, VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY

The relationship between societal violence and democracy is not clear cut and
hard to tell. More directly, violence can be used and has been used to extract
freedom from slavery, serfdom, right to life, freedom of: speech, association,

peaceful assembly, the right to vote and be voted for, and freedom of movement. It has and can also be used to acquire the right to increased wages and salaries, for compensation for environmental degradation. Violence has also been used since recorded history to diminish, suppress and extinguish these freedoms and rights and it can still be used to do so. Even when all these rights have been attained, which is no mean achievement, it is not yet democracy or the rule of the people. People can have free and fair elections, as is popularly conceived in the western world or have the rights to food, shelter, employment, education, health care, etc, and yet the people, at least the adult citizens, are not all involved in making the authoritative decisions of their polity. Those who control the means of production may still be the rulers and are often indeed the rulers. All that can be said is that the attainment of these rights and freedoms may more probably move a polity nearer the point where all or at least a majority of adults can rule. It is also probable that the attainment of these rights and freedoms may reach a point of saturation and stagnation or of reversal depending on the nature of social production. From the foregoing we can state that there may be to a certain point a direct link between societal violence and both the acquisition and suppression of specific rights and freedoms like the right to vote and be voted for but no direct link between violence and democracy.

Oppressive rule or any other form of rule founded on oppression, deprivation and/or suppression of the perceived legitimate rights and/or freedoms of a majority of the people within a social production system is likely to be maintained by violence. And such a regime is likely to be overthrown by violence. People anywhere and at any time in the world who want to bring about any state of affairs, just or unjust, fair or unfair, are likely to employ violence if they perceive peaceful and non-violent means ineffective. Therefore, violence can and has been used for contrary purposes. Pro-democracy or anti-democracy can be brought about by violence.

A social production and reproduction system in which all are involved in deciding what to produce, how, when, where and for who, is a democracy in the sense that all are ruling. Such a system is likely to produce and reproduce in the interests of all concerned because all decide what to produce, how, and for who and because sane persons rarely purposely make choices that hurt them. Thus all making the decisions removes the basis of antagonisms and conflicts which could degenerate into violence. This is in contrast to a situation in which one person or a few people chose for all. Theoretically when all decide there is no conflict and violence or at least less violent conflicts than when few or one decides for all. Here may be the link between the number of people that rule and conflicts and therefore, the link between violent conflicts and democracy/people's rule. The link proceeds as follows: since no sane person rules against his own interest, the more people that are involved in ruling (authoritative decision making) the more they are

likely to choose what is acceptable to themselves, and what is collectively
acceptable is unlikely to generate conflicts (non-violent or violent conflicts).
Democracy, in the way we use the term, being direct people's rule, is
expected to provide for the interests of the people and thus generate fewer
conflicts among the people than a few people's rule. In a similar vein and
logic a few people's rule is likely to generate fewer conflicts than one man's
rule. There thus appear to be an inverse relationship between the number that
rule on the one hand and violent conflicts in a polity on the other. This link is
fairly indirect and through a long thread. The thread is between interests and
conflicts, between ruling and pursuit of self-interests, and between getting
involved in authoritative decision making and priority to the satisfaction of
the needs of those so involved in authoritative decision making, and finally,
between satisfaction of all or collective satisfaction and virtual disappearance
of the basis for antagonisms, conflicts and violence. This also implies that as
long as the interest of one or few, particularly a determined/powerful one or
few are not satisfied, the basis of antagonisms and violent conflicts still
remains.

APPLICATION OF THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE PRESENTATION OF ARGUMENTS AND EVIDENCE

At the inception of colonial rule in Nigeria, except for a few feudal
communities most communities had communal production systems. Even
among slave owning communities only a few depended wholly on slave
labour. Similarly, semi-feudal enclaves still rested essentially on communal
mode of production. The productive forces were, as expected, not very
developed. Some kinds of ploughs, drought animals like asses, horses,
camels, etc, were in use in the far northern parts of the country.
        The communities were more or less village states or
confederations. Within these political communities violent criminal activities
against private property were comparatively low scale and limited to
livestock and food items just as the instruments for committing such violent
acts were limited. The low quality of productive forces made the effects of
violent conflicts, when and where they occurred less devastating than in our
current capitalist social production system. There were few guns, poor means
of communication and transportation as well as limited market for stolen
goods. Bare hands, sticks, bows, arrows, spears and machetes were the
predominant weapons.
        In some areas the quest for better arable or grazing or hunting
and/or fishing land/ground was the impetus for violence. Less rampant was
outright conquest and/or domination and the quest for captives and slaves
which was to gain ascendancy later from the time of sub-Saharan slave trade.
Violence of this type when it took place often occurred between communities

which were independent polities. Other occasions for violence were inter-family, inter-clan and inter-village quarrels over status, honour, women, rites, and witchcraft.

With very limited use of land and primitive work tools there was abundance of unoccupied land. New migrants reached accommodation with earlier arrivals. They either got assimilated or moved to unoccupied land or knew the order of seniority of and in their villages.

Most people produced and had food and shelter, however poor in quality and quantity. There was, therefore, no compelling need to commit crimes against private property which existed at very low scale and most people possessed themselves. Even these items were used fairly communally. Water pots, calabashes, digging sticks, hoes and spears were easily borrowed and returned at virtually no cost. The quality of knowledge and skill of what was needed and produced was fairly low and popular. Knowledge and skills were produced on the job through participation. What was produced was often fairly distributed and consumed by the producers during ceremonies and festivities. Most Nigerians lived in their homelands. Virtually everybody had a house/hut to live in, food to eat, knowledge and access to the medicinal herbs. The Medicine men and women who existed were also agriculturalists. Unemployment was virtually non-existent. Most people were self-employed and worked in groups and mutually exchanged their labour.

There was popular participation in communal affairs and governance by all adults in the village, or by a succession of elders and/or by aged grades. Most people took part in the processes of governance in different capacities, depending on their ages because they were knowledgeable in such matters as what to produce, how, when, where and for who. By and large in most Nigerian communal societies there was comparatively genuine but limited people's rule (the people directly making authoritative decision in their polities). Most monarchies, especially in the southern parts of Nigeria, where they had emerged, were constitutional not absolute. Although the standard of living was poor there was comparative fairness in the social production system. This state of affairs made most people accept their place in the social production relationship.

There were few large population centres like Kano and Ibadan which were also inhabited essentially by agriculturalists, few traders and still fewer craftsmen. Even in these big population centres most people produced their needs and exchanged by barter and/or bought their needs with cowries, metal bars, sea shells, etc. Most parts of the place now known as Nigeria remained at the communal social production system level before the advent of capitalist social production [29].

On the whole there was low level of violent conflicts especially within each of these entities because people accepted their positions in the production system. The institutions for peaceful resolution of conflicts were

also acceptable. This acceptance of their position in the production system and the institutions for peaceful resolution of conflicts was, as a consequence of their sense of security which in turn was due to the fact that most people were able to produce and reproduce their needs reasonably, including the conflict resolution structures and institutions which the people themselves evolved.

With the advent of capitalist social production system first introduced through trade then later through colonialism, the scope and mode of conflicts and violence began to change. Slave trade (especially, first, the trans-Saharan, and then later the trans-Atlantic versions) provided the first externally induced motive force for large scale conflicts and violence. The communal social production and its attendant way of life began to be disrupted. Many other changes in the social production, too numerous for this paper, were triggered off by slave trade. The demand for slaves increased the state of tension and insecurity. There was need for more organization and more concentration of labour for security, war and peace. Many villages and population centres were raided and sacked for slaves [30]. The recourse to violence increased both in the quest for slaves and in defence against slave raiders as new and more potent weapons and stimulants for violence such as more powerful guns and gin were introduced into the area.

As if the situation were not bad enough then came trans-Atlantic slave trade. The scale of this phase of slave trade, level of violence and other deleterious effects have been ably accounted for by Walter Rodney [31]. This was the era of tales of sins and woes as people tried to reposition themselves in the slave trading period within a predominantly communal economy. Certain towns (Uburu, kano, Lagos and Badagry) became special markets for slaves as many people (the Aros and their warriors) began to specialize in slave raiding and trading. Slave trade left in its trail the rise of despotic chiefs and kings slave dealers and raiders who destroyed people's rule in such places. It also left pockets of migrant slave traders and their warriors' settlements [32], inter-village wars, sacked villages, displaced peoples, waves of migrations, new settlements, atrocities, animosities, hostilities, bad memories, stereotypes among various Nigerians. In addition, there were also populations which had been dispersed and geographically separated by wars, which were to become factors of conflicts, and have indeed become factors of violent conflicts as we shall see shortly. This phase of violence and conflicts was not directly about democracy or anti democracy, it was about the pursuit of wealth through slave raids and trade and/or fighting against slave raids and against being captured as slaves. We can say perhaps that this state of insecurity had emerged because the people had lost the ability to govern themselves effectively or that the limited democracy under the communal social production was being destroyed.

The end of trans-Atlantic slave trade dovetailed into European conquest and colonization of the area known as Nigeria. Colonization of the people of Nigeria by Britain was accompanied by the imposition of capitalist social production and reproduction on a hitherto essentially communal social production and reproduction system. Large scale violence was perpetrated by the British to abolish or curtail people's rule in hitherto independent communities, where such existed. Self-governing polities were violently subjugated and subjected to direct foreign rule during the years of colonization. In this case violence was used to terminate self-rule and the degree of democracy that existed among the subdued people. The violence inflicted by the colonialists was anti-democracy whereas the violence used by the colonized to resist colonialism was pro-democracy.

From the colonial time till date the capitalist social production system introduced into Nigeria has been geared to serving the needs of a minority of Nigerians unlike the pre-colonial communal social production system. This more or less military occupation of the land lasted for over half a century. Thus began a journey away from people's rule and struggles of the various subjugated people to regain such freedom and self-rule. The struggles over the years and which were sometime violent led to the termination of direct foreign rule but not the restoration of people's rule. Since the end of colonization in October 1960, the country has been under indirect foreign rule, through the Nigerian elites, who the colonizers groomed and left behind to run the capitalist system. This mode of production has continued to serve essentially the few Nigerians who directly control it and Europeans and Americans who indirectly control it. The struggles have thus continued till date, sometimes violently, as manifested in anti petroleum products price increase and anti International Monetary Fund and World Bank conditionality demonstrations, protests, and riots [33].

At the inception of colonial rule, Nigerians were needed to help the British colonizers produce and reproduce their needs in Nigeria. First was the need for the infrastructure for the more advanced productive forces of capitalism in Nigeria. In place of bush tracks, dug-out wooden canoes, horses, donkeys and camels which were the existing means of transportation in Nigeria at this point in time, roads, railways, boats, seaports, ships, etc, were what the colonizers needed for transportation. In addition, the colonialists needed assistance in carrying out political and administrative duties as well as in the production of goods and services they needed. Carrying out these tasks required enormous labour. Various peoples of Nigeria who lived at different levels of the communal and/or emerging capitalist mode of production were recruited and or conscripted for various jobs. They were recruited as road construction labourers, chiefs, politicians, civil servants, soldiers, policemen, miners, builders, teachers, sales clerks, to name a few. This pattern of recruitment had implications for societal

conflicts especially violent conflicts and the form of rule in the country. Some dominated the armed forces officers' corps, the police, the civil service, educational institutions. This state of affairs was to lead to complaints of discrimination and marginalization of some other Nigerians.

The men and women who were needed for these production processes had to come from their former agricultural occupations where they were self-employed, worked communally, lived in their own houses and on their own land and produced their own food. Henceforth, they were to be employed and paid by other people, live in rented houses if they could or in employer- provided houses, if any, and as long as they remained employed by the same employer, bought food with their wages, and work and speak in ways that were initially strange. All these had the potential for industrial/labour conflicts and violence.

With respect to politicians and administrators, the colonial government recruited emirs, chiefs and politicians to assist in ruling the country. Where there were no chiefs the government created chiefs they called warrant chiefs. These emirs and chiefs ruled according to the dictates of the colonial government and not according to the ways the emirs and chiefs were used to or how their people governed themselves before the advent of colonialism thus encouraging self serving rule and sowing the seeds of conflicts and violence. The few politicians that were initially recruited from Calabar and Lagos had to be western educated people. Their electors had to be of particular economic status [34] and invariably those who had been recruited into the capitalist production system. Although these few politicians had only an advisory role, the pattern of recruitment had significant impact on the prospects for people's rule or democracy. In the first instance, only those that were acceptable to the colonialists not the people of Nigeria could become politicians. Secondly, they were also those who were anxious or willing to inherit the British pattern of rule. Thirdly, they were mainly urban-based workers and professionals who constituted a minority not rural-based agriculturalists majority. Fourthly, political jobs on the whole gave them better income and/or status and/or influence than they had in their permanent employments, former paid employment or the remunerations they got from their self-employment. This pattern and factors laid the foundation for violent politics in the country.

At independence those who inherited the colonial system ruled essentially in their own interest just like the colonial masters did. They continued to see politics as the better and quicker path to wealth. Politics became a matter of life and death and war. Thuggery, arson and murder became means to power. Electoral violence was neither against nor for people's rule or democracy. It was employed essentially to improve the user's position in the production system.

Concerning the infrastructure and other facilities such as the motorways, mining activities, factories, sea ports, while these projects employed the labour of people, they often displaced people who were not necessarily employed in the same facilities that displaced them. This trend has intensified. These people who have been attracted to urban centres are often under-employed or unemployed, and with no meaningful welfare benefits. They are more or less on their own. These are the ready hirelings, agents and victims of large scale urban criminal and violence.

The growth of capitalist economy meant more trading and administrative population centres. Self-employment and residence in homelands increasingly gave way to paid hired and other-employed labour as well as residence outside homelands. New ways of living and new values were introduced and/or created in food, clothing, housing, education, and social relationships. People began to employ all kinds of means to survive and/or acquire the new values. Most relevant for the understanding of urban and rural conflicts and violence was the lack of and inadequacy of jobs for those who continued to be attracted to the towns and/or compelled to adopt the new ways of life. Those who had no means of livelihood and/or dissatisfied with their position in the scheme of things engaged in all kinds of activities (non criminal and criminal). People resorted to forming all kinds of survival identities and organizations [35]. Competition and conflict over the few jobs available led to competition and conflict between and among ethnic groups especially the urban-based ones. In order to survive some other city dwellers from the same homeland formed associations for mutual support, including providing shelter and jobs for relations and those so defined. An attack on any relation became an attack on all. This is the context of the emergence and growth of ethnic meetings and unions. The formation of ethnic associations such as Ibibio State Union, Ibo State Union, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, etc, is instructive and well documented [36]. And the various ethnic riots from the colonial times till date (in Kano, Jos, Kafanchan, Lagos, Aba, etc.) have the same logic and dynamics [37].

British colonial rule encouraged more commodity production and exchange, first by barter then through the British currency. Taxes, conscripted labour and other forms of pressure were introduced by the colonialists in order to ensure that Nigerians engaged more in capitalist production and economy. Taxation was one way of compelling Nigerians to get the British currency with which to pay taxes. Tax drive was carried out vigorously and often violently by the colonial government. One had to engage directly or indirectly in trade with the British or their agents by producing what they or those who earned their currency needed. One of the outcomes of taxation was the well-known Aba women's riots [38]. This was one of the first large scale urban, and to some extent, rural violence in Nigeria, after the occupation wars (the so-called pacification wars). Tax

collection or tax drive still occasions violent conflicts between the tax collectors and the payers who feel the taxes are unjustified on the grounds of the level, the mode of administration and services rendered with such services.

Land in which minerals were discovered and mined, on which compensation was paid or likely to be paid, a! d/ or on which cash crops were grown became very valuable and saleable. Cash crops needed by the Europeans yielded more money than the food crops which the people ate. More and more people were attracted or compelled to sale their land or move into planting cash crops, move out of their homelands where they had houses and work to do, to where they expected to have a better deal which often they did not readily have.

Population pressure has also helped to raise the premium on land. All these have brought about increasing need to establish ownership even in hitherto communal land. There are now struggles for land in places where such struggles did not exist prior to colonial time or even during colonial time, and heightened violent struggles in such places where they already exist.

Issues of pollution and/or compensations for land acquired by mines and agricultural estates owners, have generated new conflicts, and in a number of cases, exacerbated hitherto existing pre-colonial land disputes. The violence in Ogoni land and in Oru in Bayelsa State were triggered by the issues of adequate compensation and pollution.

The issues of indigenes and non-indigenes in ownership of land, the original settlers and later settlers and/or first settlers and later settlers in respect of title deeds to land are some old matters that have been compounded by the prevailing quality of social production and reproduction. For example, there are issues of descendants of slaves versus free-born and those who took refuge in shrines to avoid war (Oru and Diala, Osu and Non-Osu respectively in parts of Igbo land), and settlers versus indigenes (Ife-Modakeke conflicts and violence, Zango-Kataf violence, Aguleri-Umuleri violence).

In many parts of Nigeria there are also worrisome rural violence over land boundary within states and across state boundaries, especially at the beginning of the planting season (Ubaghara versus Ohafia wars from the colonial time till recently, Obudu versus Tiv wars from the colonial time to the 1980s, and Tiv versus Junkun wars from the 1970s to the present, etc).

There are also problems of displacement and forceful ejection of people from land by government (violence over the Bakolori dam project in the 1970s, and the Osborne land issue in Lagos in the late 1990s).

All the factors discussed above have been exploited by various people and governments to displace and/or suppress others. Some other people have used them to liberate themselves or to repossess what they

consider their rights. It then means that in some of these cases the violence has been enslaving for some and/or liberating for others. Asserting a right or defending same does not necessarily mean democracy. This trend has continued till date virtually unabated. It is not clear which will prevail in the long run and whether or not gaining many more rights will ultimately lead to democracy. At least the experience of North American and European countries has shown that the enjoyment of civil liberties has so far not led to the rule of the people.

The pattern of governance from colonial time till date has been predominantly violent. The colonialists used violence to subdue Nigeria and impose their will on Nigeria. They ruled Nigeria in their own interest. They created homelessness, unemployment, urban squalor and inter-ethnic rivalry in the struggle for places in the production system in the course of producing and reproducing their needs in Nigeria without a social welfare benefits scheme as in their home country. The colonialists left authoritative decision making in the hands of the minority urban elites who they created. These Nigerian elites, whom they created in the country over the years of colonial rule, have continued to use the government, the armed forces and police to dominate the country and rule in their own interest, like their colonialist mentors did.

Prior to colonial rule leadership in most political entities in Nigeria was by ascription, rotation, achievement and consensus. Ruler ship was confined to certain families in a certain order, to certain age grades in certain order and or rotated among certain families, clans and villages in a certain order and by well known achievements of title taking. People were groomed or grew into these roles at well defined periods. The concept of voting, government party and the opposition party, majority/minority and/or plurality in the selection of leaders, and the winner takes all introduced into Nigeria by the colonialists has also been the basis of violence in the body politics of Nigeria. From the colonial time till date people from the majority ethnic groups or clans have so far permanently become the leaders over people of other ethnic groups' whom they had never ruled before the colonial time and who also continued to strive for their own governments in which their people would rule.

Since October 1960, when the colonialists reached accommodation with some of the urban elites, by giving them direct control of the capitalist production system in the country while they retained indirect control, the struggle among the urban elite and their supporters for a hold on the production system has intensified. Five authoritative decision making centres and governments: Kaduna for the Northern Region, Ibadan for the Western region, Benin for the Midwest Region,'and Enugu for the Eastern Region and Lagos for the central or the federal government, were created[38] for the elite to share with the colonial masters in the control of the social production

system. These four regional governments and their centres except for Benin in Midwestern Region were carved out for and dominated by each of the three major ethnic/linguistic groups. The central government was the bone of contention among the elite of the regions especially those of the major ethnic groups.

Those who controlled these centres enriched themselves, their relations, friends and loyalists through award of contracts, political appointments, employment, location of facilities, and other patronages of all sorts. They also punished their opponents and perceived opponents by denying them contracts, political appointments, location of facilities, employment a nd o ther p atronages o r b y using t he p olice and t he c ourts t o arrest, detain and/or jail them on trumped up charges. Those who did not control any government were at the mercy of those who did. The stage was set for virulent and violent struggle for more authoritative decision making centres (creation of s tates) and/or control of the existing centres and/or for better positions in the system. The fight for political office became a matter of life and death for those in the struggle. Electioneering campaigns and elections were often marked by all kinds of malpractices such as rigging, thuggery, arson, murder and other forms of violence.

As w ould be expected the elites of the other ethnic g roups in t he regions, other than those of the dominant linguistic/ethnic groups, who were not satisfied, and most of them were not satisfied with their position in the system, intensified their struggles for a change in their favour. The same informed the struggle for the central government. The Tiv riots [39], the arrest and detention of E. O. Eyo of U yo, the arrest, trial and detention of chief Awolowo on charges of treasonable felony, and the rebellion of Isaac Adaka Boro were fall out of the struggle for power and/or consolidation of power. In this struggle all means and instruments were employed. The most salient have been the use of government, political party, religion, ethnic group and region. After all, each region had a government of its own and controlled the resources of its own, including local government police with which it favoured and/punished people. Apart from the Midwest Region, every other region had a political party which the people of the majority ethnic g roup l ed a nd d ominated. The r egions were t he home o f t wo major religions w hich encouraged different attitude to life, the three m ajor ethnic groups had different levels of education and access to the jobs in the capitalist social production, and the regions spoke different languages with English language as the lingua franca. In addition, the geographical regions of North, East, Midwest and West had a number of different needs, different economic crops and mineral resources whose market values were not the same. These were fairly reasonable grounds for mobilization for offence and defence. For example, campaigns could proceed and did proceed in a number of occasions as follows: we in this region A must resist all attempts by people from other

regions B, C, etc, to take over our government and subdue us; our political party must not be controlled by people outside the region otherwise we shall loose control of the resources of the region: those people do not like us but our resources; non-believers should not be allowed an in road into our region lest they disrupt our way of life, offend God and make God to withhold his blessings on the effort of the believers; the men or women outside our region do not and can not understand our problems let alone solve them; and we are different people with different languages, in order to minimize misunderstanding let each region go at its own pace [40].

Although in the context of Nigerian politics we have often talked about inter-ethnic rivalry the main struggle was really inter-governmental and inter-political party and intra-political party rivalry because those who were engaged in these struggles were people who controlled and/or wanted to control governments in the regions and centre, and who mobilized or want to mobilize and use the resources of the regions and centre through the instrumentality of the governments and political parties which they controlled or wanted to control. Those who had no region or government to control had their own political parties or formed their own political parties and wanted to control the governments of existing regions or have new regions created whose governments they would control in order to enhance their positions in the production system..

The most violent phase of the inter-governmental/inter-party/ intra-party/inter-ethnic rivalry for better positions in the social production and reproduction system was the 1966 violent overthrow of the civilian regime by some members of the armed forces and the subsequent civil war. Millions of Nigerians both soldiers and civilians perished in this war. From January 1966 to September 1979, there was military rule. This phase of Nigerian history can be and has been interpreted in different ways, namely: i) as a great setback of the journey towards people's rule as a few armed people made authoritative decisions for the country; ii) a necessary phase to stop the domination of the country by the Ibo ethnic group and thus a step towards genuine people's rule; iii) as the substitution of Ibo domination with Hausa-Fulani domination and thus a backwards step in the journey towards people's rule; iv) and as the phase that helped create more centres of authoritative decision making in many more parts of Nigeria in areas outside the homeland of the three major ethnic groups in the country, the involvement of more members of other ethnic groups in the country in authoritative decision making or rule, and thus a forward march towards democracy (ethnic democracy as some would say).

Whatever the interpretation, what can be said with certainty is that the journey to people's rule has a chequered history and appears differently to different people. If the people belong to or are classified into different races, nations, religions, language groups, occupations, creeds, etc, people's rule, if

it is true to its name, must include all these kinds of people. Democracy or people's rule that discriminates against people on account of religion, ethnic group, beliefs, occupation, class, etc, is incomplete. This is to suggest that religious, e thnic, c lass a nd r acial c onflicts a nd v iolence a re n ot n ecessarily anti democracy. They, in fact, can expand and fertilise the territory for eventual growth of democracy if the violence is used to and succeeds in abolishing or minimizing discrimination against any of these categories of people.   How else can any identity that is systematically or subtly discriminated against be involved in people's rule except struggle for it sometimes violently when peaceful means are ineffective.

The end of the civil war was not the end of violent urban and rural conflicts. However, none of the subsequent violent conflicts was of the scale of the civil.war. Although the Nigerian civil war ended with the slogan of no victor no vanquished, many of the facilities and infrastructure.damaged during the civil war were not rehabilitated for a long time after the war. Many easterners who were in the Biafran enclave lost their former jobs and were unemployed, many ex-Biafran soldiers were demobilized without adequate rehabilitation, and a reasonable number of Nigerian soldiers were also demobilized. With teaming destitute, unemployed and homeless, many of who knew how to use firearms, the stage was set for violent behaviour in the form of armed robbery as well as summary justice to those caught in robbery. The federal military government unable to get to the root the prevailing violence enacted a decree that stipulated death sentence by firing squad for armed robbery in the country. With the high crime rate and the inadequacy of police protection vigilante groups emerged all over the country. This is the background to the emergence of the well talked about Bakassi Boys Vigilante in parts of Ibo land which only came into existence in the late 1990s. The kind of violence inflicted by the vigilante groups or by the armed robbers can not be directly linked to the struggle for or against democracy. Extra judicial arrests and killings of armed robbers and suspected armed robbers is not anti or pro rule of the people just as engaging in armed robbery are not pro or anti democracy. The vigilante groups are part of those who are primarily concerned with security of life and property which the state has been unable to adequately provide. The armed robbers are also part of the people essentially at the receiving end of the capitalist production system or completely excluded from the social production system but w ho m usf earn their own living, howbeit in a criminal way. One can infer that both the activities of the vigilante groups and those of the violent and/or armed criminals are indications of people not accepting their position in the production process which may or may not mean a purposeful struggle for people's rule. Both the vigilante groups and armed robbers definitely abridge the fundamental rights of fellow citizens. But the observance of the rights of fellow c itizens d oes not t ranslate i nto t he r ule o f t he p eople o r d emocracy

even though the rule of the people is more likely to address the problems created by both armed robbers and vigilante groups. Going by one of our earlier basic assumptions that no sane ruler rules against his or her own interest one could infer from this state of affairs that if the vigilante groups and those engaged in armed robberies were involved in authoritative decision making in the Nigerian polity in preventing and dealing with these types of violence they would likely control the production process(deciding and enforcing the decisions of what to produce, how, when, where and for who) differently a nd possibly i n their o wn favour. T his c ould t hen e liminate t he need for and basis of such violence. It is from this position that one can see the l ink b etween a rmed r obbery a nd v igilante v iolence a s i ndicators o f t he absence of democracy or the long distance the Nigerian polity is from democracy.

Many years of military rule did not significantly improve the capitalist social production in Nigeria while the spate of misuse and abuse of governmental power increased. Military rulers more blatantly than their civilian predecessors converted public resources to personal use. They also used public office to enrich their relations and friends. They appointed those they pleased to various offices, awarded contracts for whatever sum they chose a nd t o who t hey l iked. The o il wealth o f t he c ountry was woefully mismanaged. They arrested, brutalized and detained and/ or killed people according to their whims and caprices. The killing of Dele Giwa, Mrs. Kudirat Abiola, Chief Rewane, General Musa Yar Adua, Chief Abiola, Ken Saro Wiwa are a few of the well known cases. Military personnel used their positions to aid and abate their people in inter-communal conflicts. Military rule in Nigeria demonstrated to all and sundry that violence pays and handsomely too, and that those who can, do get away with what they want. The military officers used violence to overthrow legitimately elected governments and appropriated public wealth for themselves, their relations and friends. The wealth of General Babangida, late Abacha, General Abubakar, many retired military officers and their friends are glaring and unacceptable t o m any Nigerians [39]. More and m ore Nigerians and urban poor and unemployed have been witnessing how government institutions are used to impose unjust policies and/or subvert due process particularly since the advent of military regimes. It is alleged that the late General Abacha's million man march to Abuja opened the eyes of ordinary Ijaw youths to how oil wealth has been unjustifiably used in favour of certain places and people. They saw development, opulence and cleanliness in Abuja, the outcome of oil wealth produced in their home states, as compared to underdevelopment, poverty and pollution in their home states, the source of oil wealth. They found the situation unacceptable. This eye-opener was supposed to have fueled Ijaw youths militancy as manifested in the activities of Egbsu Boys of Africa. Many Nigerians are aware that Nigerian governments rarely respect

non-violent pleas and/or demands but act in the face of threat of or use of violence. The worst of it all came under Babangida and Abacha's regimes.

Both Babangida and Abacha tried to cling to power as long as they could. This triggered all kinds of resistance against their arbitrary and oppressive rule to which they in turn responded to with more state sponsored violence. The sordid rule of Babangida and Abacha are recent and are well-known. The recent hearings at the Oputa Panel, the exaggerations of some presentations notwithstanding, are instructive [41].

In the face of the failure of the rulers to deal meaningfully with the challenge of modern life all kinds of demands are being made and movements have been formed and are being formed in the country. There are demands for the creation of more states, for resource control by states, for making Nigeria a true federation, for a confederation, and more. This is the context of the formation and the emergence of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, MOSOP, Afenifere, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, Odua People's Congress, OPC, Arewa People's Congress, APC, the Movement for the Actualization of the Republic of Biafra, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys of Africa, the so-called Area Boys, Secret cult groups in universities and other post secondary as well as in some secondary schools, etc.

The law courts and the civil services work according to the dictates of rulers of the day. The way that Babangida and other military governors have used the courts is very unacceptable. Increasing number of Nigerians are unwilling to use non-violent means of resolving conflicts and in seeking redress because of their lack of faith in the courts, police and the government itself. Many Nigerians do not think that they can get justice in our law courts. The Odua Peoples Organization, OPC, is supposed to have been formed in reaction to the Babangida's regime's whimsical rule and arbitrary annulment of the June 12 elections of late Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba man, allegedly so that the Hausa and Fulani would continue to control the Nigerian state and the social production system. The OPC also acts as a vigilante group like the Bakassi Boys. The OPC's militancy is also said to be in self-defence against police brutality. The Egbesu Boys of Africa, the OPC, APC and other nameless ethnic and religious groups have increasingly recoursed to violence. Whether the militancy of these groups and the reaction of the state will advance the course of people's rule depends on the outcome of these acts of violence on the social production.

The civilian rulers have continued virtually in the same path as their military sponsors and predecessors. The social production system is not providing for the many but for the few. More school leavers from primary schools, secondary schools and the university levels have been joining the ranks of the unemployed, and the homeless in the urban centres and the rural areas. Workers are retired and retrenched without their entitlements in time. Workers remain unpaid for months and/or underpaid for years [42] The

leaders are steeped in embezzlement of public funds and the sale of public property to themselves and their relations and friends, increasing the price of petroleum products, and inflicting large scale violence on civilians as in the cases of Odi in Bayelsa State and Zaki Ibiam in Benue State. This state of affairs has continued to justify the existence and the resolve of the movements and groups that were formed during the military rule era as well as the formation of new ones for the struggle. A redress of the legitimate demands of these groups may not translate directly into people's rule or democracy but it is likely to improve the chances of more people and groups of people gaining access to some levels of authoritative decision making of the Nigerian polity. On the other hand the rulers may use bribery, the police and/or the armed forces to suppress these militants.

On the whole, since pre colonial time, capitalist social production has been laying new bases of violence and compounding old bases of violence and which have culminated in the scale and types of violence which we are currently witnessing. To this day, most urban violence, whether sponsored or spontaneous, religious or secular, are perpetrated by the urban unemployed, under-employed and poorly paid, or by government and its agents or by both. All the current perpetrators of urban violence are the products of the increasing march of capitalism under the guise of globalization.

Various countries react to and cope with globalization in different ways. In Nigeria, public wealth is increasingly privatized, misappropriated and stolen to the detriment of a majority of Nigerians thus aggravating the situation and making the country more vulnerable to further violence. There is less public funding for education and more ignorance in the polity. The proportion of the annual federal government budget for education has been the lowest since the 1960s. It has fallen from about 8 percent in 2001 to less than 6 percent in 2002. Other public infrastructures that are indispensable for the development of the productive forces of the country are often neglected. Many anti-peoples policies such as retrenchment of workers, non-payment, poor payment and late payment of workers, denial of workers' benefits, increase in the price of petroleum products, sale of people's property to a few individuals especially to the rulers themselves and their agents, ignoring the protests of those who they claim gave them the mandate to rule, constitute incontrovertible evidence of the misuse of the term people's rule or democracy to describe the prevailing rule in Nigeria. We re-iterate that a ruler does not choose to skew the rewards system of his polity against himself or herself. A ruler does not normally starve himself and family, remove himself from his means of livelihood. The President of Nigeria, the state governors, the ministers, commissioners, chairmen of local governments, supervisors, the legislators at the federal, state and local government levels are not refusing to pay themselves their monthly salaries

and entitlements, they are not denying themselves good housing and police security, etc. If there were people's rule or democracy the people would have been paying themselves their monthly salaries, kept their jobs and not raise the prices of petroleum products without raising their own salaries proportionately. The people would not have been organizing strikes and street protests against themselves.

The masses are manipulated and dominated. Survival and security have become more precarious in Nigeria since the early 1970 when Obasanjo's regime introduced austere economic measures. These measures have further impoverished the youth and exacerbated the conflicts among the rural and urban poor. The most badly hit appear to be those in Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Onitsha, Kaduna, Aba, Ilorin, Kaduna, Jos and other major urban centres. Among the urban poor and unemployed, those in major northern cities who happen to be Moslems, appear to be the worst off in respect of knowledge and skills for the capitalist economy. They, therefore, constitute a subclass of the poor who are constantly in competition with the poor from the south who happen to be Christians. The stage is thus set for violence, particularly when both groups understand their material problems and solutions in religious terms. Various survival measures including recourse to succor and solace from God are adopted. Today religious houses can be found in all nooks and corners of Nigeria including filling stations and markets. Religious organizations have continued to gain more adherents over the years of hardship inflicted on Nigerians by their leaders, as they increasingly offer all forms of assistance to members which the state and other public institutions would not or could not offer. Religion may not quite be the opium of the masses but the safety net of the masses in the face of state failures. Members of religious groups are encouraged to render all possible assistance to fellow co-religionists. Some religious denominations and groups preach and promise prosperity on earth to followers in line with their foreign religious examples. In fact, one Winners Chapel Nsukka, invited people "to the first Sunday Service of the Year" on January 6, 2002, with the theme "Gods answer to Inflation, Poverty and Diseases". The invitation went further to state that "This programme is designed to liberate you from the problem of fuel increase, high cost of living, sicknesses and diseases"! [43]. Some other religious groups insist on installing fellow co-religionists as secular leaders so that God will be pleased to solve their problems of human existence, and security.

The so-called sharia riots in Kaduna of 2001 which spread to other parts of the country especially the eastern states of Nigeria are essentially political and economic in content. The engineers and sponsors of these riots used them to mobilize the support of their political constituents and thus strengthen their hold on the economy against the possible incursion into their areas by their political opponents. The long standing degeneration of the

position of many Nigerians especially the city dwelling youths (Area Boys) in Kano and Lagos, in the capitalist socio-economic system, from time to time erupts into violence under one pretext or another and provides outlet for pending frustrations of the wretched of the urban centres. The rich, fully employed and comfortable are rarely directly involved in the street riots. It is the under employed, jobless, homeless, ignorant and poor who do the burning, looting and killing. More of these riots are likely to follow with the increasing rate youth joblessness, homelessness, hunger, lack of knowledge and skills and with no meaningful social security system. More often than not, these problems can not be meaningfully addressed outside the context of the capitalist production system.

The disparity in the rewards and punishment of the social production system are highly skewed in favour of a few and against the majority. Even among the minority the rewards and punishment are skewed in favour of the people from certain ethnic groups and religious groups who rule the country and against those from some other ethnic and religious groups. Even within the same ethnic and religious group the same predominance of the few over the majority occurs just as the struggle among the few with the same ethnic group occurs. There are also other combinations and permutations in the use of violence. Violence is likely to continue to be deployed along these cleavages: the few across the country versus the majority across the country, for example, the fuel riots or labour riots,(class struggle and violence), some of the privileged few of different ethnic groups against one another, military coups d' tat (intra ruling class-struggle and violence masked by religion and ethnic groupings), the many from different ethnic and religious groups against one another, for example, Tiv-Jukun wars, (intra working class/peasant struggle and violence masked by the very visible ethnic/religious and other identities).

From the beginning of colonial rule till date, increasing number of Nigerians have ceased to have their own houses, find meaningful employment and feel a sense of security. Many otherwise normal people have been turned into criminals of all sorts by the capitalist production system and its form of rule which has not provided the opportunity for these people to live decent lives. In addition, the system makes every effort to eliminate these criminals it has created. Many more in the urban centres are uncertain and insecure about their daily food. These same people are increasingly aware of the affluence and extremely unwarranted wealth of a few Nigerians particularly those Nigerians who control the state and government institutions.

So far, there does not appear to be a coordinated struggle among the people of Nigeria who are dissatisfied with their place in the production system to redress the situation. Many of the aggrieved work at cross purposes and/or against one another. They also do not even appear to

understand the sources and dynamics of their problems as evidenced by some of the solutions often proffered. On the other hand those interested in sustaining the capitalist mode of production although in control of the major revenue yielding resource in the country, petroleum, are not well organized and clear on how to sustain the system and successfully deal with the increasing violence that may disrupt, stall/hamper and/or even seriously threaten their preferred system. It is not clear in what direction (towards democracy or away from democracy) the current spate of violent conflicts will propel the country. What is clear is that the violence is very likely to continue because the basis of antagonism remains.

We had already noted that the pre-requisites for the rule of the people or democracy are popular access to, control and distribution of knowledge, skills and physical resources for production. People who lack the knowledge, skills and the resources for production are unlikely to meaningfully decide what to produce, how, where, when and for who, even when compelled to do so. The current struggles, including violent ones are not clearly organized and directed at either the construction or prevention of the rise of democracy. Many of them are either parochial, or sporadic, or impulsive, and are not coordinated countrywide. These violent conflicts revolve around anti-sharia, pro-sharia, anti-pollution, anti- exploitation of natural resources without adequate compensation for the indigenes, anti-petroleum product price increase, anti-non-indigenes, pro special privileges for indigenes, self-defence from indigenes, vigilante, anti abuse of police powers, anti non implementation and /or nonpayment of salaries, pensions and other entitlements, land disputes, pro and anti political party, pro and anti creation of states, pro and anti creation of local government, pro and anti location of state government or local government headquarters, etc. Since there is no credible, organized violent challenge to either the social production system that generates these problems or the form of rule that defends the social production system, urban and rural violence, by whosoever it is employed: ethnic militia, religious groups, armed bandits, etc, can not immediately produce democracy or people's rule in Nigeria.

What is likely to be the short run outcome of these spates of violence in relation to democracy? It could be: (i) more violence and chaos as neither the pro nor anti status quo has an upper hand in the struggle, (2) more violence, suppression, repression and order as the pro status quo succeeds in resisting the legitimate demands of the anti status quo, and (3) Less violence and more concession across board as the anti status quo succeed in their demand and/or the pro status quo in their enlightened self-interest make concessions to the various identities. What about the long run? In the long run: (1) more and more popular rights may be conceded/gained across religious and ethnic lines and remain within the capitalist social production system which situation does not lead to democracy, and (2) more

and more popular rights are won by the majority across board and there is a change in the social production system that begins to popularize access and control of knowledge, skills and physical resources of the polity, a more sure footed journey towards democracy not necessarily into democracy. Whichever way, Nigeria is still far away from the construction let alone consolidation of democracy. It is possible in the long run to have genuine representative form of rule or representativocracy in line with Britain or the United States of America but not democracy or rule by the people or rule by at least a majority of the voters.

The current societal violence perpetrated by ethnic militia, religious group a nd o ther i dentities c an i n l ine with what has j ust been s tated b ring about more chaos and suppression of more groups or lead to more order and/or liberation and fair deal for all groups depending on how these acts of violence are directed and handled within the social production system. .

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have attempted to explain and interpret the relationship between the current societal violence and the prospects for democracy in the Nigerian polity from the perspective that violent behaviour like every other human behaviour emanates f rom h uman beings fundamental preoccupation w ith s urvival and security which they must attempt to attain through social production and reproduction. The nature of social production and reproduction determines social behaviour which in turn affects social production and reproduction. Everybody occupies a position in relation to others in the production system. Those who are satisfied with their place in the production system tend to support and protect the system while those who are dissatisfied with their position in the system tend not to support it and want to change the system. There is thus antagonism between these two broad categories of people Different behaviours, including violent ones, are generally employed by both those in favour and against the system to achieve their objectives. That the current state of violence is carried out by both those who are dissatisfied and those who are satisfied with their place in the production system, the former to change the status quo and the latter to preserve the status quo.

Those who control the production system or rule determine what is produced and for who and generally produce in their own interest. Since antagonisms, the basis of social conflicts (violent and non-violent) are generated when the interests of some are produced while that of others are not in the production system because only a few control the production system it means that when many control the production system they produce the needs of the many which also means less antagonisms and less basis for violent conflicts than when few do the same. It thus expected that when a majority rule then the interests of the majority is produced and less

antagonisms and basis of violent conflicts among the majority. We thus infer that when the people rule or democracy they produce for the people and there is less antagonisms and basis for violent conflicts among the people

We tried to show how democracy or any other form of rule is determined by the nature of the social production. We traced this dynamics from pre-colonial communal social production system to the current post-colonial capitalist system. In every polity there must be authoritative decisions and enforcement of such decisions on what is produced, how, when, where, by who for who. Those who do this rule the polity. One person does this the one person rules, few people do these, these few rule, many do these the many rule, common people do these common people rule, aristocrats do these aristocrats rule, and all do this all rule. Democracy for the Athenians who first used the word, meant rule by the people, the people meant all adult citizens of Athens. It was possible in Athens because Athens was a small city engaged in a mixture of communal and slave social production. Then only all adult citizens decided what was produced, how, when, where, by who and for who. Even this model of Athenian city state has not been possible in any modern polity. The reason is that modern polities have capitalist or socialist social production system in which only the capitalist or socialist minority decide what is produced and for who. The capitalist social production system generates violent conflicts due to the fact that the needs of a majority are not met. The socialist social production system is less violent partly because the basic needs of a majority are met and partly because the state monopolises the instruments of violence and maintains surveillance over the movement of everybody. This majority tries to change the system while the minority tries to maintain the system. Each side to this struggle may employ violent behaviour. This situation is worse under capitalism because of the pervasive ownership of instrument of violence, lack of complete surveillance over citizens and because the basic needs of most people are yet to assured.

Capitalism has generated immense wealth and knowledge, the greatest any other social production system before it ever did. It has also created, perhaps, the greatest disparity, inequity and human suffering and scale of human misery from such wealth and knowledge than any other social production system. Its inherent socialization of labour that produces knowledge and wealth and its privatization of wealth and control of knowledge from such labour is inherently incompatible with peace, harmony and democracy (people's authoritative decision making and enforcement. No reasonable majority will rationally decide to sustain large disparity of wealth and the privatization of their social wealth against itself. People at great disparity of knowledge, skills and control of a polity's resources can not have the same perception of what is to be produced when, where, how and for

who. They are only likely to do so when there is little disparity in wealth, knowledge and skill as happens under communal social production.

The capitalist social production system now dominates the world, including Nigeria, and generates its usual conflicts and violence. This is so because a few control the production process and direct production primarily in their own interests. This is contrary to the pre-capitalist communal production where the majority controlled the production process and thus produced their basic needs. Since the advent of capitalism the reverse has become the case. Homelessness, landlessness, unemployment, no means of livelihood, large acquisition of private property, embezzlement of public/communal wealth which were virtually non-existent have become the order of the day. This means that urban and rural violence must continue. If Nigeria hopes to minimize urban and rural violence, the social production system must increasingly produce the needs of a majority of Nigeria. For the production system to be piloted in the direction of the needs of more Nigerians more Nigerians must struggle to rule. In the long term the social production system must be transformed into the system in which all the people or a majority of the people, at least for a start, as in a primitive communalism make the authoritative decisions on what is produced for the majority. In the current situation of advanced productive forces, advanced knowledge and skills must be constantly popularized. This is the path towards democracy in modern large scale polities.

The current challenge to any modern polity is how to (1) adapt communal social production to the current large scale societies and polities or (2) how to transform a capitalist social labour to social products and no longer private products (Socialism) in which a majority rules or (3) to transform a socialist social production system to a communist social production system in which a majority rules or (4) how to carry out a combination of (1) and (4) in a polity in which a majority of its citizens are still operating a recessive and dominated communal social production system while a minority of its citizens are operating a dominant capitalist social production system.

It seems to me the first option is more feasible in a polity with dominant communal social production system. Such a polity does not seem to exist any more. The second option appears more feasible in an advanced capitalist society that already has immense knowledge, wealth and skill and where universal adult suffrage and social welfare benefits are at an advanced stage. The third option seems applicable in socialist polities. The fourth option appears feasible in the Nigerian context where the two social productions are alive but with capitalism dominant though not deeply rooted and not popular, and a popular but dominated communalism with deep roots that are increasingly being destroyed. In each of the options there will be struggle and violence as those who are satisfied with the status quo are likely

to defend it while those who are dissatisfied with the status quo are likely to attack it.

With the benefit of history of mankind the march has been towards more self-governance in spite of reverses from time to time which sometimes lasts for centuries. In spite of the defeat of the democratic phase in Athens many other tribal communal societies and small scale communities have from time to time experienced and tried democracy within their own historical peculiarities. No large scale modern society has succeeded so far. Some large scale polities like Switzerland are nearer people's rule than Nigeria. The march towards and/or away from democracy particularly in polities marked by grave injustices and inequities like Nigeria will continue to witness large scale violence because many people do not accept their places in the social production system. The antagonisms thus generated lead to the prevailing violent conflicts. Inequities and injustices maintained by force and violence can only be destroyed by violence.

In the Nigerian case, at least in the short term and foreseeable future, the comparative strength of genuine pro and anti democracy forces will determine our distance from democracy. For now the indicators are conflicting. Some of the violent acts have led to some reforms while others have led to suppression. Many more people are participating in authoritative decision making in the country than they did under colonial rule and under military regime. However, this state of rule does not mean democracy. The polity may stagnate at this level for many years to come. On the other hand a return to military rule in Nigeria can not be ruled out. Such a regime can reverse even the gains made in the journey so far towards democracy or people's rule. If, however, the current urban and rural violence being perpetrated by various identities (ethnic/religious/classes) are organized and controlled by pro-democracy forces who want to ensure justice and fairness to all legitimate identities and their might prevail over the forces which seek advantage for themselves to the detriment of other identities, then the current urban and rural violence is likely to move the country nearer to more genuine democracy and vice versa.

In more concrete terms in order to get nearer to this stage, the privatization of public wealth must stop. Privatization of public wealth means more inequality in the control of the production system and less chances for democracy and greater chances for plutocracy. Public enterprises which are currently being mismanaged and whose resources are being embezzled for private accumulation by government and other public officials and their collaborators must be sold to communities across the country in order to empower the communities to participate in the control of the production process and thus help modernize and/or adapt communalism to the current situation and/or to encourage and strengthen healthy competition among communities. More public wealth rather than less must be invested in

public education in order to raise the level of knowledge and skills and to popularize such knowledge and skills which are pre-requisites for popular authoritative decision making/people's rule/democracy.

There must also be more public investments in community run health services, welfare benefits, creation of productive enterprises and on other basic infrastructures such as roads, electricity, communication, etc. Leaving all these to private initiative is to open the country to foreign capitalist domination and the attendant antagonisms which have generated the violent conflicts we have witnessed from the period of trans-Atlantic slavery through foreign colonization to the present. The privatization path of development strengthens the rule of the rich (plutocracy) rather than the rule of the people (democracy).

There must also be more objective pursuit of even and fair development of the country. More and more Nigerians must be involved in authoritative decision making through the use of true federalism, a mechanism that has inbuilt more popular participation than unitarism [44]. Most importantly, all Nigerians who believe in and aspire for democracy, not Representativocracy, must organize themselves into movements, political parties and into other forms of identities and struggle to bring about this desired future. Nigerians must also struggle to ensure that all people and groups in the country get a better and a fair deal in the social production system in the country. The social production system must be redirected to meeting more of the legitimate needs and rights of all Nigerians. It is this process that is likely to reduce homelessness, landless, joblessness, environmental pollution, exploitation of the many by the few, uneven development of the country, impoverishment of the masses, etc, which constitute the combined motive force for urban and rural violence of various colouration, to a tolerable level. It is this path that is likely to take Nigeria towards democracy.

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