

Insecurity in a Democratic State: Re-Engaging Traditional Institutions as Alternative Action Plan for Enhanced National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

The main focus of this study is to examine the relationship between insecurity in Nigeria and the extent traditional institutions can be used as veritable tool for the mitigation of increasing insecurity in a democratic system such as Nigeria. The pervasive nature of insecurity, though, not an entirely a Nigerian problem, has been trending of late, and hence, become a huge source of worry for scholars, experts, public commentators and the international community at large. The menace of insecurity finds expression in wanton killings, kidnapping, farmers-herders conflicts, rape, communal clashes, militia activities, ethnic secessionist agitations and many other strands of violence. The multiplier effects of all these challenges have been very devastating in terms of the recent attacks witnessed all over the country in recent times. This study observes that most of the people engaged in some of these atrocities might be well known to traditional rulers in communities where they come from. This is because traditional rulers are closest to the people. The work is an exploratory study, and relies solely on literature and works of experts in the broader field of security studies for investigation. Data were strictly derived from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, monographs, among others. The paper recommends that there is need for the adoption of both vertical and horizontal approaches to tackle the menace of insecurity, particularly, using the instrumentality of traditional institutions.

Keywords: Insecurity, Democratic State, National Security, Traditional Institutions, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nation states the world over have had a fair share of security challenges, whether developed or developing. In developed nations such as United States of America, Britain, France, Germany and a number of other super power countries, a retinue of insecurity concerns have been experienced. They include, but not limited to terrorism, youth restiveness, political violence (as in the case of the recent 2021 general elections between President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden), drug peddling such as narcotics and cocaine, gun running, among under-aged children in high schools, alcohol addictions, gangsterism, and so on. These forms of criminal acts have had unfold economic, social, behavioral and political consequences not only on the victims of the crime, but also on the nation's polity generally.

In Third World countries (Nigeria inclusive) the rate and momentum at which insecurity has skyrocketed has been, and has indeed continued to grow in an alarming rate. In Nigeria for instance, there is the prevailing and sustained trend of the Boko Haram insurgency, which until recently, was not known or heard within the nation's geopolitical landscape. It should be emphasized here that a vast majority of Nigeria's landscape has been literally taken over by the menace of terrorism and terrorist activities. The socioeconomic consequences of terrorism, are however colossal. Quite a number of resources and human lives have been lost in the wake of

terrorism. Again the Nigerian state is daily confronted with some other security challenges ranging from communal cum ethnic clashes, religious intolerance, youth restiveness, cultism and cult-related clashes, militia activities, inordinate struggles for land and water resources, herdsmen – farmers imbroglio, and until recently, kidnapping (ostensibly for pecuniary reasons and for ransom).

All of these activities congeal to further stifle the already tensed socio-political and economic system typical of the Nigerian society. This is essentially why a lot of debates have been thrown up and a good percentage of the discourses have sought for the need to adopt a comprehensive horizontal and vertical approach to redeem the quagmire. Of particular importance in the debates is to ensure that the indispensable roles of traditional institutions and structures are fully incorporated and internalized into the decision-making processes, side by side the extant bureaucratic principles of government which defines the nation's security architecture. The arguments that have been put forward by scholars and public analysts on the dire need to involve traditional institutions in the security framework of the nation points to the fact that the traditional monarchs and royal fathers are closest to the grassroots. Again, the criminal elements or groups involved in some of these heinous acts of violence come from local communities and clans where these institutions exist.

Corroborating the over-arching importance of traditional rulers in Nigeria's national security, Logan 2013 (cited in Abubakar, 2015) averred that:

African traditional structures and institutions over time, have proved to be highly resilient in crisis management. The role traditional authorities play in managing and resolving conflict and the leadership qualities they demonstrate to be able to checkmate insecurity in communities can be said to be dramatic in orientation as they are unprecedented in posture (my emphasis added) (2015, p.2).

The foregoing position gives indisputable account of how and why African societies cannot exist without the corresponding roles of traditional institutions. In what has been recorded down in extant literature, and in fact, in the classic works of Osakede and Ijimakinwa (2015), traditional institutions became indispensable so much so that it became almost impossible for the colonial authorities to discharge certain governmental responsibilities without the latter (traditional rulers).

Unarguably, it can be said that during colonization, the system of indirect rule was made possible through the availability and willingness of traditional rulers as well as Native Authorities. Thus, under what was created by the imperial system, otherwise known as the 'Native Authority' system became veritable avenue through which colonialism and all its principles and dictates thrived. Essentially, the drivers of grassroots politics and the general gamut of political economy were traditional institutions. To most critics such as Fajonyomi (1997), (cited in Osakede & Ijimakinwa), averred that though, traditional rulers were vestiges and stooges in the hands of the colonial masters, they acted in certain regular ways to stabilize the colonial government. That is why Fajonyomi went further to say that traditional structures were unequivocally members of the colonial administrative apparatus due largely to the enormous roles played by the institutions in colonial territories and protectorates. Some of these roles were evident in so many dimensions, and finds expression in the local socioeconomic settings of the precolonial Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. These were found in the North, East and Western regions of Nigeria, respectively. The underlying roles or functions these institutions played in the consolidation and sustenance of colonialism in Nigeria were enormous. They range from tax collection, keeping the peace in their

respective domains, paying allegiance to colonial Governors and transmitting same level of loyalty to the British Queen as well as the Privy Council in London (in the case of Nigeria).

Having examined an historical evaluation of traditional institutions in the determination and maintenance of colonial systems, the question that readily comes to mind is: how do we bring such roles to bear on the Nigerian fragile social climate, characterized by rancor and acrimony? What area of Nigeria's national security should be the primary concern of stakeholders and government in order to forestall future break down of law and order? How do traditional institution fit into the organogram of modern security architecture, and to what extent can the two structures re-enforce themselves so as to achieve a Nigerian society that is devoid of insecurity? These posers will be of immense concern in the course of this study.

Methodology

This study is an exploratory one. The study relies on works of experts in the broader field of security. The method of data collection adopted for the investigation was strictly secondary. These included archival research materials such as online journals, books, government gazettes and relevant documents, among others.

Conceptual clarifications

Traditional institutions

Traditional institutions' and 'traditional rulers' can be seen as meaning one and the same concepts. The reason is that while the latter refers to the paraphernalia of office, the former indicates the personalities involved in the traditional governance scheme of things. In either of the two extremes, human beings, institutions, structures and leadership acumen is involved, and the roles played within this school of thought is geared towards entrenching and internalizing traditional values, norms and conventions upon which such societies are governed.

However, many scholars and intelligentsia have looked at these concepts (traditional institutions, of course) in various ways depending on their respective convictions as well as ideological leanings. In the opinion of Orji and Olali (2010) traditional institutions could be used to mean all native authorities at the local levels conferred with traditional political powers and responsibilities to carry out and execute governmental tasks. What this means is that such leaders must be seen to have exhibited high level of responsibilities and responsiveness, sufficient track record that shows that they possess the requisite qualities and pedigrees to lead. The problem with this concept, however, is that the operations of traditional institutions in most Third World communities have been subverted by politicians so much so that the legitimate traditional duties of monarchs or chiefs have been truncated. In most communities, Obas or Emirs, as highly revered as they appear, have been pulled out of their traditional stools and either banished or sent into exile with high sense of humiliation and dehumanization.

A case in point is the recent sanction meted on the former Emir of Kano, and Central Bank Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi in 2019. Again the wave of youth protests christened "EndSARSProtests" that swept across the Nigerian state ostensibly to revolt against alleged police brutalities led to the destooling of the Obas of Lagos. This kind of situation not only pose serious distractions to the monarch, it also shows that the traditional edifice does not mean much to the overall security concerns of the nation; the sanctity for which such traditional structures are meant to protect and defend. Again, the sacrilegious attitudes of the powers that be in arbitrarily hunting down traditional rulers or the tendency where belligerent youth meddle with traditional stools

shows that the nation and its people lack what it takes to preserve peace, acrimony and sanctity of Nigeria's cultural heritage, which in itself is a dominant step towards enhancing national security. In the view of Malami (1978) cited in Uthman (2016), traditional ruler is a concept which is used to define any form of indigenous arrangement where individuals are nominated or selected to fill vacant traditional positions of authority at local communities. The practice here is hereditary in nature, and hence, it is more or less familial in orientation. It does appear that only people with the same blood lines are allowed to be nominated or selected. In Nigeria, for example, the position of Oba in the nation's south-west geopolitical zone as well as Emir in the north, though contested in its political sense, are often carried out with a certain group of families who have had the hereditary privileges to do so. It is in the light of the foregoing position, which Uthman (2016) submitted that the essence of traditional titles is to not only preserve the tradition and culture of the people. The import is also to manage, resolve and settle disputes that could arise between and amongst members of the community.

National Security

To many avid critics such as Amos and Erunke (2018), national security is a fluid concept. This is because the latter has defied unanimity in terms of content, character and definition. For the purpose of this paper, however, national security will be rightly considered and evaluated. Generally speaking, the concept of national security lends credence to what a nation seeks to attain as its ultimate objectives and principles. This is why Anyadrike (2013) earlier opined that the concept is contingent on the requirements needed by nations of the world to achieve relative peace and harmony within their domain. It is therefore some kind of national survival strategy entrenched and domesticated by independent states so as to achieve a fair share of national stability and sustainability in all its ramifications – social, economic, political, cultural or otherwise. To Anyadrike, claimed that to realize this objective, nations engage themselves in deliberate attempt to install economic and diplomatic powers alike. The latter have the potentials to project the corporate image of nations to a greater or lesser extent.

Nonetheless, Anyadrike's position on what national security portends has been widely criticized. The reason is that his views, rather than focus on national questions, have instead deviated to areas considered to be "western" in orientation as they are also militaristic in nature. The argument here is that national security goes with corresponding social and cultural security, with socio-cultural security acting as buffer for the overall interest and sustenance of the nation's security. Thus, while national interest or security acts as the superstructure, the social climate fits into the infrastructure capable of stimulating the needed peace and stability in the nation.

Traditional Rulers and Nigeria' National Security

From a historical standpoint, the argument about the place of traditional rulers and the role they play in ensuring peace in society is strategic. The institution of traditional leadership, though existed before the coming of colonialism and colonial rule, derives their powers from existing traditional norms, mores and values of their respective societies. On this premise, traditional rulers have become cherished by their subjects so much so that the sanctity of societal values are considered as sacrosanct beyond which there might not be no closer substitute. To many historical analysts, maintained that traditional institutions are so critical in the advancement of peace, security and stability because they promote ethical values in society. To Edegoh, Kenekwue and Asemah (2013), the critical importance of traditional institution is due largely to the fact that as

custodians of traditions and custom of the people, they (traditional rulers) enjoy a fair share of legitimacy and support from societies which they govern.

It can therefore be said that the kind of legitimacy enjoyed by traditional leaders before colonization paved way for a society that was based on justice, fair hearing and justice. With this in place, it became clear that the governmental system that existed then thrived on an enabling ground capable of fostering the continuity of some of these cherished values under consideration.

To be sure, the advancement of these cherished values of traditional societies was further enhanced by the way and manner the traditional arrow heads themselves administered their territories. Unarguably, it can be said that traditional rulers played prominent leadership roles namely, organization of troops quashing local uprisings by potential enemies of state, administration of justice, collection of taxes and transmission of same to colonial authorities as well as the general protection of their territories from external aggression and attacks. This can be further understood when one looks at some of the skirmishes that erupted around the Benin Kingdom and several other traditional domains before the advent of colonialism (Akinwumi, 1995). It should be emphasized that traditional rulers such as Oba Ovonramwen Nogbesi, the erstwhile Oba of Benin Kingdom fought gallantly through his local calvaries and formations.

For example, in the periods before colonial conquests, many of local wars were fought. They include the Egba-Dahomey war, Owu-Ife war (1821-1828) and the Oshogbo war of 1940. As the name suggests, the Egba-Dahomey was an inter-community fracas between the Egba people and her adjoining neighbor in Dahomey. The tension erupted due to the quest for expansion of territories.

For the benefit of hindsight, Abubakar (2015) wrote that in order to safeguard the peace and tranquility in pre-colonial Nigeria, traditional institutions administered their domains at different levels. In Northern, for instance, local conflicts were resolved using committee approach. They include Village heads, Land holders head and the cattle owners head, respectively. These committees were at liberty to resolve teething issues at their respective enclaves through intra-conflict mediation strategies. Again, those persons or groups found to have circumvented societal rules and codes of conduct were made to face the wrath of the law. At some point, offenders were compelled to pay designated amount of money as compensation for damages in favor of aggrieved individuals of the community. It should be noted here that all other committees, be they clan or District Heads, Chairpersons of farmers or herders association and many others. All of these committee would have their cases ratified by the Council of Galadimas established by the Emirate system, and the decisions at this level is considered as final, while parties in conflict must as a point of duty and responsibility, adhere to such decisions.

Traditional Leadership and the Promotion of Sustenance of National Security: Evidence from the Recent Past

As earlier posited in the course of this paper, traditional institutions occupy indisputable and strategic administrative leadership positions in the Nigerian state. Uthman (2016) argued that this position was entrenched in African, namely, Nigerian socio-political and cultural scene way before the advent of colonialism. Traditional leadership, no doubt, carries out certain important traditions which can restore substantial amount of security, peace and stability in Nigeria. The singular fact that traditional rulers are closest to the grassroots and its people, has been earlier emphasized in the course of this study; they are capable of mobilizing, coordinating, mediating and sensitizing the 'people' on critical government policies and programmes. Traditional institutions are perceived

as sacred in most Nigerian societies. What this means is that some of the laws made by traditional authorities are often respected, obeyed and executed by the subjects to the latter.

It is often times believed or assumed that village or grassroots laws dished out by traditional ruler's commands respect, and therefore often adhered to by individuals and groups in society. The reason is not far-fetched. Government at state and federal levels is too isolated. Some of the policies and programmes of government at higher echelon of power (federal and state), though centralized in nature, appeared almost puerile in the imaginations and perception of Nigerians at the grassroots. So, the tendency to enforce obedience in the heart and minds of the generality of the people down the scalar chain becomes almost impossible. In Nigeria, as elsewhere, and indeed Africa generally, a vast majority of followership appear to pay more loyalty to traditional authorities. At challenging times such as when there is outbreak of conflict or war, it is relatively easier to gather the people, sue for peace and sustain same for the purpose of an orderly and peaceful society. In societies such as Ogoja, Ikom, Obudu, Ishibori, Eruan, Boki and Utugwang areas of Cross River state, quite a number of bloodshed have been averted due to the roles traditional rulers played to counter inter-ethnic and intra-communal skirmishes. The tension that has erupted between warring communities such as those between Bete village and Mbaduku-Tsar communities in Cross River (in the case of the former), and Benue state (in case of the latter). These communal strife has brought about mutual suspicion among the people of the area since the early 1980s and up to the late 1980s. The quantum of loss of lives and properties occasioned by these conflicts are unimaginable.

Again, from extant literature, the crisis that engulfed the Bekwarra-Ishibori axis as well Boki – Eruan – Ekumtak geo-political landscape in the same period brought about colossal loss of lives and properties. At this point, it was rather difficult for the crisis to be resolved amicably but for the quick intervention of traditional structures and institutions. Some of the traditional rulers such as Uti-Itedim I, Uti Jedy Agba and many Tiv traditional rulers waded in to be able to contain the menace (Erunke, 2021).

Unarguably, in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, traditional rulers have played unifying roles not just in their immediate environments at community levels. They have also contributed greatly to sustainable peace in the nation as a whole. From the works of Coockey (n.s) cited in Uthman (2016), claimed that Nigeria over the last six decades, has experienced quite an enormous volumes of conflict within the polity. Coockey went further to substantiate his argument about the occurrence of internal crises in Nigeria when he noted that:

The Nigerian state has witnessed well over 670 ethnic/and or religious imbroglio since its inception as at the first count at independence. The aftermath effects of the said crisis have given rise to several deaths running into hundreds of thousands of people cutting across the nation's locale (Emphasis added) 2010, p.7).

There is no gain saying that the Nigerian nation has at various times been rattled by the menace of violence, be it political, religious, socio-cultural or otherwise. If the point of view of Coockey is anything to go by, one can understand the atmosphere of uneasy calm occasioned by myriads of elements of disintegration some of these problems have caused. From independence to date, a good number of regions and/or states and local communities have been affected by repeated violence. They include, but not limited to states like Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Cross River, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, Bayelsa, Rivers, Ebonyi, Delta, Kano, Oyo, Plateau, Lagos and until very recently, Katsina state. The latter, even though is the birth place of president Muhammadu Buhari, the nation's sitting president and Commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of

Nigeria. Nonetheless, Katsina state is not in any circumstance spared by the incessant activities of hoodlums masquerading as kidnappers and cattle rustlers of all shapes and sizes. It thus appears that while the attacks lasted, and again, when the federal government and of course the state Chief Executives have found themselves at cross roads on how best to tackle the security challenges, traditional and opinion leaders in these places have directed attention to the fact that the ‘bad boys’ behind the attacks are part and parcel of the community. What this portends is that traditional institutions, by virtue of their closeness to the communities have had the opportunity to literally ‘identify’ those ‘behind the masks’ that are unleashing mayhem on the people in the affected states.

Traditional institutions have continued to be relevant even in modern day political dispensation in Nigeria. Historical experts such as Akeem, Kamorudeen and Oyewole (2016) have reported that the conference of over 250 traditional rulers who converged on Osun State under the aegis of the National Council of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria, the purpose of which is to promote national unity and cohesion was quick to confirm the earlier positions put forward by Akinwumi, Malami and Anyadrike. The latter scholars have expressed optimism to the effect that what the federal and state cannot do, the traditional institutions could do even much better. This is why Akeem, Kamorudeen and Oyewole (2016) went further to aver that:

It is not an over statement to submit, and unequivocally, too, that traditional rulers in Nigeria have all it takes to bring about peace and unity in the country. The reasons are obvious. Traditional rulers are endowed with unmatched awe and respect. They have the dignity and honor, which makes it convenient and a lot more easier for them to control and direct their subjects without any form of opposition or rejection (Emphasis added 2016, p.150) (Akeem, Kamorudeen & Oyewole).

Historical evidence has further showed that traditional rulers are of immense relevance due to some of the roles of dispute resolution they carry out. Akeem, et al have demonstrated how traditional leadership during the colonial era settled disputes between and amongst families, groups and communities. The success recorded over some of these disputes during the period under review was largely made possible because of the experience and dexterities acquired by traditional rulers spanning several decades on the stool. In Utugwang community in Cross River of Nigeria, for example, the present sitting paramount ruler of Obudu local government area, and chief of Utugwang village, Chief Necus J.D. Agba, has been on the throne as traditional ruler for close to 70 years. The level of wisdom and intellectual prowess he (the traditional ruler) possesses in the dispensation and settlement of scores amongst not just Utugwang village, but also within and around other places such as Ngbenege, Ukworotung, Ukpe, Bebuabong, Alege, Ukworogung, and many other places, are unprecedented (Erunke, 2021). What has happened in these areas over time is the struggle and contestation for land resources; issues bordering on infidelity between husband and wife; the struggle for farm land between communities, intra-ethnic clashes, cases of theft as well as trespass and right to paternity. For the many years he has been deliberating on these disputes, he (the chief of Utugwang community) is believed to have carried out his responsibilities with a high degree of precision, and with minimal mistakes. All parties to disputes have at one time or the other expressed satisfaction with the judgment dispensed over their grievances with other contestants and third parties in disputes.

It can be argued that the amicable and peaceful resolution of disputes over land matters, for example, points to the nature and duration of accumulated experiences and historical experiences some of these traditional monarchs have gathered over time. All across the Nigerian state for instance, traditional rulers have excelled with relative success. To buttress this assertion Akeem et al have proved that states such as Bauchi, Osun and Ekiti have had life-threatening conflicts over

land matters. It only took the knowledge and wisdom of traditional rulers to wade into these squabbles and resolve them without leading to bloodletting. To a very large extent, however, it does appear that dispute resolution by traditional rulers is not only restricted to community responsibilities alone. Evidence from the Nigerian political scene has proven otherwise. For example, it has been documented that high profile cases in Nigeria involving top military rulers and politicians have been resolved using the traditional diplomacy as method of settlement.

During the military dictatorship of the late Head of State of Nigeria General Sani Abacha in the 1990s, and the allegations of phantom coup leveled against a section of members of the Nigerian military top brats, traditional rulers were readily available to intervene in order to placate the former military dictator to temper justice with mercy.

In tandem with the inevitable roles played by traditional institutions to forestall peace in society, Olubusola (2007) is quick to note that traditional rulers, having been endowed with the requisite triangulation for conflict resolution have divine mandates to perform. They therefore act as mediators, judges as well as chief security officers in their respective domains. Olubusola went ahead to give a graphic picture of what has transpired in the very recent past when he claimed that: Notable traditional rulers from Northern Nigeria, namely, Sultan of Sokoto; notable Emirs of Kano, Bauchi, Gwandu; the Shehu of Borno as well as that of Ilorin, Kwara state met. The convergence gave rise to the appeal put before the late Nigerian military ruler, General Sani Abacha urging him to release his former chief Security Adviser, Major Hamza Al-Mustapha... (2009, p.154).

Again, when it became clear that the presumed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, Chief M.K.O Abiola who was arrested over his claims and declaration of himself as the rightful winner of that election. Traditional rulers delved into the conflict to appeal to the then military President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida the 'military boys' were not going to give up, and the continued to mount on the government until Abiola eventually died while in custody in a more or less mysterious circumstances.

In all of these cases, it is clear that community leaders have a stake in the whole security architecture of not just their immediate environment in which they govern. They also tend to have enormous advantages over the wider polity given the insignia or paraphernalia of office they possess. To a very large extent however, one can say without hesitation that traditional rulers can also be relevant in major societal roles such as sensitization of their communities on critical government policies and programmes. These policies may include issues of census enumeration, basic immunization against disease pandemic, promotion of some level of tolerance among the people; mediation between government and labor unions, among others. The latter is germane in the overall stability of the nation's public sector, which appears to have been bedeviled by incessant industrial actions, thereby crippling the already comatose socio-political fortunes of Nigeria. Notable labor unions such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), a university-wide pressure group in Nigerian universities, had had to embark on strike spanning several months, with the worse of it been the recent indefinite strike from February 2020 running into over 9 months. It took the intervention of royal fathers and monarchs in various locations to intervene for the government to listen and act in good conscience for the action to be suspended. Most of the union's branches across the country had to consult with traditional title holders and other members of the society to pressure government to 'behave' as well as perform on their social responsibilities.

Until very recently when it became clear that the wave of crimes and social vices in the country has quadrupled, the federal government of Nigeria, in conjunction with royal fathers in Nigeria's northern region have subscribed to the revisitation of status quo. The practice as prescribed by the Northern Governor's Forum (NGF) is to fall back to the overarching roles of traditional institutions which in time past have yielded positive results in the quest for peace, justice, equity, fairness and stability in society.

From the standpoint of Waziri (2020), argued that:

As a result of incessant breakdown of law and order in Nigeria, which unarguably beclouds the future prospects of the country, it has become necessary to look inward and go back to the drawing board. This reversal is pertinent so as to swiftly arrest the burgeoning insecurity that has engulfed our country of late (Emphasis added), (2020, p.3).

From Waziri's point of view, it appears that all forms of modern application of contemporary security strategies have failed to provide the needed succor for societal peace. The trend now is to ensure a paradigm shift where traditional rulers can again be employed and reintegrated into the security design of the nation so as to guarantee lasting peace. The contention here is to say that African societies, being humanistic in nature, conceptualize man as been positioned in a closely-knit system of organization of persons or groups who co-exist. This form of social aggregation could lead to conflicts due largely to differences in ideology and orientation. The end result is increasing mayhem, which of course, could have disastrous consequences on the socio-economic and political fabric of the society, generally. As earlier pointed out in the course of this paper, and because of the ever-increasing functions of government at both state and federal levels, the onus is for the nation, and indeed, policy makers to go on a reverse gear and hence, embrace traditional institutions as last resort for national security. Again traditional rulers being the arbiter and custodian of culture, norms and values, with first hand interference with the natural environment of human existence, would ultimately have all the answers that can assist to mitigate rising acrimonious across the largest and breadth of Nigeria.

Nwosu (2020) corroborating the position of Waziri and many other scholars on the wave of insecurity as well as the roles of traditional institutions in mitigating the menace opined that:

Going by what transpired recently in Nigeria as regards the EndSARs protests, the prompt intervention of traditional rulers was quite ambitious and so, a necessary step to douse the tension. The swift and timely intervention ensured that the protesters were not hijacked by unknown forces and enemies of state to further unleash mayhem, vandalism and destruction on the nation as witnessed all over the place (Emphasis added), (2020, p.3)(Nwosu Annie).

For the benefit of hindsight, it is a known fact that the crisis in Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general, are tied around some of the agitations and violence extremist groups in most parts of the continent. President Muhammadu Buhari, decrying the uneasy calm that has engulfed the African continent recently, lamented that:

The African sub-region is no longer safe, more so with the collapse of the former Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi's regime and the ensuing infiltration of cross-border movement of arms and criminals. All of these have congealed to form part and parcel of what we are currently experiencing in our nation today (Emphasis added, 2020, p.3)(Muhammadu Buhari).

Factors Impeding Effective Security Roles of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria

As an institution, traditional rulers or traditional leadership has been grappling with quite a number of challenges in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities at the grassroots. First is the lack of recognition and incorporation of roles of traditional rulers in the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Traditional rulers lack formal roles that should ordinarily afford them the leverage to effectively govern their subjects in their domain just like every other bureaucratic government parastatal, ministries or Departments. The gap in the legal framework for traditional institutions therefore limits their areas of operations to more or less trivial issues having to do with customs, traditions, marriages and many others. This goes to say that other critical issues of security concerns in society such as terrorism, armed robbery, child molestation, abuse of women, human trafficking, cattle rustling, kidnapping and a host of other security breaches are left at the mercies of government. This makes it relatively difficult for government alone to tackle the problem.

For the benefit of hindsight, it will be recalled that during the colonial days, the British government in Nigeria created what was called ‘House of Chiefs’, the essence of which was to ensure participation of traditional institutions in governance. However, all that changed when Nigeria became politically independent. The aftermath of the 1979 and 1999 Constitution that followed political independence hardly made provisions for traditional rulers to operate within their enclaves, which is why the nation as it were, now grapples with security challenges that have spiraled beyond the control of government.

To most critics such as Akeem and Kamorodeen (2016) argue that rather than performing independent roles in maintaining law and order in society which they govern, traditional rulers have instead become stooges in the hands of politicians in Nigeria. To a large extent, most political office holders are the ones who dictate and determine what should be or should not be done by traditional rulers in terms of security. To say the least, traditional institutions in Nigeria have been literally dehumanized and disenfranchised so much so that they can now run errands for state Chief Executives and Governors with reckless abandon. The secrecy associated with traditional institutions have been subverted and made to look like a child’s play, which is why traditional institutions in Nigeria currently have become highly political in orientation and disposition. Most traditional rulers today have become more of full time “politicians” than politicians themselves.

Closely related to the above is the dehumanizing and distasteful conditions of traditional stools where, rather than conducting themselves in the area of traditional legislations, traditional rulers have been partisan in outlook. In Nigeria, the success or failure of traditional rulers depends on what party the office holder belongs. For those traditional rulers who are members or friends of the incumbent government, they of liberty to enjoy the magnanimity or benevolence of powers that be. The reverse is the case when such traditional rulers belong to opposition parties.

Again, it is common knowledge in Nigeria today that the effects of modernization are fast catching up with traditional institutions. Here, modernization can be used as synonym for corruption. It is common knowledge to hear from several climes within the country how traditional rulers strive for riches and wealth much to the detriment of their legitimate duties. Most of them have ‘soiled’ their hands in an attempt to get rich quick.

From some of the recent experiences shared across the country, most traditional rulers have been found to have been involved in complacency. Several reports of cattle rustling, theft, kidnapping and many other forms of banditry in some parts of Northern Nigeria recently have been said to have enjoyed some level of support by royal fathers in the affected areas. What this portends is

that traditional institutions, unlike the colonial era, have become partners in crime, which is why the society today has become relatively ungovernable due to dramatic increase in criminal cases.

Many other challenges faced by traditional institutions include, but not limited to undue favoritism given to loyal subjects within their immediate domains, high degree of indolence and ineptitude, proliferation of security outfits, ever increasing political interests over appointment and installations of traditional rulers, lack of funds at grassroots levels, lack of control of youths by traditional rulers, low morality and in most cases, absence of moral etiquette and principles on the part of parents and their wards; influence of hard drugs, internet access and other variables that have made traditional institutions literally outmoded or old-fashioned. All of these and more form the bulk of the level of decay and depravity experienced by traditional institutions in the effective discharge of their roles and responsibilities that can impact positively on the security of not just their domain; but also that can generally affect the nation's security concerns in the 21st century and beyond.

Conclusion

This study has examined the role of traditional rulers and how their roles could impact on Nigeria's national security. The study appreciates the enormity of insecurity as a major issue around the world, which of course, is not limited to Third World economies alone. The global stage has become victims of crime, with attendant socio-economic and political consequences, the result of which has given rise to the decay in the world order, and it does appear that things are gradually, but steadily falling apart while the center can no longer hold. The study has glossed over works of experts in history to be able to discuss the prevailing security breaches that the nation has experiences in the last few decades. For the avoidance of doubt, however, the Nigerian state has now lived and will continue to live with what has been variously described as the 'new normal', while many strands of insecurity keep surfacing and emerging on daily basis. Typical of the nation's security quagmire, the study has appreciated trends of security breaches ravaging the nation at present ranging from intolerance, political thuggery, terrorism, kidnapping for ransom, incessant killings, threats of secession by sections of the nation's geopolitics, insurgency, religious bigotry, militia activities, youth restiveness, hunger and desperation for survival, hate speeches, unguarded utterances and public comments by politicians and all what nots. These factors have continued as major factors stifling the road to peace in the world's most populous black nation. The questions are; where do we go from here? How do we remedy the situation now that the nation is at cross road? How can traditional institutions come in to redeem the bad state of the nation, and what is the guarantee that we shall have a nation of our dream ever again in this fast degenerating social milieu where drums of war keep sounding from every corner of the Nigerian state? These are questions to be pondered about and thinker with. However, for the purpose of this presentation, a few suggestions and recommendations will suffice.

Recommendations

In the light of all that has been articulated in study, the following recommendations are made so as to be able to navigate a new security direction for Nigeria:

- i. First, traditional institutions and indeed traditional rulers should be seen and treated as independent entities within their jurisdictions. What this means is that the Constitution of the Federal Republic should be amended to reflect the realities on ground where all traditional rulers are assigned designated traditional roles free from molestation and politicization.

- ii. Traditional rulers should avoid the temptation of compromise and hence, getting themselves involved in politics of rancor, self-aggrandizement, acquiescence and subversion. They should see themselves as sacred and sacrosanct entities meant to serve their subjects, rather than politicians. This is because they are closer to the people in many respects. A situation where traditional rulers become isolated and estranged to their subjects due to their involvement in partisan politics spells doom for the common interests of the society which they preside over.
- iii. Traditional rulers should govern without favouritism, complacency and compromise. They should come out to reprimand all those involved in criminalities within their communities. This will serve as deterrence to would-be criminally-minded individuals whose interest is to cause security breaches in such communities. The resultant effect, no doubt, will translate to peace, tranquility and national development in no small measures.

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