



# The Implications of Thuggery as a Form of Political Violence in Bauch, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Security challenges have remained a worried concern, as the activities of political thuggery in a form of violence becoming rampant in most societies of Nigeria. The utilization of thuggery in the process of attaining and preservation of political power has become a fashion to most of the politicians. This study tends to examine the implications of political thuggery in Bauchi, Nigeria. Hence, the qualitative method was used to collect data. The study reveals, through the use of thuggery, insurgency, small arms proliferation, violence and incompetent leaders emerge in the society. Eradication of poverty and education programs should be given due attention by the government.

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### Introduction

In the year 1999, Nigeria has witnessed a successful transition of power from military to the civil rule under the presidential system of government. And right from that time to date, democracy has been the system of government without any interruption from the military, so is said to be the longest democratic process in the history of Nigeria. [1] Stated that within fifteen years of uninterrupted democracy, the longest period in her sixty years of independence, Nigeria could beat its chest that a firm foundation for democratic governance has been laid. Hence, the word “democracy” is originated from Greek word *demo-kratia* which literally means “rule of the people”. Based on this Abraham Lincoln defined the concept as rule of the people, by the people and for the people. But it is not clear in this definition that the people are, since slaves are being excluded in the democratic process in both the Greek and America. Meanwhile, on the other hand, Churchill the famous prime minister of Britain sees democracy as the worst possible form of government, except all the others that have been tried [2]. [1] Also added that the most important feature of the democratic system is the selection of leaders via competitive elections by the people, and without election there is no democracy. Therefore, democracy can be accepted when it’s fulfilled the fundamental human rights of equality among all individual, that is all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights [3].

In line with this declaration of human rights, [4] Stated that the coming of democracy which provide for freedom of expression and association, some youth in Bauch state use the advantage to form a quasi-association called Sara Suka. Literally, Sara Suka is a two compounded Hausa word which means “cutting and stabbing”, the name was also referred to a group of thugs mostly youth who are fully engaged in thuggery and other Criminal activities in the state. These informal associations provide support for politicians during the campaign and election, they perceived rivals of their masters and opponents who pose a threat to their victory. Most of the

election that took place in Nigeria under the democratic process was characterized by high utilization of political thugs by the politicians in order to get a cheap vote in an attainment and maintenance of their political seat. Sara Suka activities have become worrisome in Bauchi metropolitan since the return of democracy in 1999 and shortly after the 2003 general election in the state, these thugs group resort to all of criminal activities ranging from thuggery, extortion, drug addiction and even robbery in order to earn a living, [4].

[5] Posited that in order for the politicians to secure or protect their political and economic interest they engage in recruiting, training and empowering the unemployed youth to harass, intimidate, assassinate, murder, and victimize their political opponents or any other person who go against their opinion or interest. It is based on this; political thuggery becomes a threat to the democratic system as it’s negates the peaceful coexistence, law and order. Therefore, in regards to the security situation, it’s against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. These has effects on the social and economic wellbeing of the state, and the country as a whole, so also creates imbalances in social relations [6]

With the above discussion, [7] asserted that the worst are the politicians who are even worse than these thug boys as they instigate them into thuggery acts in maximizing their political interest. Hence, [8] concluded that Sara Suka group and their sponsor are not only seen as a threat to democracy, but also to the survival of the society at large. It is discouraging to see youth engaging in all sorts of criminal act that led them to a series of problems to their livelihood and its attainment consequences to the detriment of their future aspirations and dreams.

Therefore, consequences in this direction, explains the Sara Suka group activities which they did in the state that cannot be replaced or found again. Sara Suka activities like any other criminal act have its own effects. The effects here will be examined based on the Sara Suka action in the state and to examine such impact on how it affects the freedom of the people, and the democratic development of the state. The

activities of Sara Suka have in one way or the other contributed toward the backwardness of the state in the country, since their major action is violence, drugs addict, killing among others. The rationale behind this is to understand the nature of Sara Suka activities in Bauchi, meaning to explore what they do in the democratic process since they are now part of the politics of the state, and whether their activities has social, economic and political impacts to the coexistence of the population of the state. The important aspect of this study implies the situation youth found themselves on involving in thuggery act, which has a threat to their future and the society.

### Theoretical Explanation

The study uses the politics, securitization theory [9] as the bases of understanding the implications of thuggery activity in the democratic process. The theory, like any other theory has a cardinal objective and responsibility, though the concept of "securitization" becomes the central point of analysis in the theory. The theory seeks to explain and explore security situation of a particular phenomenon in a society, and whether such things can be considered as a security issue? And what are the implications of doing it or not doing it?

The theory assumed that security issue should be imposed within the people rather than the policy, meaning that most of the security attention were given priority to policies while allowing people of certain communities free from security. They believe that different opinion, interest and struggle of different group of people always create desecuritization in most societies of the world, and that most of the security issues were attached with political reason which imposes threat in the society. So for security to be valuable, security matters needed to be considered and treated outside the politics of society because discussion of a security is a discussion of a threat.

Therefore, this theory explains the concept of thuggery (Sara Suka) which is the main focus of this study, because political thuggery (Sara Suka) is a social problem that creates security challenges in the state. It is important to note that most of the security policies are designed by those who sponsor the political thuggery activities.

### Methodology

The qualitative case study method was utilized in this study to explore the implication of Sara Suka activities on the democratic system in Bauchi. According to [10] specified that a qualitative inquiry is an attempt to understand a problem in their distinctiveness as part of a specific context and the interactions. That is qualitative method is a process of exploring and understanding a problem within a specific context or system, based on this, the approach help the study to examine the main effects of Sara Suka activities in Bauchi. Furthermore, [11] Postulated that case studies are research that concentrate on and gather in depth data about specific phenomena. Hence, the case study method utilizes in depth data gain from different sources and provide a certain and essential approach of explaining the problem of interest to the specific topic. The reason why the study chooses the case study approach is because it provides very detailed information about a particular phenomenon and it utilization of multiple sources in the process of gathering the research information.

Moreover, sampling in case study approach emphasizes on a method of sample that are bound in respect of time and place. Therefore, the boundaries of this study involved the geographical setting in Bauchi state and the time range 1999-2013. The specific setting or unit of analysis of the study is political thuggery (Sara Suka). In order to meet the research objective, the study identifies the following groups as

informants. The Sara Suka members, victims of the scenario, government officials, community head, vigilantes group, youth committee (youth voluntary vigilantes), Governmental and non-governmental organization officials (GOs/NGOs). The sample involves these seven categories in gathering data of the implication of Sara Suka on the democratic system in Bauchi state, in order to avoid superfluous information.

### Process of Data collection and Analysis

The process of data collection was conducted in this study based on the application of primary tool. The primary tool comprises of interview and observation. The interview is conducted on one on one interaction between the researcher and the informants. The study identifies five different groups of Sara Suka in the study area, at this juncture the Sara Suka members were selected based on the position they occupied in their respective group, and they can be recognized in this study as informants A,B,C,D&E. Meanwhile, other groups of the informants were chosen based on snowballing and they most poses certain character and experience to the problem, this group of informants can be identified as informants 1,2,3&4 respectively. In order to validate the information obtained from the informants the study uses triangulation method to prove the reliability.

The findings and interpretation of this study involved a description of the context and setting of the problem. As such each group of thugs has its own, for instance, the Yan Kwanan Kwaila, Hungry Lion Boys, Yan Karofin Sama and Yan Karofin Kasa, etc. Due to the limited time for the study, the study choose three sub wards of the state, as a case. These Wards include the Kofar Idi, Karofin Madaki and Kofar Dumi, all in Makama B ward, in Bauchi state.[12] Concluded that a case study approach normally brings about change in regards to social and economic aspect. Therefore, the study uses case study type of qualitative research to explore and describe the implication of Sara Suka on the democratic government in the state.

### Findings and discussion

This section of the study covers analysis and discussion of information gained from the informants based on the designed research questions, which aimed at finding out the consequences of Sara Suka activities on the democratic system in Bauchi state, Nigeria. After scrutinizing and sorting the obtained information base of categories, the study comes up with the following themes of the research objectives.

#### The emergence of incompetent leaders

Garba stress that in such act of Sara Suka incompetent leaders always emanated as we are seeing today, that is incompetent politicians tend to use the Sara Suka group to get votes, so that they can win the election

*"Yes, people with selfishness and weak mind are now joining politics because they know they can get a vote through the use of Sara Suka. As they win they don't think of anything rather themselves. For example, those representatives in the state house of assembly, most of them don't know what representative is all about, how can you expect a good representative from them" (Informer, 4)*

Kawu share a similar view that through the Sara Suka some politicians tend to get recognition and to be the favorite candidates

*"Through the Sara Suka some politicians tend to get recognition and be voted into office at any cost, to represent the society without the knowing how capable he/she is. Since they have money they can do whatsoever they like" (Informer, 6)*

Usman the civil servant stress that government activities are deteriorating because incapable people were allowed to govern the affairs of the state.

*"Eh, I can say the government business is decreasing not like before, now you can see a civil servant coming to office at past 10am or at afternoon, while some office you may not even see anyone inside, for the whole day. Unlike before, we normally come to office latest by 8am, even if you are late you will be queried and your salary would be deducted. All this happens because of the democratic leadership, as incapable leaders emanated in the process of decision making"*

Musa concluded that the Sara Suka act always gives a chance to weak and inexperienced people to rule.

*"To be realistic, activities like that of Sara Suka can pave way or give opportunity to weak, less, illiterates and inexperienced people to govern the state or government, and that can hinder the decision making process and the development of the state in general"* (Informer, 3)

It is understood here that, the Sara Suka activities contributed immensely towards the weakening the democratic process of the state, as they leads weak and incompetent candidates to attain or maintain their power in order to rule and govern the affairs of the state. So, this has effects on the democratic and administrative process of the state. Meanwhile, [13] added that democratic process depends on the perception that people (majority) can realize the best candidates to rule them, especially when there's competition in the democratic process, but in reality, most democratic government is founded to produce mediocre and incompetent leaders. [14] Also noted that in most societies whereby the people are incompetent or corrupt, the system can have leadership that is not only incompetent but also inefficient and irresponsible. In this regards, [8], concluded that incompetent leaders emerge in the democratic process, especially if that society fail to recognize the value and ethics of democracy. And once there's weak leadership, to some extent relied on the utilization of thugs in the democratic process, then there's every tendency of that state to experience insecurity challenges that may lead to the formation and emergence of other terrorist group (like the insurgency) in the democratic setting.

#### **The emergence of insurgency and small arms proliferation**

Kawu stated vividly that the present insurgency in the country is as a result of political selfishness by the politicians.

*"In one way the other, those that participated in Sara Suka activities are the one in the insurgency. That's what I believed. And the insurgency comes as a result of Sara Suka menace. Yes, Sara Suka activities pave way to insurgency in the state."* (Informer, 6)

Garba believes that the Sara Suka boys have now started using arms in their operation which gave birth to the present insurgency in the country. He pointed that;

*"Recently, they do. Because of the proliferation of lighter arms not only with them in the country, but the emergence of insurgence weapon becomes cheap. And we made to understand that even the politicians do provide such arms to them, because they tend to be their security, and that can make them to do other business; like insurgency, robbery and theft"* (Informer, 4)

Musa also share a similar view where he mentions that the small arms that was given to this Sara Suka during election by the politicians

*"Yea! With the small arms proliferation that was given to these boys during the campaign and election by the politicians so that they can crush any political opponent who tends to stand on their way, and after this period the politicians fail to collect such*

*arms back from the Sara suka boys, with that those boys take the advantage of what they have to gang themselves."* (Informer, 3)

Hamza the retired member validates this statement that most of his friends who were Sara Suka members have now join the insurgence group in the country.

*"Actually, most of those in the Boko Haram (insurgency) are former members of thuggery group, and I have proved to that. I know most of them and we were invited to join the insurgence group together but I denied myself from joining the group"* (Informer, E)

The above views stress that the small arms that was given to the Sara Suka members during the campaign and election period by the politicians to intimidate their opponent or any other person that can block their way, and after the period the politicians are not collecting back such weapon from the Sara Suka group. As such those weapons are used by these boys to terrorize the populace and also use for other social vices like the insurgency. Hence, to some extent the Sara Suka group can create or join other groups, which are meant to fight the government like the "Boko Haram" insurgence. And it is believed that activities of political thuggery (Sara Suka) in the country contributed to the emergence of the insurgency in the northern part of the country. It is believed that the genesis of "Boko Haram insurgency" in Nigeria, begins in Borno state, by the then political thugs (Ecomog) of the state who were recruited by the past governor of the state (Ahmadou Sharif) to help him in retaining his governorship seat, at that period he supply weapon for the thugs in order to fight any other opponent, as he declared the winner he left such weapons to those thugs. And this was the first time why these boys regroup themselves and fight the government in the name of jihad (establishment of the Islamic state) [15]. So this act of regrouping and provision of arms at the period of campaign and election to thugs in the process of protecting the interest of their masters also contributed and imposed threat to the survival of the democratic process in the state.

As weapon becomes easy to access or in the hand of the people apart from the security, then violence can reign in that society, as [16] posited that one of the major causes of small arms proliferation is political violence, which was normally carried out by thugs in the democratic setting.

#### **Political violence**

This is another area that creates threats to the survival of democratic process. As the name implies political violence are normally instigated by politicians and carried out by their thugs (Sara Suka) in the democratic system, especially when the election outcome did not favor their masters or their favorite candidates. It is believed in Nigeria, that there's no election that took place in the country that has no post-election violence, since the return of democracy in the year 1999 to date. Thus, the history of thuggery (Sara Suka) in Nigeria politics cannot be over emphasized without the history of political violence, this means that thuggery activities are highly associated with political violence, since the first republic. This behaviour of political violence in a form of thuggery originated back during the colonial rule particularly in western and southern part of the country, when the local chiefs are allowed to participate in the local administration of the region under the colonial rule, whereas in the northern part during the first republic, especially in Kano between the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) and Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) at that period these political parties utilize thugs known as Yan Daba to challenge the rival party [7]. It is believed that this same reason

of Yan Daba in Kano accounted for the formation of Sara Suka in Bauchi.

The Sara Suka members asserted and agreed that their major task in the group is violence, and each of them believed that what they are doing is destroying the society. But they clearly state that they do that in order to protect the interest of the group and that of their leaders. For example;

Auwalu stated that they engaged in violence

*"Eh, we were normally asked to do such things, especially when the election outcome didn't favor our sponsors or when they feel like getting something from the government"* (informer, B)

Hamza added that their leaders or sponsored normally assign them to do something that will terrorize the populace.

*"Actually, most of the things done in the group are seriously bad for the society and the people living in it. At times the group virtually protects their own interest by engaging in such activities. Especially when their sponsors fail to give them something or when they are in need of something. It happens during our time when one of the top rank members wanted to sleep with one of his neighbor daughter, he commands us to get her at any cost and lucky enough for us, we get her and took her to him; this thing is still paining me up to date especially when I remember it. So to me, the group engaged in to destructive in order to protect their own or their masters' interest"* (Informer, E)

Meanwhile, Garba asserted that violence remains the major activities of those thugs and such things directly implicate the society

*"So that they can be able to intimidate, harassed, terrorize their opponents. Once they scared them away, they invite or call their masters over. Even during the campaign if any opponent is sighted, he can be attacked or even murdered through sword, machetes, and so many means."* (Informer, 4)

Musa believed that Sara Suka activities are quite violent

*"Yea! Their major activity to me is social violence, this is their major activity because their activity in total is quite destructive to safety and being of the society they are into raping, robbery, stealing, personal attack, they even go to the extent of killing their brother without any fear of what will follow, so their activity is quite destructive they can take or kidnapped a female child for more than 2-3 months there with them by camping somewhere. So they are into addicting girls. Their activity is dangerous and quite destructive to the peaceful coexistence of the society. That is why problems are so pathetic to the members of the society."* (Informer, 3)

This means the activities of Sara Suka are quite destructive and violent, as they normally engage into terrorizing, harassing, intimidating and to some extent kill a political opponent or innocent soul, especially, during the post election period, when the election outcome did not favor their masters. So, they go into such acts, thinking that would make the government to revise or cancel the election result. This statement also shows that Sara Suka activity is violence in the society, to some extent because of their political backup they went into abducting girls, robbery, thief and killing in the society. [17], estimated that over one hundred (100) innocent people lost their lives as a result of violence and other act by the thugs (Sara Suka) all in Makama B, of Bauchi State. [18] the former president of Nigeria, asserts that: the politicians struggle hard, and at times shed blood to achieve and retain political power because for us in Nigeria, the political kingdom has for too long been the gateway to the economic kingdom.

[19] Digests more that the statement demonstrates how blood is being exchanged for political power in Nigeria. The use

of thugs in Nigerian politics has not only led to a waste of properties, but it has also resulted in the death of young men who may be valuable in the future of the country, and it also leads low participation of women in politics. All of the ambition of those who would not like to renounce power. [20] Added that political violence develops as a means of attaining and maintaining power, this means that, the utilization of violence in the attainment of power has some negative effects for the realization of the collective well-being of individuals and society as a whole. [5] Believed that the current situation of political violence is a very worrying circumstance towards social progress and prosperity as it's destroy human lives, physical assets and reduce people's social relationships. So, with these points of view, it is clearly that Sara Suka activities in a form of political violence threatened the survival of democratic process in Bauchi state, as it creates fear in the mind of people, who are even competent than their masters. It also create gender imbalance in political participation in the state, meaning, female were unable to participate fully in the political process because of the nature (violence) of the politics. As violence prevail and become the order of the day, then the future of the youth who happen to be the leaders of their time, the state where they live in and the country as a whole is doomed.

#### **The future of youth and the state**

Garba lamented that youths that are seen as leaders of tomorrow happen to be a drug addict and engaged into thuggery then that state will be at risk.

*"Yes! Their activity can lead the state into a serious problem and that's means it can push the country to serious doomed. Because, they said the youth are the leaders/future of tomorrow, if they were so nonentity now, that means the future leaders will be more worse, and there will be more missiles, more corruption, more drugs, more killing, more rituals and more anything illegal, because, the society allowed itself to be destroyed by them. Before you take drugs addicts to court you see a politician bailing him out, it is said the case is bailing out. A thug can machetes somebody to death and that thug can be able to go free, even if he is arrested within a week or a month, he will get away with it. He will even celebrate his release from the jail."* (Informer, 4)

Musa pinpointed that a society cannot develop with a situation and problem like that of Sara Suka are being allowed to occur in the state.

*"I felt bad and I am still unhappy with the issue because as a person I don't think a society can develop with these security challenges and reckless members of the society. Once the members of the society are not competitive, but work toward destructive as a reasonable person you have to shock. : Because even if you are safe today tomorrow it might be your own turn. They can go to any length to attack you. So is a very serious issue to me, it is a not only destructive to the state, but to the entire society"* (Informer, 3)

Abdul azeez complains seriously that such act can push society into serious doomed

*"The kind of Sara Suka activity gave birth to a series of problem to people and society as a whole. Because if I look at those that have been killed by this group, we might not know what that person will be in the future and we don't know what contribution he will make to the society. Therefore, their activity is a serious problem for people, especially the young ones and the society in general"*. (Informer, 2)

Having examined this view, it is important to note that Sara Suka activity is a social problem imposing threat to the co-existence of individual in the society, this means that the

activities of Sara Suka is not only a problem to the people or to the democratic process, but also a problem to the Sara Suka members as they involved themselves into such acts, they destroy their own future as well as that of the state, they live in. Therefore, the Sara Suka activities have a multiple impact, in one hand it destroy the lives of innocent youths, and on the other hand it destroys the lives and future of the Sara Suka members themselves and that of the society. Most of the problems facing today's youth are not restricted to any one ethnic or religious group, but social forces affect young people generally. Most discussions on youth have focused on issues such as drug abuse, crime, violence, sexual harassment and poverty. In addition to these, today's youth is afflicted by new challenges that can cause the society into doomed.

[21] Stated that, most societies of the world are living in a very youthful environment, with almost half of the current global population under the age of twenty five. It is also important to note that young people hold the key to society's future. Their goals, ambition and aspirations for peace, security, human rights and development are often in accord with those of the society as a whole. And when almost youth is kept unemployed is likely to cause grievances and hence dissatisfaction. [22] pinpointed that acts of thuggery (Sara Suka) and the drugs they take between them can cause violence, especially during elections, which lead to loss of lives and properties that will threaten the future of any state or country. [23] posited that societies, nowadays, is an aging society increasingly dependent on all its youth.

### Conclusion

From the above point of view, therefore, it is understood that the Sara Suka groups are now the dominant thugs group in the state that engage in thuggery, intimidation, assassination, rape, robbery and drug addict. And their activities have contributed immensely in imposing threat to the survival of democratic process. So, activities like that of Sara Suka is not acceptable to any society because of its implications. Moreover, most of the youth that participate in such act are people from broken home or aliens, as such their participation in such act is not because they wanted to, but the reason is that their certain right and basic needs were being denied by the societies. On the bases of this concern they hire themselves out for any social vices, which will impose a threat to the consolidation of the democratic process in the state and the country in general.

Sara Suka menace is a social problem that disturbs and creates a threat to the fundamental human rights of the people of Bauchi State. Their (Sara Suka) activities have become worrisome in recent time to the extent it imposes threat to the survival of democratic system or process in general, as such both the government, NGOS, the people of the state and intellectuals are struggling with designing a proper way out or policy that can control or remedy the problem of the Sara Suka in the state. In respect to these findings, the study recommends that the government should give priority to the provision of education and employment, especially to the youth who are the majority in terms of population and the perpetrators of any social menace in the state. Debate among contestants candidate of a given seat should be imposed by the independent electoral commission, so that people would know who is competent enough to rule them, and campaign and election should be conducted in a free and fair manner, if any violence or utilization of thugs is made by any politician, that candidate should be terminated. The society at the grass root level should also organize themselves or establish a kind of youth vigilante group, who are stronger than the Sara Suka boys and are ready to face any challenges of social vices

that can impose or bring havoc to the society or the state in general.

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