

Effect of Political Thuggery on the Life of Nigerian Muslim Youth: Solutions from the Teachings of Sokoto *Jihad* Leaders

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Abstract

This paper titled Effect of Political Thuggery on the Life of Nigerian Muslim Youths: Solutions from the Teachings of Sokoto Jihad Leaders was designed to analysis the political thuggery confronting Nigerian Muslim youths in the light of the teachings of the scholars of Sokoto Caliphate. The paper examines the relevance of Islamic teachings in solving Contemporary political Thuggery. The paper delineated some political issues to serve as a guide in addressing the challenges. However, the various teachings of the scholars of the Caliphate were presented in order to establish relevance. The paper adopted mix method of both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The paper establishes the following findings: there was high degree of Political corruption which was responsible for breeding crimes and evils in the societies. Artificial redundancy among the youths was responsible for the easy manipulation. In the light of these findings, the paper recommends the following: Muslims should ensure the election of people with religious values, people that are upright, sincere and have the consciousness of Allah (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala). There should be job creation in various capacities by the leaders to cater for the teeming redundant youth. Parents should provide full maintenance to their children especially when they are to release them to educational errand.

Key Words: *Effects, Politics, Thuggery, Teachings, Caliphate,*

Introduction

Sokoto Caliphate is a Caliphate established based on the precedence system of Islamic Caliphate, guided by *Shari'ah* precepts. The Caliphate was established as a result of the political challenges faced by the Muslims. Thus, the struggle for the establishment of the Caliphate was a demonstration of Islam as a whole system of life. Therefore, all economic, political, and social challenges of the periods were viewed in the light of Islam just as the rituals and other spiritual exercises. This is because in Islam the spiritual life cannot be upheld at the expense of worldly life.

The Sokoto Caliphate created a political structure that incorporated people from hundreds of ethnic groups, covering a territory of about one million square kilometers, slightly larger than the area of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, spread over what are now the territories of the Republic of Mali, Niger, Benin, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. Yet lives and wealth were sacred and safeguarded, rights were restored and respected, religion was upheld and valued, hence prevalence of peace. During the period of the Sokoto Caliphate the implementation of *Shari'ah* including its political arrangement were commendable; it enjoyed the support of the whole people in the region. It is worth mentioning here that the exchange of the Islamic political system by the Western politics and government remain the devastating blow done to the Unity of Muslims in Nigeria. Instead of bringing Muslims closer as enshrined in the two sources of Islamic *Shari'ah*; it has driven apart Muslims in many aspect of their political life. (Abdul-Fattah 2007)

The last decade of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth Century may be described as the period of the collapse of the Sokoto Caliphate and indeed the whole regions of Nigeria. The Sokoto Caliphate consolidated itself for almost a century before it was confronted and challenged by the British occupation at the beginning of the twentieth Century after the conquest and establishment of Colonial rule. The coming of the colonialists was a period of so many changes (some were positive, while others negative). The positive changes include Western education, construction of roads, hospitals, and other social amenities. While the negative changes are the deposition of some Emirs, Chiefs and traditional rulers who opposed the British rules, as well as the introduction of colonial rule which seize the power of control from the native ruling class. The motives behind the conquest and establishment of colonial rules in Nigeria were to promote the Colonialist trade and raw materials, suppression of slave trade, protection of missionaries, and the establishment of their system of politics which were detriment to the already established system of leadership such as the Sokoto Caliphate. The inherited system of Nigerian politics has since independence been characterized by thuggery and violence. In Nigeria, Politics is conceived by some politicians as a dirty game and exclusive right of thugs and hooligans. Consequently, Nigerian politics manifest in acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, harassment, maiming and killing.

Concept of Politics According to Muslim and Western Scholars

The literal meaning of the word politics simply means to have control of affairs of a community, a state, or a nation. This control entails positive or negative depending on the nature of the system and the person entrusted. Ibn Munzir (2003), opined that, the word *as-Siyasah* is derived from Arabic root word *Sasa*, *Yasusu*, *Siyasatun*, which means to be on control; it equally means to

organize, arrange and control an affair. Muslim Scholars understood the literal meanings of this root word differently, thus, its meaning depends on the concept of its usage.

Technically, the word politics (*Siyasah*) is viewed differently by the Muslim scholars in relation to different approaches. In this regard, the scholars of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) such as Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) opined that politics is wider in scope, it means act of preventing what is harm and bringing or commanding to what is beneficial. In the same view, Ibn Aqil, in Ibn Qaiyim al-Jauziyah (2006) opined that the word politics simply means activities of people that bring them closer to what is beneficial and keeping them distance from evils. Al-Muqriziy (1998) also states that politics is a written document for controlling the attitudes and behaviours as well as for organizing the affairs of the people. The basic idea of the concept of politics in Islam emphasizes on two fundamentals, these are: power to control or prevent what is harmful, and secondly commanding or attracting people to what is beneficial. He further says politics is an act of keeping trust.

al-Badawi (1989) says the word politics has attracted various interpretations with contemporary Muslim scholars, this made it difficult in having unanimous meaning of the concept; nevertheless, possession of authority or control of a state appear to be common in meaning among them. In line with this contention, al-Jasuri (2009) noted that politics is knowledge of authority and relationship of laws; it also comprises all the internal and external affairs of a state. Atiyatullah (1968) considered politics as the knowledge of affairs of a state, which comprises the organization of the state, its constituted laws as well as the laws relating to internal and external affairs of the state. Also, Al- Baghdadi (nd) postulated that, Islamic politics is an organize rules and regulations aimed at controlling the socio-economic and political life of Muslims both internal and external; it is the process of bringing peace, harmony, and happiness in the society. Umar (1984) states that Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) retains sovereignty to Himself and thus, makes all the *Ummah*, both the ruler and the ruled to be equal before the laws.

Politics from the above submissions of the Muslim Scholars is the ability for one to be on authority and having political power of commanding rights and forbidden evils. Thus, political power and authority is a great blessing of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) upon leaders, but Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) retains sovereignty to Himself by legislating and approving laws for the betterment of entire Universe.

Islamic state, there is no separation between the religious and worldly affairs, the two are indivisible, both religious and worldly matters are ruled, controlled and regulated by Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) who legislate and approve laws. In other words, Islam enters into all facets of life of the state affairs, it determines what they should be and how they should be, and Muslims consider the world and all around must be in conformity with the wills of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*). Thus, the rules of Allah (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*) must be established on earth so as to create a just society, which Allah legislate.

Politics according to some western scholars has so many meanings and understandings, Clark (1982) observed that, there was no single universally accepted definition of the concept of politics as scholars have viewed and described it in several ways employing different phraseologies, criteria, and perspectives, resulting in a plethora of different definitions. Clark further described

politics as a process or means of having supreme coercive power over individuals and groups within a society for the purpose of regulating and maintaining a general hierarchy of social values and institutions. Shively (2001) defines it as any action that contributed in the making of a common policy for a group of people. In this definition the scholar refers the concept of politics to mean any action or idea that aids in making common policy for people to live in a society. He further explained that politics consist of making of a common decision for a group of people through the use of power. It is viewed from two perspectives as cooperative search for an answer to common problem or as an act by which someone or group of people impose their wills over others. Thus, according to them, politics always involve the exercise of power i.e. a situation where one person causes others to do what the person wants either by forcing or convincing them to do so. According to this definition it is an exercise of power, this may be through coercion, (that is when someone force others to do something that they do not want to do), or through persuasion (that is when someone is convinced to do something that he or she really understands and appreciates).

Appadorai (2004) discussed that the term politics is derived from the Greek word polis which means a city-state. Thus, politics may be defined as a science concerned with the state and of the conditions essentials to its existence and development. In other words, it is that part of social science which treats the foundation of the state and the principles of government. State according to this definition is referred to as an aggregation of families and their common possessions ruled by a sovereign power and by reasons.

Renwick and Swinburn (1980) opined that, the essential individuality of human beings is always rooted in political activities. This activity is found when people are engaged in making decision (a process which sometimes and frequently involves conflict). Politics at its simplest meaning, takes place whenever conflicts exists about goals and the method of achieving those goals. The process of solving conflicts whether at home, school, state or nation is what characterized political process. In other word, it is the process through which those in charged with governmental task take decisions that which direct the lives of all in the community. According to them therefore, struggle between human beings in achieving goals of life is what necessitates the formation of certain rules that guide the affairs of a state.

Grazia (1962) opined that politics is all about who gates what, when, where and how. He further says, politics is almost always a troublesome pursuit, thus, people tend to struggle in order to achieve their goals especially their interest in state affairs. In the same vein, Anifowose (1999) see it as a process of striving to share power or striving to distribute power among individuals and groups within a state. It is also the shaping and sharing of power. Anifowose (1999) further explained politics as the authoritative allocation of values for a society where people have different interest and objectives and these must be allocated or distributed by someone. Anifowose (1999) further affirmed the assertion that politics is more concern with authoritative allocation of power of a state to an individual, where such individual is considered to be the leader and controller of the affairs of the state. In order words, a state is vested with the power to decide on what to be done for the betterment of its citizens.

According to the above definitions by some of the Western scholars, politics always involve the exercise of power in a situation where one person causes others to do what the person wants either by forcing or convincing them to do so. Thus, struggle between human beings in achieving goals of life is what necessitates the formation of political authority, and in other word political authority is more concern with authoritative allocation of power of a state to an individual to be the leader and controller of the affairs of the state.

Concept of Political Thuggery

Thuggery according to the longman Dictionary (2003:1733) is defined to mean a violent behavior in which people fight and attack others. The word is thus clothed with criminal flavors and is consequently associated with all negative synonyms such as violence, brutal acts, hooliganism, gangsters, assassins, criminal, delinquent, trouble makers. Eventan and Urhie (2014) defined thuggery as an act characterized by rudeness, hooliganism, touting, intimidation and harassment. It is a behavior that contradicts peace, harmony and co existence among groups.

Thuggery is mostly associated with politics in Nigeria. The elites are responsible for recruiting and training of thugs to serve their selfish interest of maintaining and controlling political power (www.researchgate.net). This, as well as their aggrandizements has continued to fuel the activities of political thugs, majority of whom are youths who are educated or uneducated. According to Sani, (2015) political thuggery can be defined as any act of intimidation, violence, hooliganism, brutality or gangster's, whether leading to death or not, calculated to pose a threat or scale political opponent or perceived political opponent before, during or after elections and aimed at achieving an undue political result or advantage. Sani, (2015) further affirmed that political thuggery especially at elections may range from such acts as inciting or causing other to act in a disorderly manner, being in illegal possession of or usage of offensive weapons with the aim to scare or intimidate voters, snatching or destruction of election materials, acts resulting in to undue influence as by compelling only one person to vote or refrain from voting against his/her will, ballot stuffing etc. This illegal interference with the electoral process no doubt is electoral fraud, criminal and has severe consequences on democratic stability in general and national security in particular.

From the idea by the above authors political thuggery takes place prior, during and post election period which takes several dimensions such as the acts of inciting or causing others to act in a disorderly manner, as well as intimidation and violence that leads to death or casualties and damage to public properties.

The major and most central of political thuggery in Nigeria according Abdul-Fattah (2007) include: (a) Financial Gains, (b) Money politics, (c) Poverty and unemployment, (d) Unpopular candidates, (e) Sit-tight syndrome, (f) Prebendal politics. These causes of political thuggery is as a result of negligence by the government to exercise its full functions of providing the teeming youths in the country with functional and qualitative education as well as employment or entrepreneurs skills.

Sani (2015) cited that in the Northern part of Nigeria, *Kalare* is a brand of Hausa word referring to a group of people, mostly youth between the ages of 13-35 years, some of whom are in secondary schools or school drop-outs. These youth are used by politicians during campaigns and elections in some sections of Northern Nigerian to intimidate voters and political opponents into accepting the position of their sponsors. Similar group exists in Kano known as *Yan Daba*. In Kaduna, they are called *Kauraye* or *Yan Mage* while in Borno, they are known as *Ecomog*, in Bauchi, they are called *yan Sara Suka*, in Gombe they are known as *Yan Kalare*.

Sani (2015) further says, history has it that the *Yan Akusa* also known as *Yan Daba* or *Banga* in Kano were used in the first Republic by the Northern People Congress (NPC) to check the winning streak of Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). This trend continued with the subsequent elections. According to Kamaldeen (2011) in the 2007 general election held in April, the National Human Rights Commission monitored the conduct of security personnel in each of the six (6) geopolitical zones involving eighteen states of the Federation and the federal capital territory. The report indicates that in a number of states security personnel were over powered by thugs who snatched ballot boxes in some polling stations. While in some states, some security personnel were indifferent to various electoral offences like multiple voting, under aged voting, impersonation and snatching of ballot boxes. Kamaldeen (2011) further says, in North West Zone covering Kano, Katsina and Sokoto states monitored, cases of ballot box snatching amongst other offences were noticed.

Miriam (2009) said without doubt, politics in this Country has since independence, been characterized by thuggery and violence. Little wonder, politics is conceived as a dirty game and exclusive right of thugs and hooligans in Nigeria. Consequently, Nigerian politics manifest in acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, harassment, maiming and killing. There are many factors that were responsible for the activities of thugs.

According to Shedrack (2007) many among the Nigerian politicians hold the notion that it is only political power that can give them access to economic power and political positions or offices. Therefore, the political ideology of “do or die” and godfatherism among Nigerian politicians are some of the root causes of political thuggery. Some of them believe that politics is a war in which the winner takes it all and therefore, winning is a must irrespective of the cost. The “do or die” ideology emerged because politics became a very lucrative business. The remunerations of political officers have become exceeding attractive.

According to Mehler, (2007) a former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) revealed that National Assembly took the bulk of the Federal budget in 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively and that most of government spending was on recurrent expenditure and not on the masses. Noteworthy also, is the fact that money politics has been introduced into politics. Politicians spend huge sums of money to secure or buy political offices. For example, they buy votes, and king-maker (that is the political cabals) and thugs.

The Teachings of Sokoto *Jihad* Leaders on Political Thuggery

The leadership of the Sokoto Caliphate attributes the causes of thuggery and other related crimes to negligence in the side of the government and parents. For instance, Caliph Muhammad Bello in *Usul as Siyasa* said:

...it became known that without rulers who possess power a man would not be at peace in his house let alone outside.

One of the most important functions of a leader is to bring a peaceful atmosphere for the people to go about their normal life without fear, intimidation or harassment. Parents on the other hand should ensure the training of their children in accordance with the dictates of the *Sharia 'ah*

In this regard, Caliph Muhammad Bello (1817-1837), wrote to the Emir of Katsina, Umarun Dallaji (1808-1836), in his concise treatise on government and politics in order to clarify the role of a leader that could deter the activities of thugs he said:

The Amir (President or Governor) is the one who lays for the people of his state their worldly and religious institutions; and he should foster the artisans and concerned people who have some occupations which are indispensable to the society such as farmers and smiths, tailors and dyers and carpenters, and physicians and greengrocers, and butchers and all the occupations which contribute to societal development. He (ruler) must establish these in every village and every town and quarter and urge the subjects to search for food and to the building of protective walls and bridges, to the maintenance of markets and roads and the realization of all general public welfare so that the harmony of this world may be maintained.

In the above idea of Caliph Muhammad Bello unemployment and redundancy are the most vulnerable causes for youths to involve in criminal acts, thus if leaders would tackle the issue of unemployment through skills training and provision of supportive grant it would assist in deterring them from committing crimes and thug activities.

In the same vein, *Shaykh* Uthman in *Bayan wujubil hijrah* opined that:

Good government is the stopping of oppressions, which is forbidden by the *Shari'ah*, and the promotion of uprightness, which roots out tyranny and protects the public against wrongdoers.

It is part of the responsibility of a political leader to be up-doing in discharging his duties by providing adequate security and other measures that would stop all forms of oppressions which

the law forbids as well as promoting virtues and uprightness among the subjects through motivating Scholars to educate people on the Islamic teachings of life here and hereafter.

Furthermore, *Shaykh* Uthman said among the functions of leadership includes:

...raising the moral tone of society and providing a social ideology in accordance with Islamic ideas... general education reform...to be accomplished by the training of teachers, economic reform to be brought about by the improvement of markets (for which special officials should be appointed), the development of communications (by opening roads and bridges)... the strictest judicial control over the financial transactions of the government (and undertaking) all good works.;

The teachings of Sokoto *Jihad* leaders on the causes of crimes such as thugs and other related evils in the society were due to high level of illiteracy, unemployment, selfishness, and failure of government to undertake its responsibilities, which according to *Shaykh* Uthman in the above quotation if the government would function effectively the criminal act of thugs would be eradicated in the society.

Poverty in some part of Northern Nigeria by some Parents has been used as an artifice wheeling the *Almajiri* (begging) system which has further led to the rising incidences of societal crime. The uncertainty of street life has predisposed the *Almajirai* (beggings) to delinquency for self survival. In view of this, *Shaykh* Uthman Foduye in *al Farq* stresses that:

I say this refinement has eluded our boys (children) in our country because majority of them are sent by their parents to school without maintenance and some of them go to school on their own without attention from their guardians. Therefore, they grow up with the habit of begging people and they gradually inherit insolent manners, not giving the due regard to anyone... subsequently they develop the habit of lying... in order to get something from people.

Parents must provide for children a favorable atmosphere and environment for learning in terms of adequate feeding, clean and healthy living room and school premises. These were responsibility of parents toward their children which *Shari'ah* mandated them to undertake. It is incumbent on parents not to allow their children to be roaming about on the roads seeking for food and other livelihood; they should try their utmost effort in catering their families. It was under this premise that Gwandu (2005) opined that it was illegal in the opinion of *Shaykh* Abdullahi to allow children to go in search of knowledge in form of the current *Almajiranci* system that is being practiced today among Muslims' communities thinking that it was Islamic. Gwandu further says, parents should encourage them to ensure a genuine and sound education for their children, and should take full responsibility of such. In *Shaykh* Abdullahi's opinion, as presented by Gwandu,

Under no circumstances should a parent dump his child in school in order to get rid of his nuisance and escape the responsibility for

providing for him or her. No one should be condemned to begging (*Bara*) a practice Abdullahi seriously criticized.

In the above submissions the attitudes of some parents of neglecting their role of parenthood towards their children because of poverty by allowing them to go about roaming on the street begging in the name of seeking for knowledge is quite condemn by Islam, and this creates the danger of increase of crimes such as thuggery, kidnapping, and banditry in the society.

Conclusion

Political thuggery is mostly attributed to the youth as a result of redundancy cause by unemployment, illiteracy, and selfish interest which the politicians and other government officials make use and push them into crimes that may cause security challenge to the nation. If all the stakeholders in the training of children would carry-out their responsibilities diligently and perfectly as mandated by *Shari'ah* guidance through the teachings of Sokoto *Jihad* leaders, political thuggery and other crimes affecting the society would be eradicated.

The leaders and scholars of the Caliphate on various challenges and issues in governance are quite relevant to the Muslims of the contemporary Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the contemporary system of governance appear to be disparaged with Islamic guidance. But the contemporary politician may have attitudinal changes by employing the guidance of Islam into their life style. This may lead them in sanitizing and promoting of their political wellbeing.

Recommendations

The paper recommends the following:

- i- The masses should ensure the election of competent rulers who possess power, Allah's fearing and capability of stopping all oppressions and other criminal acts in the community.
- ii- Political leaders should create jobs and skills in various capacities to cater for the teeming redundant youth.
- iii- Parents should provide full maintenance to their children especially when they are to release them to educational errand.
- iv- The government should assumed the responsibility of raising the moral tone of the society by providing a social ideology in accordance with Islamic ideas especially in the aspect of education and economy
- v- Government should Provides food security and ensuring welfare of the people.
- vi- Muslim Scholars should intensify their efforts in *Da'wah* through public lectures, *Ta'lim*, seminars and Islamic educative programmes on the effects of political thuggery and other crimes.

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