
Traditional Institutions and Their Role in Controlling Insecurity in Emerging New Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

The paper undertakes steps into the past of Nigerian traditional society in order to assess how some of these traditional institutions fared during the period understudy in regards to the control of insecurity and other vices. It is as well to take time to examine how possible some of these institutions could impact on our contemporary and the emerging new Nigeria. The research carried out discovered that, despite the diverse nature of Nigerian society, such institutions as family, kingship, age-grade, economic institutions, and others existed for their valuable service to the members of the society in general as well as in the area of social security. However, the case is whether we can still justifiably talk about Nigerian traditional institutions in the context of contemporary changes. This paper discovers that the traditional institutions could be valuable agencies for national security. Evidence-based recommendations such as strengthening community policing, information and intelligence sharing and organising and including traditional rulers in community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes will help improve the security of Nigeria.

KEYWORDS : *Traditional Institutions, Control, Insecurity, Emerging New Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Society is an association of human beings and a complex relation of man to his fellows. It consists of the complicated network of groups and institutions which provide the framework of expressing human social order, thereby holding society together. They bind individuals to certain uniform rules of behaviour which are deemed essential for harmonious and orderly conduct.

There were some of such institutional groups in pre-colonial Nigerian society as the family unit, kingship, socio-cultural, economic, age-grade, political, religious, military and others groups that regulated and punished human conducts that might be at variance with or pose security danger to the neighbours.

Such institutions were voluntary and had the cooperation of the members of the community, since there was no imposed idea by the coercive power of the state, the society members found it easy to willingly obey the laws/rules that guided their operations. That is why some scholars like Clark in Apparodai (2011) views such association as “an area of society is voluntary cooperation that its energy is goodwill and its method is elastic, while the area of state is mechanical action; its energy is force and its method is rigidity”.

However, such effective roles performed by our traditional institutions started to dwindle at a point, specifically at our contact with the foreigners especially the Europeans. The Europeans deliberately imposed their culture and civilization on our society to weaken our systems for their self-interests. With time, the services of these institutions to the community had become moribund, thus existing only as symbols.

However, hope is not yet lost for Nigeria to recover and revive its traditional institutions for the purpose they were established - social security. This can be achieved first, by revisiting the past to identify the relevant institutions that can be adopted and adapted in integrating the modern system of security outfits. By these methods, the existing traditional institutions can once again regain their past glory in insecurity control.

NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

From earliest times, man found it necessary to come together in groups for the sake of survival. Therefore much of human history has been a fight for survival against natural hazards and against real and imagined human enemies.

With the view of these challenges, the Nigerian ancestors have come together to devise and establish various institutional frameworks such as family, clans, kingship, age-grade, military institutions and others to be able to contain societal vices such as insecurity for peaceful and societal wellbeing. In such traditional societies, individual members' basic needs were taken care of.

Such society was not totally devoid of some conflicts but were reduced to manageable level, unlike the magnitude and incessant spate of insecurity Nigeria is experiencing now. We are not calling for the reproduction of that society per se but to borrow a leaf from especially those that can be relevant, can be adaptable and can be integrated into the modern insecurity operative system in order to enhance its performance in the emerging New Nigeria.

THE EMERGING NEW NIGERIA

The project called New Nigeria Portends is an enabling environment for the full utilisation of skills acquired to be fully relevant and thrive by connecting it to the emerging global economy. This is the New Nigeria everyone is calling on to envision. This would surely make the emerging New Nigeria a better place for all individuals if given the opportunity to contribute his/her quota for the common good of all.

The media have a great role to play in changing the mindset of our people, especially the young ones, by informing, educating and inspiring everyone for aspiration. Therefore, the focus of New Nigeria, would be economy, education, security, peace and unity among others as would be the watchword if the New Nigeria must work. We can together create such an enabling environment than we have come to meet. This is the message we want to get across to every Nigerian; both the leaders and the followers. It is then we get Nigeria working again.

This step would make Nigeria part of the global network which enables our country to explore knowledge and collaboration with other great ideas. To achieve this objective, good institutions as channels must be established. Good institutions may be defined as laws and practices that motivate

people to work hard, becoming economically productive to enrich individuals and their country. They are based on why nations succeed as well as what differentiates developed rich countries where insecurity is less and the poor nations where insecurity is rampant.

THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY AND INSECURITY

Several scholars have presented varying viewpoints on the concept of security. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994 describes human security as protection from hidden and harmful disruption in the daily activities at home, offices or communities. That is, security is the state and feeling of being safe and secured from any form of danger. The Commission on Human Security (2003) defines security as the protection of important aspects of human lives in a way that would enhance human freedom and fulfilment. In other words, security encompasses freedom from wants, harm, fear and the freedom to aspire greatly without any form of hindrance.

Insecurity, on the other hand, is “the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection” Ali (2013). That is, inadequate freedom from danger, uncertainty, hazards and lack of protection for lives and properties. In corroborating this view, Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) state that insecurity is the condition of being vulnerable to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in expectation of an unfortunate incident. This paper sees insecurity to be a breach of peace and security.

Causes of Insecurity in Contemporary Democratic Nigerian Society

Some of the factors that have been responsible for the spate of insecurity in Nigerian polity have been attributed to several factors. Persistent poverty often breeds other kinds of social dysfunctions like gangsterism, drug trafficking and a general feeling on the part of ordinary people who organised criminality threatening the state itself and its basic institutions. The failure to deal effectively with these problems has undermined the legitimacy of our democracy.

Recently the Defence Intelligence Agency has said that some black-Smiths in Nigeria now have the expertise to manufacture assault weapons such as AK -47- The DIA noted that while black-Smiths and the rifles that are traditionally produced are an integral part of some cultures in the country that some blacksmiths now produce more sophisticated weapons, a development which pose a security threat (The Punch 2021).

Nigeria is home to approximately sixty million youths, seething with frustration over the lack of academic and job opportunities that just three decades ago appeared to be within the reach of their parents; a lost generation. That huge army of frustrated youths who lack tools to face the demands of the modern economy are ready tools to be used by unpatriotic, greedy and selfish politicians to carry out their biddings.

The Nigerian state is a colonial construct with faulty lines at all levels-geographical, social relations, economic, political, and educational. Leaders capitalise on these faulty lines to deny the citizens fair access to the wealth of the nation, is a cause of discontent. Thus the primary task facing the leader is the political will to convince the citizens that the government exists to serve them rather than few or prey upon them.

However, it is the responsibility of the Nigerian state to organise society in such a way that basic needs of the citizens like wellbeing, security and safety and others as peace and justice are provided

and in return citizens would be patriotic and law abiding. The failure in these areas may engender revolt by the citizens.

The Relevance of Traditional Institutions in Contemporary Nigerian Society in Regard to Insecurity Control

Any institution that exists in any society is expected among other things to promote the wellbeing, the security and the safety of lives and property of the members of that society. Citizens then depend on state and central governments to secure the person and free them from fear (Rotberg 2003). Failing to establish security nation-wide, the faltering state's failure becomes obvious. Nigeria in our contemporary dispensation, insecurity is growing as an institution as well as other vices have become culture and tradition. They are no longer seen as exceptions but taken to be a norm, to the extent that violence has become a rule.

This breakdown of law and order in our contemporary time could be traced to a certain phase of the Nigerian development process. This ugly situation can be attributed to the breakdown of our traditional system that could no longer provide safe haven for the members. It can also be traced to the failure of leadership to provide role models for the subjects. Some or all these put together could account for the breakdown of law and order in accelerated speed.

Though our society has been making frantic efforts in devising new methods in bringing the spate of insecurity under control, experience on the ground has shown that there is no significant improvement hitherto.

How do we go about correcting these issues? It is simply looking back in order to move forward to the next level. To revisit the past of Nigeria in order to see the records of success in taming, domesticating and containing insecurity menace in that period of Nigerian history. Some of these institutions like the family unit, kingship set, age-grade, military institutions and others as highlighted in this paper can still serve as a source of anti-insecurity measures and as sources of inspiration to the youths as preventive insecurity mechanisms. And in fact this system is bound to continue if properly integrated into the mainstream of modern security build-up.

The members of the insecurity organisation are home-grown; that is, members of the community. They are familiar with the community environment. They usually know each other since they grew up together in village institutions like age-grade school. They know the hideouts, some of them act as agents or an accomplice due to ignorance in betraying community peace. Some are used as vital information agents, the suppliers of drugs, weapons locally produced in disguise. That is why the role of the youths together with the community leader is vital to win the war against the terrorists, bandits, kidnappers and all sorts of terror.

This step would serve as a deterrent to others. Therefore there is a need for government anti-insecurity agencies to partner, support and unify the operations of various local vigilante groups for effective coordination for effective service delivery. This approach is geared toward improved synergy between the community-based and anti-insecurity modern agencies, the police in such areas of joint patrol and surveillance of various communities within their catchment areas on a continuous and sustainable basis.

“However, culture is not a dead thing, nor does it always remain the same. It belongs to the living people and is always developing in the world” (Rodney, 2009). Therefore Nigerian traditional

institutions, in this case, anti-insecurity control mechanisms can still make reasonable contributions to modern security management by being in partnership with the modern system.

Hopefully, this partnership as a new force, shall spring up to salvage our country from total destruction. What are the processes of this renaissance of partnership? The incessant attacks being perpetrated by various criminals groups across various length and breadth of our society pose a significant threat to not only Nigerian polity but to international peace and security as well.

One step is the determination to continue to fight against this through both military and civilian-led efforts aimed at defeat of the groups. In this paper, is a call for partnership between the modern system and traditional institutions of waging war against the insecurity to the continuing existence of our nation.

As noted in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2170, terrorism and any activities posing a threat to international peace and security can only be defeated by a sustained and comprehensive approach involving active participation and collaboration of all states. Thus in this fight some elements of traditional institutions should not be undermined.

Nigeria's partnership in this Global Coalition to defeat insecurity threat would be an opportunity to compare notes and share as well as expanding network of stratagem which includes some of the elements of our traditional institutions as highlighted in this paper to minimise and if possible eradicate national, sub-national and regional threats posed by the activities of violent extremists (Muktar, 2022).

The Need for Partnership between the Traditional Institutions and Modern Security Operative for Efficient Management of Insecurity of the Emerging New Nigeria

In the wake of decolonization, the question arose, now that the imperial order is coming to an end, who is to keep peace in Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Now that Nigeria as an entity is undergoing decomposition and dismemberment of its federation units, the question that concerns Nigerians and stakeholders is how can we put insecurity of Nigeria behind us.

The question above arises because, to most outsiders, the very name, Nigeria conjures up images of chaos and confusion. However, before Nigeria got to this point or level, the potential of Nigeria as a hope of Africa was not in doubt. However deep Nigeria sunk into the mire of corruption, repression, economic dilapidation and insecurity to lives and property of her citizens, Nigeria remains one of the world's strategic nations. Nigeria is the pivot point on which the continent rotates. According to some one, the Nigerian state is like a battered and bruised elephant staggering toward an abyss with the ground crumbling under its feet, should it fall, the impact will shake the rest of West Africa.

Thus the present Nigeria in its transition to the next level should not be the concern of only Nigerians and the stakeholders but Africans and the world in general. The question in the mouth of Nigerians from all walks of life is whether their country should remain as one entity or dismantle the colonial borders and break up into several federating entities. Since Nigeria lacks national consciousness or a binding ideology, the polity has provided a levelling ground for primordial, regional and ethnic inclination to thrive in the forms of religious, ethnic cleavages, corruption, lawlessness and poor leadership.

When the surrounding environment changes and new challenges arise there is often a disjunction between existing institutions and present needs (Fukuyama, 2011). Therefore there exists a common trend that links many of our contemporaries about the failure of Nigeria as a failed state.

There must be a concerned and concerted effort to create and maintain effective institutions and government that are simultaneously to sustain the polity and that should be the central focus of this partnership. The legitimate government that binds populations together and makes them willing to accept its authority. Most people in the world prefer to live in a society like ancient Nigeria in which the government was accountable and effective. But a weak and corrupt governmental institution that culminates into insecurity would incapacitate that government to provide the necessary service.

In fact institutional building is costly and takes time to mature and yield the expected results but they are indispensable. However, no society can effectively be governed without a functional anti-insecurity institution in place. And that is why the experience has shown that poor countries like Nigeria are not necessarily poor because they lack basic resources for development but because they lack effective functional political institutions that can hold the society together for positive development.

We therefore need to understand where those institutions come from, in our case, an integration of our past institutions and in alliance with the modern system. Examples abound whereby institutions that were created to meet a set of conditions often survive even when those conditions change or disappear because they might have potential for adaptation. Such were the Nigerian traditional institutions for example family, age-grade youth club and kingship. That shows that human societies are not trapped by the past. The argument holds that comparable institutions can still emerge in the present under similar conditions like ours. Therefore some Nigerian traditional institutions that offered valuable services to their society can be copied and improved in modern times.

In fact, one of the most cardinal functions of political institutions is precisely to control an aggregate level as violence appears. And indeed some of the pressure on institutions for their innovation or reform (in this partnership) has been violence and war as Nigeria is passing through.

In this case the Nigerian version of democracy is called to order, that successful liberal democracy requires both a state that is strong, unified and able to enforce laws on its own territory and able to impose accountability on the state. The call for this partnership would ensure that.

CONCLUSION

Without vision, the people perish, they wander aimlessly, the people live carelessly Proverb 29: 11. Where there is ignorance or rejection of God, crime and sin run rampant. Public morality depends on the knowledge of God as well as keeping His law. In order for nations and individuals to function well, people must know God's way and keep His rules.

The Nigerian insecurity situation today has reached the level to be described by somebody as a battered and bruised elephant staggering toward an abyss with the ground crumbling under its feet, and should it fall, the impact will shake the rest of West Africa as stated in this paper. Nigeria is a country that represents so many good things in life, both to Nigerians themselves and Africans and

the black race all over the world. And that is why the country has been able to resist all attempts to destroy the polity. Even those who call for its dismemberment know that they have more to benefit from it than its destruction. Nigeria's situation has not been so, it developed to this point for the failure of modern state institutions, the family, social, economic, political and religious institutions to perform their role as nation-builders.

RECOMMENDATION

Addressing the control of insecurity in the emerging New Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that involves traditional institutions playing a pivotal role alongside government agencies and civil society. Here are some evidence-based recommendations for leveraging traditional institutions in curbing insecurity:

Strengthening Community Policing: Encourage the collaboration between traditional institutions and law enforcement agencies to enhance community policing efforts. Community policing, a concept rooted in the Broken Windows theory, emphasises the importance of local collaboration in crime prevention (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Research has shown that community policing, where local leaders and law enforcement work together, can significantly reduce crime rates by fostering trust and gathering valuable intelligence from the community.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation: Traditional leaders often possess conflict resolution and mediation skills, which can be instrumental in resolving disputes peacefully. By providing them with formal training and support, they can play a critical role in mitigating inter-communal conflicts that often lead to violence. This recommendation aligns with established research on conflict resolution techniques, thereby enhancing community harmony and reducing violence.

Information and Intelligence Sharing: Intelligence-led policing relies on gathering local insights and information (Marenin, 2004). Establish mechanisms for sharing information and intelligence between traditional institutions and security agencies. Traditional leaders can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of their communities, helping security forces understand local nuances and potential security threats better.

Youth Empowerment and Skill Development: Research on youth crime prevention highlights the significance of empowering young people (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Engage traditional institutions in initiatives that focus on youth empowerment, skill development, and education. Evidence suggests that providing opportunities for young people can reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by criminal and extremist groups.

Community-Based Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Collaborate with traditional leaders to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders and former militants into society. Offender rehabilitation research underscores the importance of community support (Van Der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Working with traditional leaders to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders and former militants into society is vital. Traditional institutions can guide and support successful reintegration, reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

Sensitization and Awareness Campaigns: Organise joint awareness campaigns with traditional leaders to educate communities about the dangers of violence, extremism, and crime. Research has

shown that such campaigns can change attitudes and behaviours, fostering a culture of peace and security.

Land and Resource Conflict Resolution: Resource-related conflicts require inclusive policies based on local customs (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In regions where resource-related conflicts are prevalent, involve traditional institutions in sustainable land and resource management strategies. Their understanding of local customs and practices can help create inclusive policies that address underlying causes of insecurity.

Encouraging Gender Inclusivity: Promote gender inclusivity within traditional institutions, allowing women to participate in decision-making processes related to security and conflict resolution. Studies have indicated that women's involvement in conflict resolution can lead to more sustainable peace outcomes (True, 2013).

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of traditional institutions' involvement in security efforts. Regular assessments will enable stakeholders to identify successful practices and areas that require improvement.

Collaboration with Modern Technology: Integrating modern technology into traditional practices aligns with discussions on technological advancements (Goodchild & Janelle, 2010). Support traditional leaders in utilising modern communication tools and technology to enhance security measures. This could include using mobile apps for reporting incidents, crime mapping, and early warning systems.

It's essential to remember that while traditional institutions can play a significant role, they should not be seen as a replacement for formal law enforcement and government agencies. Instead, a collaborative approach that integrates their expertise with modern security strategies is crucial for addressing the control of insecurity in the emerging New Nigeria effectively

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