

Improving Internal Security Management Through Reintegration of Traditional Institutions: A Case Study of Kano Emirate Council-Nigeria

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Abstract: Beginning from 1999, when Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian government, subsequent development indicates that the country's national security has been facing serious internal challenges. Attempts by the security agencies to contain these challenges appear not to be effective. This has prompted calls and suggestions for re-assessing the management of the country's internal security management. Among the suggestions is the idea of reintegrating the country's traditional institutions which had hitherto played a dominant role. This study, is therefore, conducted on the assumption that the reintegration of these traditional institutions will improve the country's internal security management. Therefore, the central objective of the study is to find out how the reintegration of traditional institutions will improve the country's security management. To this end, Kano Emirate Council is chosen as a case study based on its historical background in administration and security management. The study adopts a qualitative research design as its methodology using in-depth interview in soliciting primary data from purposively selected respondents. Findings of the study revealed that the strategic position of traditional institutions within the Nigerian social setting make them relevant in the management of internal security issues. In most cases, security agencies have to depend on the institutions for intelligence information which has helped in nipping some security threats in the bud. Traditional institutions also serve as conflict mediators by resolving ethno-religious disputes which could lead to serious security threats. Furthermore, traditional institutions can also help in building public trust on the security agencies.

Key words: Emirate council, internal security, national security, reintegration, traditional institutions

INTRODUCTION

Prevailing security situation in Nigeria suggests that security agencies are having difficulties in overcoming the country's internal security challenges which began to get worse in 1999 immediately, after the military transferred political power to civilians. The seeming inability of Nigeria's security institutions to address the above security challenges has prompted many of its citizens to seek alternative means for safe guarding their lives and property. Furthermore, the situation has led to the emergence of many ethnic and religious militia groups in different parts of the country thereby constituting serious threats to the provision and management of the country's national security. Among, the various security challenges facing the country are the Boko Haram insurgency, terrorism, violent conflicts arising from ethnic, religious and political differences, conventional and transnational

crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, sea piracy, ritual and political assassinations, sea piracy, human and drug trafficking (Logan, 2013).

Apart from the prevalence of these security problems, the rate and frequency in which they have been occurring is alarming. For example, the indiscriminate bombings and attacks by Boko Haram insurgent group at public buildings, schools, villages, markets have resulted in the loss of many lives and properties in the northeast, northwest and north-central regions. Data from the country's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) also reveals that from 2009-2015 over one million Nigerians have been rendered homeless and are currently registered as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) at various centres across the country due to the violent activities of Boko Haram insurgents. In addition, Nigeria's former president, Jonathan Goodluck during his address to the UN Security Council high-level meeting on the

threat of terrorism to global peace and security, disclosed that from 2009-2014, over 13,000 people have been killed by Boko Haram insurgents, many communities razed and hundreds of persons kidnapped particularly that of about 300 innocent girls of Chibok Secondary School in Borno State (Isine, 2014).

Also, activities of ethnic militia groups such as Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) despite the granting of amnesty continue to constitute another source of internal security threat in the country (Nweke, 2012). Based on the difficulties faced by the modern security agencies to address these security challenges, some Nigerians are of the opinion that the country's internal security management needs to be re-examined. Among the suggestions being put forward is the issue of reintegrating traditional institutions of leadership in view of the past records and strategic positions in the society. Against this background, the study attempts to examine how the reintegration of traditional institutions will help in improving the management of security in Nigeria using Kano Emirate Council as unit of analysis.

The nexus between traditional institutions and internal security management: In Nigeria and other African countries, during the pre and immediate post colonialization periods achieving the conceptual meaning of security vis-à-vis national security were done through the traditional institutions. Traditional institutions refer to indigenous system of administration or arrangements in which community leaders are chosen through hereditary rights in accordance with local customs and traditions (Crook, 2005; Orji and Olali, 2010). They are, therefore, considered as agencies and custodians of traditional culture, norms and values and consequently serve as agents of social control in community and society at large. For instance, in northern Nigeria, the institutions are organized into sultanate, Emirates and chiefdoms occupied by graded emirs and chiefs who are also referred to as traditional rulers while their followers are known as subjects (Englebert, 2002; Mohammed, 2007).

The roles of traditional institutions in peace, conflict and security management within their respective domains in Nigeria and other African countries have been well acknowledged and documented (McIntosh, 1990; Abacha, 1994; Vaughan, 2003; Obed, 2012). Similarly, historians and conflict studies scholars have documented their performances within the above areas beginning from the pre-colonial era to post-independence period of 1960 to date. For example, during the pre colonial period of 1804-1809, Northern Nigeria was administered through traditional Emirate system established by an Islamic

scholar Usman danfodio. Among their various functions then were: recruitment and posting of troops to different areas, determining and paying their salaries and allowances, maintenance and administration of criminal justice system (courts, native police or guards, prisons) and collection of taxes and religious alms, also known as (Haraji, jangali and sadaq or zakkah). It was also the duty of the emirs to provide general defence for the state and protect the community and religion from innovations or change (Mohammed, 2007).

The emirs as representatives of the traditional institutions were assisted in these functions by their appointed cabinet such as councillors, district, ward and village heads. This was the prevailing situation with regards to their position and roles in northern Nigeria until 1914, when the various regions were amalgamated by the colonialists. After, the amalgamation of the regions, traditional ruling institutions were integrated into the new political structure by establishing native authority system also known as indirect rule. Under the native authority system, the emirs and chiefs still retained most of their instruments of powers over political institutions such as the criminal justice system and finance but lost significant political influence with their executive powers taken away. The native authority system was divided into two distinct structures of security and administration/finance matters. The security structure was made up of the emir's personal guards (Dogarai), native authority police and prisons while administration and finance had district, village, ward and family heads respectively (Mohammed, 2007).

It was, therefore, through the above structures and the active participation of community members that the security of the population was ensured. For instance, it was then the responsibility of each family head in the community to report to the ward head the arrival of a visitor to his home. The information on the visitor normally includes parentage, home town, occupation and reason for the visit. This method helped the entire administrative structure to track and have full knowledge of all visitors to each community. However, following the changes in the administrative structure of Nigeria beginning with nationalists led government in 1960 as a result of independence from British government and the various military interregnums, traditional institutions have undergone several changes. Thus, post independence period is considered as the most significant era in the historical transformation of traditional institutions in Nigeria. This was the period when the occupants of the institutions political structures were reduced from their previous exalted positions of being the de factor powers to some complimentary or insignificant entities. For instance, immediately after the independence in 1960, the

nationalists who took over the reign of governance from the colonialists subjected many traditional rulers to various forms of humiliation ranging from dethronement to banishment (Mohammed, 2007).

Although, when the military overthrew the nationalists civilian led government in 1966, traditional rulers were given some temporary relief. But, the military like their colonialists counterparts also used them to gain grassroots support for their political adventure in governance. With this development traditional rulers regained some of their lost powers and they were once more recognized as embodiments of social control. Unfortunately, the re-integration and recognition by the new military regime did not last long following the counter coup d'état in July of the same 1966. The new military government headed by Lt. Col Gowon introduced some reforms which again deprived the traditional rulers of playing any role in security management and other administrative functions. In particular, they were relieved of participating in the running of police, the judiciary and the prisons confining them to land and other traditional functions.

The last reform that completely eroded the powers of the traditional institutions in Nigeria was the 1976, local government reform headed by Ibrahim Dasuki a prince who incidentally later became the Sultan of Sokoto in North West part of the country. The reform transferred the management of land matters which was the remaining area of authority for the traditional rulers to the state governors under the land use decree. Thus, when the regime handed over power to the civilians in 1979, the constitution limited the role of traditional institutions to the following areas: formulation of general proposals and advice to local government, provision of advice on religious matters, support for arts and culture, chieftaincy matters and control of traditional titles and offices, mobilization of people for self-help projects, assistance in the collection of levies and local revenues and making representations to government on matters referred to council by government (Blench *et al.*, 2006). However, available literature indicates that despite their non-constitutional recognition, traditional institutions of governance such as the Kano Emirate Council have over the years been active in facilitating peace and stability in Nigeria (Olusola and Arigu, 2014).

Brief background of the study area

Nigeria: Geographically situated in the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and seventh in the world (UN Report, 2014). It shares borders with four other African countries including Benin and Cameroun republics in the East and West as

well as with Republics of Chad and Niger in the North East and North West respectively. The history of the country can be traced to the amalgamation of various ancient kingdoms, caliphates and Emirates with over 250 different ethnic languages by the British colonialist in 1914 who subsequently, ruled the country until independence on 1st October, 1960 (Mohammed, 2007). Although, the country has a large number of ethnic groups, the dominant ones are the Hausa/Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the south west and Igbo in the south east regions respectively. While majority of these ethnic nationalities practices Islam and Christianity as religion, others are inclined towards native religion. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has been mostly ruled by the military but since 1999, the country transitioned to a democratic rule operating presidential system of governance. The country has three tiers of administrative structures comprising federal, 36 states and 774 local governments. Despite, the existence of these modern structures, recent study reveals that there are quite a number of unconstitutional pre-colonial traditional institutions operating besides them with significant supports from the population.

Kano traditional Emirate council: The history of Kano Emirate Council is reported to be over one millennium in spite of the fact that greater part of its history before sixth century was based on myths as opined by Hogben and Kirk-Greene. Located in the North Western Nigerian commercial city of Kano, the Emirate in its current structure with an estimated population of 10 Million spread across the forty four local governments of Kano State was established during the period of Habe rulers which was terminated by the Fulani Jihadists under the headship of Usman Danfodio in 1805 (Blench *et al.*, 2006). Although, the Hausa ruling dynasty was conquered and replaced in 1807 by the Fulani Jihadists, in 1903, the Fulbe rulers were also conquered by the British paving ways for further restructuring of the Emirate. However, prior to the 1805-1807 and 1903 developments, Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-1499) one of the Hausa kings who ruled the kingdom attempted to reorganize the administrative structure of the Emirate in the middle of fifteenth century by introducing the concept of Islamic constitution as preached by Shehu Maghili (A middle East scholar who wrote a famous treatise on governing called "The Obligation of the Princes" to advise Emir Rumfa on the proper conduct of a king).

Thus, when the Fulani Jihadists took over it was the same constitution they adopted as the basis of maintaining their leadership. Consequently, the Emirate was according to Blench *et al.* (2006) was organized along the following structure (Fig. 1).

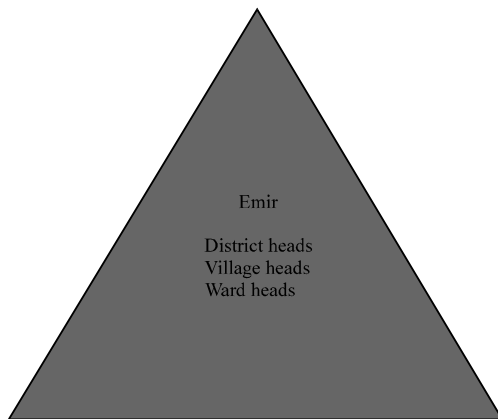


Fig. 1: Hierarchical structure of Emirate system

The Emirate was divided into districts, villages and wards. At the apex of the traditional Emirate system, the emir (Sarki) occupies top of the pyramid. Immediately below the emir is the district heads (Hakimai) followed by the village heads (Dagatai) while the bottom of the pyramid is manned by the person of ward heads (Masu Unguwani). It was, therefore, through the above structure that law and order were maintained during the pre-colonial era within the various communities so as to achieve internal security of the society (Tamuno, 1993). However, during the colonial era, following the introduction of indirect rule system by the British colonialist the structure of the Emirate was divided into two parts comprising security and administration which was merged with finance to give the emir more powers as the sole administrator of the native authority. Composition of the administration division included the family heads ward heads, village heads and district heads. On the other hand, the security division was structured to include the Emir's personal body guards (Dogarai Emir's body guards drawn from traditional slaves); native authority police; and the prisons (Mohammed, 2007).

On the whole, security within the society was achieved through the above structures while the functions of the above designated personnel were carried out in the following manner. First and foremost, the district head is the closest authority to the emir as such he is regarded as the emir's representative. He oversees the functions of village heads and represents the emir on functions which he cannot attend. By virtue of his position and location within the local government headquarters, the district head is un-constitutionally co-opted into the local government security committee. However, his first loyalty is normally given to the emir before any person. Thus, whatever information, he receives from the village heads or other community leaders; he passes it to the emir directly before informing other relevant security agencies. As for the village, he is

the link between the ward and the district heads function as the intermediary figure by collecting and passing information from the two sides whenever the need arises. Like the ward head, he is also assisted by the community leaders such as Sarkin pawa (King of Butchers) Sarkin kasuwa (King of Market) Imams (Islamic Scholar appointed to lead people in congregational prayers) The major difference him and the ward head is that he co-ordinates the activities of several wards and pass them to the district head (Blench *et al.*, 2006).

Similarly, the ward head as the closest form of traditional authority's representative in the Emirate is responsible for collecting information at the grassroots level as a result of his constant interactions with the community. His grassroots position enables him to obtain vital security information at ease and pass it to the village head or relevant security agency within the community as compared to contemporary security agents who are often viewed with suspicion by the majority of the people. The ward head is assisted in this task by other appointed community leaders who control various aspects of the community daily activities such as meat sellers overseen by Sarkin pawa, market traders also overseen by Sarkin kasuwa and of course the spiritual functions headed by the Imams. The above structure indicates that the Emirate is firmly rooted in the grass root population of the community which makes it easy for it to monitor the activities of the people within its jurisdiction.

In as much as these two structures were interwoven with the political, economic and security issues, Mohammed (2007) contend that they were able to function harmoniously. For instance, under the political structure (administration), intelligence information regarding the activities of the community members and visitors were collected by the ward head and passed to the emir along the hierarchical order. Every family head of the community was according to the rule mandated to inform the ward head about the arrival of new visitor to his house along with the visitor's personal bio-data and reason of the visit. Thus, through this mechanism, the Emirates were able to track peoples' movement thereby ensuring community safety. Although, the Emirate council like any other traditional institutions in Africa has undergone several political changes over the years, its administrative structure has to date remained the same.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted base on qualitative research method using two types of data (primary and secondary) obtained through in-depth interview and review of related publications. The in-depth interview was conducted on semi structure basis with purposively

selected respondents from security agencies, Kano traditional Emirate council, professional associations (Umbrella or body for professional people such as lawyers, Journalists, etc.) and the general public within the study area. Thus, while the respondents from security agencies were selected from the army, police, immigration, customs, civil defence corps and state security service, those from Kano traditional Emirate council were selected across the administrative hierarchy of the council (emir, (Islamic Ruler) district (Divisional representative of the Emir) village (Rural representative of the emir) and ward heads Administrative representative of the emir within the city divisions or settlements). Other respondents were selected from members of the academia, general public and key professional associations comprising Nigeria Union of Journalists, bar association and business groups (market association). On the whole, a total of 17 respondents were selected and interviewed to obtain qualitative data for the study. On the other hand, secondary data for the study was obtained from the review of relevant publications such as books, academic journals, previous studies and documents from government/traditional institutions to compliment the primary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study reveals that at the moment, there is an informal relationship between traditional institutions and security agencies in Nigeria. However, the findings suggest that despite the informal relationship between them, traditional institutions are still assisting the security agencies in managing internal security challenges in the country. One of the areas identified by the study in which traditional institutions have been actively engaged despite their non-recognition by the constitution is that of conflict resolution. Findings of this study revealed that in Nigeria, the police do not strive to meet this function. A respondent from Kano Emirate Council described the difference between how traditional institutions and the police handle disputes in the following manner.

“Unlike, the police who are only interested in taking parties that are in disputes or conflicts with each other to the court for prosecution, the traditional institutions through its representatives such as ward head, village head, district head and up to the level of emir resolves such disputes using their peculiar methods”.

Another respondent from the same Kano Emirate Council who is a district head narrated his experience in conflict resolution as follows: “As a father, I listen and mediate and solve conflicts between my subjects by using

alternative dispute resolution. And then give and take, I settle them and they go back home happily. But, if they go to the police in their vocabulary, there is no mediation. If you go them, you find that instantly they become hostile to one of the parties for one reason or the other. At the end of the day, they charge the case to the court and one of the parties goes to prison and the enmity between the parties goes on all through sometimes through family generations. So, the important thing is that we try as much as possible to impartial and act as fathers to the parties in dispute”.

A respondent from the police agency highlighted the importance of traditional institutions in managing conflicts by stating that: “As security agents charged with the responsibility of maintaining internal security we have been relying on traditional institutions to resolve conflicts. This is because as custodians of tradition and customs they enjoy respect and loyalty from members of their communities. So, when they intervene on issues, people listen to them and this has helped in averting ugly situations that can lead to serious security breaches in many communities”.

Findings of the study also show that traditional institution of leadership such as Kano Emirate Council has a significant role in intelligence gathering, complementing the police force in policing the community and building of good relationship between the security agencies and the populace. However, with respect to intelligence gathering, a respondent from the Directorate of State Security (DSS) explained that traditional institutions such as Kano Emirate Council can be effectively used for intelligence gathering provided the present administrative structure is reorganized. According to him: “Presently, the administrative structure of Kano Emirate Council is rigid for security purpose. The structure should be reorganized to make it possible for ward heads to boycott the existing protocol of hierarchal reporting and communicate intelligence information directly to the relevant security agency”.

Corroborating the position of the above respondent on the need for restricting the traditional institutions, a security expert respondent from the academics acknowledged the important role of traditional institutions in internal security management but opined that “a situation where the ward head will have to pass security information to the village head, who will in turn communicate to the district head and the district head to the emir before it gets to the security agencies means that the information can be compromised along the way”. Furthermore, the closeness of traditional institutions in the society and the respect accorded to them by the populace makes them indispensable in the management of internal security in Nigeria.

Apart from using the administrative structure of Kano Emirate Council intelligence gathering, another finding of the study indicates that traditional institutions can also be useful for managing terrorism and insurgency through discrediting their ideological foundations. For example, the strong opposition demonstrated against the Boko Haram insurgent group which claims to be fighting for the establishment of Islamic Sharia laws in Northern Nigeria by the Kano Emirate through the religious leaders within the communities whose first loyalty and respect goes to the Emirate council has helped in discrediting their ideological beliefs in the minds of the people (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015). A military respondent who is actively engaged in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents also stressed the role of traditional institutions in internal security management by pointing to the role of Kano Emirate council towards in tackling the problem of terrorism and insurgency in the state. He further revealed that at the moment the Emirate council is collaborating with contemporary security agencies in the area of intelligence gathering. However, to achieve a synergy between the two institutions, “members of the traditional institution need to be empowered and motivated especially the ward heads who perform the roles of watch dogs to the communities”.

A respondent from the Emirate council explained that when Boko Haram insurgents attacked Kano in 2012, the Emirate council played significant role in controlling the situation from deteriorating. According to him, the first action taken by the emir was that of directing all the ward heads under the Emirate council across the state to ensure that, identities of new comers into their communities are properly ascertained before they are allowed to settle. Similarly, all local and registered property agents as well as individuals were directed to scrutinize the identities of immigrants especially refugees from the neighbouring states before accommodating them. This helped in preventing the settlement of Boko Haram insurgents coming from Borno state among the communities. He further stated that “the strong position taken by the Emir against the insurgents was viewed as an attempt to deny them shelter hence they attempted to kill the emir”. Available literature also shows that the attack on the Kano central mosque located within the vicinity the of the emir’s palace in which hundreds of worshipers were killed was also linked to the strong opposition of the new emir Muhammad Sanusi II against the insurgents (Lere, 2014).

Thus, an expert respondent from the academics argued asserted that “Traditional institutions are by far the most organized body that can render community policing due to their knowledge of the community and understanding of each member’s character”. However, a

respondent from Kano traditional Emirate council explained that for traditional institutions to be more effective in internal security management, it must be enhanced through proper funding and constitutional recognition. According to him: “Once this is done, all the problems of insurgency and other crimes in the community would be drastically reduced. This is because traditional leaders are closer to the people and they know what is going on. For example, most of the Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS) being used by the Boko Haram insurgents are prepared within the communities. This means that some of the Boko Haram members are living within the communities”.

Underscoring the implication of Boko Haram attacks on the late Emir Ado Bayero and the present Emir Muhammad Sanusi II, a respondent from Nigeria Bar Association explained that Boko Haram insurgent group understands that people have more regards on the emir’s instructions than that of government officials. Hence, the emirs are being attacked. A respondent from the Kano state government also agreed with the position of the above respondent. According to him: “The general feeling among the majority of Nigerians is that modern security agencies especially the police are ineffective. So, at the moment I can tell you authoritatively that the Nigerian populace from the common person on the street to the elites does not have trust on modern security agencies especially our colleagues in the police force. They see the police as the most corrupt security agency in the country and cannot be trusted. This lack of public trust has lead to a gap in the previous existing relationship between the security agencies and the general public whose support is very essential in security management”.

On how traditional institutions can help in rebuilding public confidence on security agencies a respondent from Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps disclosed that at the moment the populace are not cooperating with the security agencies due to lack of trust. According to him: “We need the traditional institutions to obtain public cooperation. From my experience in dealing with the people especially those in the local areas, I can tell you that we have loss the trust and confidence of most Nigerians. As a result of this reason, many people now turn their heads the other ways when they see miscreants committing crimes instead of reporting to the law enforcement agencies”.

Another respondent from the immigration agency corroborated the explanation of the above respondent by stating that that “due to lack of public trust on us, many people are unwilling to cooperate with the police by refusing to provide useful information on criminal activities or that will expose the criminals, or refusing to testify against the criminals”.

CONCLUSION

The study has been able to establish that traditional institutions still have a significant role to play in societal security. For example, the role of the Kano Emirate Council in the current fight by Nigeria's security forces against Boko Haram insurgents has been acknowledged by members of the security agencies and the general public. Apart from serving as an avenue for discrediting the ideological pretence of the insurgents the council of Islamic ulamas, the Emirate council has also been providing security agencies with some useful intelligence information thorough its ward level structures. Consequently, it is the position of the paper that, the difficulties faced by security agencies in overcoming security challenges in Nigeria, makes it imperative to re-examine the idea of the formal reintegration of traditional institutions with the contemporary security agencies. Doing so will enable the two institutions achieve a synergy that will facilitate effective management of security problems especially those relating to terrorism and insurgency, violent conflicts and other crimes. In this regard, creating a modality such as the restructuring of the traditional institutions administrative to allow the ward heads communicate intelligence information to modern security agencies directly without adhering to the rigid hierarchal procedure will help.

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