



Political Thuggery in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and Some Solutions from Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Political thuggery is rough and is seen as violence behavior and antisocial that involves physical assault and intimidation to subdue political opponents. This study aimed to examining the causes and effects of political thuggery in Nigeria and provide some solutions that would help in reducing or eliminating the frequency and consequences of the menace at local, state and national level. This review study is qualitative in nature that reviewed not less than fifty four (54) peer reviewed articles in the field so as to arrive at defendable conclusion. Findings revealed that there is significant increase in political thuggery in Nigeria and it is observed that illiteracy, poverty and unemployment to some greater extent are the key factors triggering youth's involvement in the political thuggery, vis a vis destroying their future and the future of the country at large fueled by corruption tendencies in the country. It is therefore recommended that Nigeria's judicial system as well as relevant security outfits should gear more strategic efforts to curb or manage the menace of political thuggery in the nation. Future studies should dwell in by narrowing the scope of the study by restricting to a particular community, local government or state government and or by making it a complete research study other than a mere review of previous literatures.

Keywords: Political, thuggery, Islamic, Perspective and Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

There are number of facts indicating the activities of thuggery in almost all part of the whole nation as they were called with different names. According to weekly trust 25th October 2014 they are identified by different names: 'Area Boys', 'Egbesu boys', 'Bakassi Boys', 'Yan Tauri', 'Sara Suka', 'Yan Daba', 'Ecomog' and 'Yan Political thuggery' are some of their names, which strike fear in the hearts of citizens. The increasing audacity of these bands of men, mostly young and idle, is a cause of concern around the states where they prevail. For example in Benue State, the thugs are used in forcefully subduing opponents of the government, acting above the law. Although there are many incidents of thuggery in the state, recently armed youth numbering over 50 invaded the chambers of the Benue State House of Assembly. They snatched the mace and disrupted a plenary session in a bid to stop the impeachment of the former Speaker, Hon. David Iorhembra. According to Weekly Trust gathered that while 28 members of the House signed impeachment notice against the Speaker, which was presented to him by leader of G23, Hon. Baba Ode, the PDP dominated House offered him a soft landing. They asked him to resign, but the Speaker dragged the matter, in the hope that he would calm frayed nerves with time. As he bargained for time, the original mace of the House also mysteriously disappeared in the office of the Clerk. It compelled members to request and obtains an alternative mace and the plenary started with the Deputy Speaker, Dr. Steven Omenje presiding and the impeachment process commenced.

Also, Lagos State is among states in the country under the firm grip of thugs. While there are numerous instances, at least six persons were killed and several injured recently, when rival thugs of the PDP and APC clashed at Isale Eko area of the state. A security source disclosed that some APC youths were angry over the President's visit, which they perceived as subtle campaigning for 2015. But to also stamp their authority, PDP youths also rose to defend the cause of their party, resulting into the clash. A popular local politician named Azeez Ashake was recently shot dead in front of his house at Isale Eko in Lagos by suspected political thugs and his son, Usman, was also shot but didn't die and was rushed to the hospital. In Amukoko part of Lagos, thugs clashed over ₦ 50,000 gifted by a popular politician in the area to them. At least four persons were killed in the incident, said to be caused by a disagreement over sharing formula.

2. Literature Review

Abba 2004, affirmed that, the genesis of thugs in Borno State dates back to the first republic politics between NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) and NPC (Northern People's Congress) whose problematic scenario begun at Kano.

Abba 2004 while mentioning the historical origin of political thuggery in Nigeria specifically analysed the role played by the British therefore contended that

“With this attitude of the senior colonial officers in Kano Province and indeed the most senior British Resident in Northern Nigeria, the stage was set for persecution of NEPU, its members, supporters and leaders. The British Colonial Government mobilized the machinery of the Kano Native Authority made up of the traditional institution, police, judiciary and prison and transformed them into instrument of repression and violence against the adherent of NEPU.”

Abba 2004, further mentioned how the indigenous politicians reacted in their attempt to comply with the directive of the British, he therefore opined that

“A gangster group called Jam'iyyar Mahaukata (crazy men's party) was created to deal with anyone associated with NEPU by moving from house-to-house and street to street to fish out, attack and molest them squarely. This therefore, set a stage for another wave of violent attacks on the opposition parties in the northern region, especially the NEPU. They continued and spread this to all opposition parties in the region.”

However, according to Isa 2008, while lamenting on the geneses of political thuggery in Nigeria relating it to post military rule. Therefore, contended that:

“Thus in the year 1999 when the military handed over power to politicians, the thugs have, 'become well 'organized'. Each and every political party, or candidate has a group of thugs guarding him/her and in turn they enjoy financial benefits and protection from the law (Isa, 2008).”

2.1 CONCEPT OF POLITICS IN ISLAM

The central theme of this paper revolves around some key concepts that require a brief discussion in order to have clear focus. These conceptual terms are: thuggery, political thuggery, and political development.

2.1.1 Thuggery

Thuggery is conceptualized to mean a violent behaviour consciously intended to pose a threat or scare people who are perceived to be opponents in order to achieve an undue advantage. The word ‘thuggery’ is thus associated with criminal behaviour and is consequently linked with all negative synonyms such as violence, brutal acts, hooliganism, gangsterism, assassins, criminal, delinquent, troublemakers etc. Shankyula (2011).

2.1.2 Political Thuggery

Shankyula (2011) viewed political thuggery as any act of intimidation, violence, hooliganism, brutality or gangsterism, whether leading to death or not, calculated to pose a threat or scare political opponent or perceived political opponents before, during or after elections and aimed at achieving an undue political result or advantage. Mohammed (2013) also conceived Political thuggery to mean any negative behaviour employed in order to alter, change or influence by force or coercion, the electoral behaviours of voters or voting pattern or possibly reverse electoral decision in favour of a particular individual, groups or political party.

Political Islam is any interpretation of Islam as a source of political identity and action. It can refer to a wide range of individuals or groups who advocate the formation of state and society according to their understanding of Islamic principles.

Political aspects of Islam are derived from the Quran, *hadith* literature, and *sunnah* (accounts of the sayings and living habits attributed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad during his lifetime), the history of Islam, and elements of political movements outside Islam.

2.3 CAUSES OF POLITICAL THUGGERY IN NIGERIA

There are many causes of in one way or the other cause political thuggery in Nigeria. Some of which are as follows:

Common Motives for Thuggery

The rationalist choice perspectives have affirmed that the common motives for crime could be summarized as follows: - To obtain money or goods, to gain pleasure from intoxication, to obtain excitement, fun or thrills and to relieve boredom, to achieve peer approval, admiration, status or popularity, to prove toughness and bravery, to show off or gain attention to reduce tension – due anger or anxiety, to escape or avoid aversive situation, to see someone suffering or become

frightened, to gain compliance with orders or wishes. To assert dominance or control, to hurt an enemy, to avenge an insult.

The other causes of political thuggery include the followings:

I. **Lack of Job Opportunities:** some youths that were interviewed confirmed to me that; they withdrawn themselves from the school because they observed that even their seniors that graduated from school at different level have nothing to do i.e. they were not employed. This assertion had been proven by many sociologists as contained in this work.

II. **Available Hard Drugs**

The availability of hard drugs in our society due to the negligence of security agency or government, had immensely contributed in the persistent of thuggery activity. Some members of thuggery group whom I have interviewed like (Dan-Malam) Umar A. affirmed to me that; they use to take hard drugs, and many people interviewed confirmed to me that they used to force some innocent girls to take Indian hem or hard drugs, so that they could achiev their aim of either raping them, or using them to attack others.

III. **Social Media**

Media is playing a great role in promoting thuggery activity as asserted by many scholars. This is usually happens due to some foreign films like blue films, some war films, that were imported, and some indigenous films especially the Nollywood cassettes, popularly known as Nigerian films, where many acts of social vices were practically taught. The other form of social media includes magazines, Newspapers, internet etc. where illicit sex is taught or advertised.

THE EFFECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian democratic system is highly characterized with uncertainty, unsafely of peoples' lives, due to some conflict that occurs at the political gathering. Some youths were giving hard drugs by so-called youth leaders purposely to use them during campaigns or elections. In the process many youth lost their lives, some injured and many become psychologically disturbed. All these became possible due to the persistence of corruption from the democratic setup of Nigeria, where by poverty/ ignorance became endemic among the masses which forced them to blindly follow any politicians.

As part of the instances or effects of Nigerian democratic System, Gombe had recorded huge number of people which were either murdered or injured. Among the people (youth) interviewed who happened to be among the victims Umar M. (Omo Roster) confirmed to me that his hand was imputed in 2007 as result of politically rivalry attack.

There is no doubt that Nigerian democratic system of governance is fully characterized by compounding issues relating to one another. The most prominent features of such problems include: Problem of insecurity, ethnicity and political violence, corruption and terrorism. And these problems disputed the actual definition giving to democracy: as ‘ Government of the people by the people, and for the people.

Insecurity:

Since the inception of the second/third republic democracy in Nigeria i.e. 1999 to date, Nigeria has been witnessing series of insecurity problems from every part of the country, especially after the death of Late Umaru Musa Yar'aduwa. Whereby hundreds (100's) of people were killed every day in the name of either Boko Haram, army rubbery, or political and foreign interest. However, in relation to the problem of insecurity in Nigeria, every day of the week both the masses and the most prominent individual in the country were attack by gun men. e.g In the south west armed robbers had taken over, south-south fear of kidnapping the aged, titled men, clerics, government officials and selected academic.

Also, in relation to the problem of insecurity some prominent people of the country were attacked by the gunmen for instance; Former executive Governor of Kano State, Abubakar Rimi was attacked in the year 2007 Late Royal Highness the emir of Kano Alhaji Ado Bayero was also attacked by unknown gunmen in the year 2013, the executive Governor of Adamawa State General Murtala Nyako (Rtd) was attacked by (politically motivated) in the year (2014) while, regarding to the killing of masses or innocent people especially in the northern part of the country as contained in media sources; just from 2011 to date, more than one thousand (1000) people were assassinated in the name of Boko Haram, in Borno and Yobe States. And more than 450 women were kidnapped by the gun men and the government was reluctant about the issues.

Ethno- religious conflicts

As a result of the democratic influence many part of the country has engaged in ethno- religious conflict example is what is happening in Plateau (Jos) today where by hundreds of people were killed every year. Ibrahim and Egubuzor (2002) asserted that as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness often structured around ethno-religious identities in all part of Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have assumed alarming grates''¹ These crisis were said to occurred in places, like Shagamu (Ogun) Lagos, Kano, Abia, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Taraba, Ebonyi, Enugu, e.t.c

Political Violence

The present political dispensation had become like the previous republics which are characterized by anxiety, ethnicity, where most politicians are strategizing about the control and retention of power. As a result of that the inter and intra political party conflicts become rife, as a result of that; politicians are deploying large resources to outdo each other by doing that they change rule and legislations of the political game, through distorting laws and employing violence and political assassination to settle political scores.

The Role of Political Leaders/Government in Promoting Thuggery

Our contemporary leaders, right from the councilor up to president considered political leadership as a “do or die affair”; wife of the present president was quoted to have said: Beat, wound and stone whosoever shout “change” to death. From the above statement of the former president of Nigeria the politicians were regarding their sit as a do or die affair whereby they can kill, injure, harass or intimidate their opponents purposely to achieve their aim. It is unfortunate to note that the youth had failed to understand that their opportunity to have qualitative and quantitative education had always been denied by the politician.

2.3.1 Solution to Political Thuggery

i. Democracy and Governance in Islam as a Solution to Political Thuggery

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the Seal of all Prophets and Leader of the Messengers laid down solid foundation for the world to emulate in all ramifications i.e. politically, economically, religiously, socially, emotionally e.t.c. Meanwhile, there were four rightly guided Caliphs that shoulder the helms of Islamic governance after his demise, which serves as an example of the nature of governance in Islam. The system which was based on the idea of an electoral group of prominent Companions who would assess the possible choices and agree to recommend one. Therefore, he had achieved the aim of been righteous and pious leader as a result of receiving divine information which differs from human legislation which can be withdrawn at will.

His companions especially the four rightly guided caliphs had played a good exemplary leadership by emulating prophet (SAW), especially Umar bn Khattab. Therefore Allah (SWT) commands the entire Muslim believers to copy from him.

Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow or him who hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much (al-Ahzab:21)

ii. The Principles of Leadership in Islam

The leader in Islam is the representative or vicegerent (Khalifah) of Allah. He must therefore ensure that the laws of Allah are obeyed on earth and that justice prevails. In this regard, Allah (SWT) says in the Glorious Qur'an that:

Those Muslims rulers who if we gave them power in the land their will enjoin the compulsory observance of regular prayers, the payment of Zakkat and they enjoin goodness and righteousness and forbid evil and with Allah rests the end of all matter (Qur'an 22:41)

1. **Adalah -Equality before the law:** It is the tradition of the Prophet to uphold absolute justice for all its citizens, whatever their status, rich, poor, powerful, weak, religion or ethnic group. It was recorded that a woman of noble family was arrested for theft and the case was brought before the Prophet (SAW). The woman's family persuaded a close companion of the Prophet (SAW) to intercede on behalf of the woman so as to avoid bringing shame on them. But the Prophet (SAW) replied:

The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allah because they punished the common man for his offences and let the dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes. I swear by Him who holds my life in His hand that even if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad had committed this crime, I would have amputated her hand.

2. **Accountability (Mas'uliyah):** This is a prerequisite for a leader or ruler as laid down in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Upon this the prophet [SAW] was reported to have said in sahih MUSLIM 4724 KITABUL IMARA that all of you are Shepard, and everyone is accountable for his leadership, including the women at their matrimonial home.
3. **Human Rights:** It is bound on any government to strictly protect the rights of the entire citizens in the following areas.
 - a) **Protection of honor:** Individual's honor must be protected so as to avoid humiliation. "Do not allow yourselves to speak ill of one another behind your backs (Surah al-Hujurat, Q:49: 11).

- b) **Security of life and property;** Life and property of the individual are sacred and must not be taken at will. The Prophet (saw) specifically mentioned this in his farewell message; "Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection".
- c) **Equality of human beings:** There is nothing like ethno centrism in Islam as everybody is equal beside Allah. The Prophet is reported to have said that: "No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over the white man. You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from clay." Ahl AL-Dhimmah (Covenanted People): Though Islamic government is devoid of racism, nepotism, tribalism, ethno centrism e.t.c but bases its ideological state on equality and fair treatment of the non-Muslims conduct themselves within the teachings of Islam.

iii. Leadership By Example [Good Governance]

When Caliph Abubakar was appointed as a Caliph of prophet Muhammad (SAW) in his sermon address he made the following statement which clearly shows an exemplary leader. It read as follows

...Verily Allah has chosen prophet upon mankind, prevent him from vices, I am nothing but a follower I am not the originator (first) if I am right obey me if I deviate straighten me...

The above speech of Caliph Abubakar (RA) serves as the beginning of Islamic empire, explains the role of an exemplary style of governance, where he clearly showed that the leadership is bestowed by Allah (SAW), and that they should correct him whenever he made mistake because he is liable to have mistaken.

The second Caliph serves as a leader of emulation, he kept to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As a Caliph, he showed the world justice, integrity, fairness, compassion and excellence of the Islamic state. He played the above role in the following areas: no abuse of power, care for people's welfare, shura (consultation), freedom of Speech, organization of taxes, encouragement of Agriculture etc.

iv. Admonishment towards Thuggery Activities

There are various ways suggested by scholars and other individuals as a means of curving crime from the society, most of such ways were emphasized from the commands of Allah (SWT) and the prophetic teachings (Sunnah) in view of that the following ways are regarded among the ways of curving the crime in the society.

Therefore, da'awah plays great role toward curving crime (*Kalare*) activity from the society in view of that: Allah (SWT) has emphasized the importance of moral guidance i.e. Da'awah or admonishment in various places from glorious Qur'an. He says:

And remind, for verily, the reminding profits the believers (meaning), for only the believing hearts benefit from being reminded (az-Zariyat: 55)

Allah (SWT) while narrating statement of Yusuf (AS) regarding admonishment says:

Say "This is my way; I invite unto Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follow me. And Glorified and Exalted be Allah. And I am not of the idolaters.

Allah (S. W.T) encourage Da'awah by stating it importance to the believers where he says:-

You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma`ruf (all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah. And had the People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are Fasiqun (rebellious) (al-Imaran:110)

Therefore, commanding good deed and forbidden bad things is among the major principles of Islam, where by the strength of Islam cannot be ascertain with it. However, the prophet himself used to send his companions to various parts of the world purposely to educate and enlighten both the believers and none believers about Islam, it is in view of that the companions perceive that Da'wah is obliged upon every believer. Therefore, they hasten towards asking him some question related to issues in Islam purposely to embark on Da'awah or Nasiha (Admonishment). E.g. Imam

Also, the prophet while emphasizing on the need and importance of Da'awah (admonishment), Sahal bn Sa'ad was reported to have said:

Invite into Islam, inform them what is oblique upon them from the right of Allah. Verily someone to be guided through your influence is more preferable (better) than to be given 100 camels.

v. Avoiding Crime Committers as a Means of Curving Crimes

Most of the members of thugs were said to be active members of the group as a result of being too close to their friends. Although some were said to force to join the group especially the ladies as they affirmed to me during an interview. Allah in the Glorious Qur'an had warned the believers to shun away from sins and the people that commit sins

purposely aim at avoiding crime from the Islamic society. Imam Qurtabiy is reported to have said that the verse discouraging people to seat together with the committers of sin: (An-Nisa'i:140):

And it has already been revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until they engage in talk other than that; certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell.

Therefore, from the above mentioned prophetic tradition, it is obliged upon believers to shun away from people that commit sins, especially when it is apparently seeing. Because whoever sat with them is as he agrees or support their deeds.

However, Islam had taught the believers essence of being trustworthy, pious, gentleness, e.t.c. which serves also as a mean of inviting others that commits social vices or crimes. Humbleness, interaction, firmness, of course the presenter suggestion is conformity with teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah which reads as follows:

vi. Employment, Labour and Productivity in Islam

Islam being a complete way of life, as part of curving the menace of thuggery which serves as guide to all mankind raging from social, economic, political and educational way of life had not left anything un discussed. Therefore, Allah had blessed a mankind on the earth with different creatures and encourages him to make a very good use of it.

Allah condemned the laxity and encourages self-reliance as contained in the following verse;

Q: 45:13

And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth;) the stars, the mountains, the seas, the rivers and all that you use for your benefit; these are all from His favor, kindness and bounty.

Meanwhile, being self-employed is highly encourage in Islam, whereby if taken into consideration our youth will not be dependent upon others, sacrificing their lives just for token AMOUNT on money (less than five thousand naira only).

vii. Retribution (Law of Qisas)

Islam has provide law of Qisas as a permanent solution to thuggery activities as contained from Qur'an, Sunnah and the saying of predecessors. This is observed from the saying of exegetes of Qur'an. Meanwhile Ibn Kathir by quoting the statement of Sa'id bin Mansur reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "The Children of Israel were required to apply the Law of equality in murder cases and were not allowed to offer pardons (in return for blood money). Allah said to this Ummah (the Muslim nation):

The Retribution is prescribed for you in case of murder: the free for the free, the servant for the servant, and the female for the female. But if the killer is forgiven by the brother (or the relatives) of the killed (against blood money)

Ibn Kathir quoted the saying of Qatadah:

Hence, 'pardoning' or 'forgiving' means accepting blood money in intentional murder cases." Ibn Hibban also recorded this in his Sahih. Qatadah said:

This is alleviation from your Lord.

In his attempt to expound Allah's mercy on this Ummah by giving them the Diyyah which was not allowed for any nation before it, the People of the Torah (Jews) were allowed to either apply the penal code (for murder, i.e., execution) or to pardon the killer, but they were not allowed to take blood money. The People of the Injil (the Gospel - the Christians) were required to pardon (the killer, but no Diyyah was legislated). This Ummah (Muslim community) is allowed to apply the penal code (execution) or to pardon and accept the blood money." Similar was reported from Sa'id bin Jubayr, Muqatil bin Hayyan and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas.

Allah's statement:

So after this whoever transgresses the limits, he shall have a painful torment.

Meanwhile Ibn Kathir said its means, those who kill in retaliation after taking the Diyyah or accepting it, they will suffer a painful and severe torment from Allah. The same was reported from Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, `Ata' `Ikrimah, Al-Hasan, Qatadah, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, As-Suddi and Muqatil bin Hayyan. Allah's statement

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

Political thuggery in Nigeria has been subject of discussion by the leaders and the followers. This is because hundreds of people were injured or killed during the exercise. The major causes were said to be as result of poverty and

lack of good governance. Therefore, Islam as a Devine religion had provided solution to the menace, most of which if followed will curve the menace.

Therefore, Allah (S.W.T) had ordained the principles of justice in many verses of Qur'an, among which include (Q: 22:41) whereby the ruler/leader was referred as vicegerent on earth and he is responsible for ensuring righteousness, forbid evils as interpreted by his beloved messenger Muhammad (S.A.W)

3.2 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

- i. That the Islamic principles of governance or policy be adopted.
- ii. Government should be urge to address the issue of poverty and ignorance especially among youths.
- iii. The government should be urge to create job opportunities to the youths.
- iv. The community members should work hard in hand with the government to tackle the menace.
- v. The government should liars with religious leader/clerics in to curve the menace.

4. Suggestion for Future Research

Future studies should dwell in by narrowing the scope of the study by restricting to a particular community, local government or state government and or by making it a complete research study other than a mere review of previous literatures.

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