

# **THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN CURBING CRIMINALITY**



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TRADITIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS IN  
CURBING CRIMINALITY, KIDNAPPING, ARMED  
ROBBERY & COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

**A Paper Presented To  
THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON KIDNAPPING,  
FARMERS-PASTORALISTS CLASHES, VIOLENT CRIMES AND  
OTHER FORMS OF  
CRIMINALITY IN NIGERIA**

**By  
Professor Sani Abubakar Lugga, MFR  
The 5th Waziri Of Katsina**

**ORGANISED BY  
THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE IN  
CONJUNCTION WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRADITIONAL  
RULERS OF NIGERIA AND THE  
LEADERSHIP NEWSPAPERS GROUP**

**HELD AT  
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, ABUJA, NIGERIA, ON  
THURSDAY MAY 11TH AND  
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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Organisers proposed a Summit Presentation on, “**The Roles of Traditional Institutions in Curbing Criminality, Kidnapping, Armed Robbery and Communal Conflicts in Nigeria**”. However, given their disposition, it is difficult (or even impossible) to pin down the Traditional Institutions to managing some aspects of security challenges in Nigeria and leaving out others. Just as the Police Force, as an Institution, is managing all forms of security challenges, so could the Traditional Institutions assist in doing the same; when given the opportunity to do so. Therefore, it is most appropriate to make a presentation that discusses the entire “**Roles of the Traditional Institutions in National Peace and Security**”. In these regards, this paper looks into the historical roles played by the Traditional Institutions in the maintenance of peace and security of their domains; before colonialism, during colonialism and after independence. The paper also looks into the possible roles the Traditional Institutions could play in assisting the Nigeria Police Force and other Security Agencies in the maintenance of peace, provision of security and prevention of crime in contemporary Nigeria.*

*Conflicts are inevitable in a pluralistic Nation like Nigeria that has diverse ethnic, religious and other interest groups; but the metamorphosis of conflicts into insurgencies and other serious security challenges in the country are*

*squarely the results of the poor management of such conflicts at their early stages of development.*

*The tripartite options of (1) military and/or police action; (2) dialogue and amnesty; and (3) community involvement through the Traditional Institutions; in the management of conflicts and other security challenges in Nigeria are recommended. No one-leg of the tripartite options is sufficient enough to manage the security challenges; therefore an appropriate combination is recommended. There is certainly the need for consistent military action in insurgencies and police action in civil strife. But, in managing all forms of conflicts and security challenges, appropriate dialogue should be employed. Military and Police actions may win the “war” but only dialogue could win the “peace”!*

*For day-to-day conflict resolution and community surveillance, the involvement of Traditional Institutions (who have a long history of conflict resolution and community surveillance passed from one generation to the other for centuries) is most appropriate as they are closest to the people, have the people’s confidence and know who comes into, and who goes out of their domains and communities.*

*According to the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, the Nigeria Police Force is the number one Law Enforcement Agency. The powers of the Nigeria Police*

*Force include those of arrest, detention and prosecution of suspects and the prevention of crime. It is in these respects that this paper proposes to the Nigeria Police Force, the effective use of the Traditional Institutions in the policing of the communities through a well articulated and well implemented Community Policing Program.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The biggest threats to Nigeria's corporate existence today are insecurities of monumental dimensions. They include religious, ethnic, political and communal conflicts that have been heightened by the Boko Haram insurgency, livestock rustling and Niger Delta militancy. Other security challenges facing the Nation include, assassinations, kidnappings, armed robbery, cultism, disregard for law and order, disregard for human lives, etc.

The last few years in Nigeria have witnessed an alarming spate of conflicts, insurgency and all forms of security challenges and human rights violations. As a result of various crises in Nigeria, over 40,000 killings were reported between 2011 and 2015 (Premium Times quoting US Council on Foreign Relations, Nigeria Security Tracker, May 2011 to September 2015). The Borno State Governor recently released *Boko Haram* casualty figures that showed more than 100,000 deaths! The North-East Recovery and Peace Building Assessment Team stated that public and private properties worth over \$9 billion (about



4.36 trillion Naira at the current parallel market exchange rate) were destroyed in the North-East between 2011 and 2015 (News Agency of Nigeria quoting Senior Special Assistant to the President on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr Mariam Masha, on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2016). This figure is almost equal to Nigeria's Federal Government budget of 4.65 trillion Naira for the year 2015! Several Local Governments once fell to Boko Haram insurgents where they declared the areas as their "Caliphate". These happenings are beyond conflicts, they are a national catastrophe that has retarded the socio-economic development of the Nation thereby making poverty to be on the increase and life to become unbearable for the vast majority of Nigerians

Conflicts are inevitable in a pluralistic Nation like Nigeria that has diverse ethnic, religious and other interest groups; but the metamorphosis of conflicts into insurgencies and other serious security challenges in the country are squarely the results of the poor management of such conflicts at their early stages of development. The tripartite options of (1) Military and/or police action; (2) Dialogue and amnesty; and (3) Community involvement through the Traditional Institutions; could effectively be used in the management of insurgency, conflicts and other security challenges in Nigeria.

However, no one-leg of the tripartite options is sufficient enough to positively manage the insurgencies and conflicts; therefore an appropriate combination should be used. There is certainly the need for consistent military action in insurgencies and police action in civil strife. But, in the effective management of all forms of conflicts and security challenges, appropriate dialogue (and in some instances, offer of amnesty) should be employed. Military and Police actions may win the battle and quell the civil strife respectively, but it is only dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts that ultimately win the peace. For day-to-day surveillance and for regular dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution, the involvement of Traditional Institutions who are known to have a long history of conflict resolution and community surveillance passed from one generation to the other for centuries is most appropriate and very desirable.

### **WHAT IS A TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION?**

The term “**Traditional Institution**” is generally misconstrued to mean and to encompass only **Traditional Rulers**. However, just as the **Police, the DSS, the NIA**, etc., make up the Nigerian Security Institution, the Traditional Institution is much wider in context and in composition than the Traditional Rulers alone, as it encompasses the following:-

1. **Traditional Rulers** - made up of Emirs, Chiefs, Obas, Obis, Kings, etc.; and Members of their Councils and

the District, Village and Ward Heads, most of who occupy their offices and positions through native customs and traditions that are generally hereditary. In addition, they have natural wide ranging portfolios that have been accepted by the people despite the absence of formal government official portfolios.

2. **Traditional Title Holders** - made up of retired senior public and private sector officials and other persons recognised by Traditional Rulers through the conferment of traditional titles.
3. **Religious Leaders** - made up of Chief Imams, Senior Pastors and leaders of Christian and Muslim religious groups and organisations.
4. **Community Elders** - made up of respected elders of the community whose opinions are respected by the people.

The above listed members of the **Traditional Institution** normally sit or have regular interaction with or unrestricted access to the Emirs, Kings, Chiefs, Obas and Obis in Council. This combination of the Traditional Institution gives the members the advantage of being respected by both the ethnic and the religious communities. Therefore, they have the capacity to positively influence all ethnic nationalities and religious groups to peacefully live with one another.

The working together of traditional rulers, religious leaders, traditional title holders and community elders for hundreds

of years gave rise to the formation of the **Traditional Institutions** that administered the various communities in what has become Nigeria today, before colonialism, during colonialism and for some times after colonialism. That was so because culture, tradition and religion are so interwoven in Nigeria to the extent of making it impossible to divorce one from the other!

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES TO TRADITIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT**

Before the conquest and the later amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern Protectorates and the Lagos Colony to form Nigeria in 1914 by the colonialists, the various segments were a conglomeration of Caliphates, Empires and Kingdoms with Traditional Authorities as the basis for governance. In Hausaland, for example, the Kingdom or Emirate was the highest Traditional Authority with the Hausa King or Emir and his Councillors at the head. The titles carried by those Councillors may differ from one place to the other, but their responsibilities were clear. For example, the Waziri was the Senior Councillor and the major adviser to the Emir. The District Heads were in charge of many Village Heads under them. The Village Heads, to complete the hierarchy, controlled the Ward Heads in their areas of jurisdiction.

The Sheikh Usman Danfodio led Jihad of 1804 established a Caliphate in Hausaland that had traditional leadership at

Emirate, District, Village and Ward levels, which operated a unique and effective security network. The arrival of a new face in town was immediately reported to the Traditional Rulers who ensured that the guest and his host were watched effectively thereby eliminating criminal-alien who would participate in robberies, thefts and other vices. That ensured a theft and robbery free society. The local police (*dogarai*) were well chosen from trusted and very well known families and usually on a hereditary basis.

Theft and murder were very rare occurrences such that houses or rooms did not have burglar proof bars at their windows and they were not locked with heavy doors and padlocks. Even with the advent of the then modern Native Authority Police Force, the importance of the Force was so high that senior Princes were always heading them. In Katsina Emirate, for example, the late Emir of Katsina Alhaji Sir Usman Nagogo and his successor son, the late Emir, Alhaji (Dr) Muhammadu Kabir Usman were Native Authority Police Chiefs (*Wakilin Doka*) in 1929 and 1953 respectively. Also in Kano, the late Emir, Alhaji (Dr) Ado Bayero was a Chief of Police in 1956. The same thing obtained in Adamawa, where the late Lamido of Adamawa, Alhaji (Dr) Aliyu Mustapha, was a Police Chief in 1951. His Eminence, late Sultan Sir Abubakar III, was also a Police Supervisor before his becoming the Sultan of Sokoto.



Recruitment into the Native Authority Police Force was done based on recommendations from the Ward, Village and District Heads. That ensured that bad eggs were never recruited into the Force. Discarding that method had sometimes resulted into the recruitment of wrong persons into the respected Nigeria Police Force. This was amply stated by the former President of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo in an 8.00 pm media chat on the Nigerian Television Authority Network on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2004. The Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004, edition of the popular newspaper in Western Nigeria, the Nigerian Tribune, reported the President as having said, *“Unfortunately, we now have robbers in the Police Force, legitimately recruited”*.

The Prisons, under the defunct Native Authorities, were so reformatory that those who have been in them never returned. The Judicial system was so honestly administered that Justice was seen to have been done. Of course minor lapses and abuses occurred, but such were very rare and very insignificant, compared to today’s massive corruption and injustice that has pervaded the Executive, the Legislature and even the Judiciary.

Most of the Emirates, Kingdoms and Chiefdoms during the colonial and First Republic periods never recorded any serious conflict up to the 1966 Military coup that resulted in the brutal murders of some great leaders, like Alhaji Sir

Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Chief Samuel Akintola and a host of others. The atmosphere of peace and security that pervaded during the First Republic was due to the excellent peace and security systems evolved and sustained by the Native Authorities under the Traditional Institutions. That atmosphere of peace and tranquillity was maintained up to the 1976 Local Government Reforms, when Traditional Institutions were stripped of their administrative powers and same transferred to the Local, State and Federal Governments. Since then, the Nigerian Nation had been experiencing one form of serious security challenge or another.

#### **TRADITIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT METHODS**

It is interesting to note that about 80% of all the recorded religious and ethnic conflicts that degenerated into full blown crises leading to losses of lives and properties in Nigeria from around 1950 to date, occurred after the 1966, 1967 and 1976 Local Government Reforms that stripped Traditional Institutions of their interventionist powers in such conflicts and crises. Prior to 1976, conflicts were easily resolved by Traditional Authorities thereby saving lives and properties without attracting any undue attention or publicity. That also assisted in curtailing the spread of the conflicts and crises from their originating places to other areas.

Traditional Institutions mainly employed dialogue and other alternative dispute resolution methods in managing conflicts. In isolated cases, they used threats and minimal force. They also had excellent surveillance and monitoring systems that enabled them to detect and contain conflicts at their infancy stages before they grew into full-blown crises. Examples given below of the security management systems and methods in Hausaland may represent those of Traditional Institutions in Yorubaland, Igboland and other Lands that make up today's Nigeria.

### **The Pre-Colonial Period**

Prior to the advent of colonialism and prior to the Sheikh Usman Danfodio led Jihad of 1804, inter-tribal and communal conflicts abound in Hausaland where settlement of such conflicts had generally been through warfare. The Jihad led to the transformation of most of the societies from tribal and communal unions into States under a Caliphate with Headquarters at Sokoto.

For about a century, Sokoto Caliphate had a relatively peaceful existence with some isolated cases of revolts and resistances which were generally settled amicably through dialogue and diplomacy and in some few cases, by threats or the use of minimal force. For example, about ten years before the European conquest, the Caliphate contended with a few of such conflicts like the Kano civil disorder (*basasa*) of 1893-94. Sokoto, embarked on shuttle

diplomacy to save the situation with a diplomat, Muhammad Bukhari Dan-Ahmad, assigned the mediatory role by the Sultan of Sokoto (Adamu, 1978). Religiously inspired conflicts were also few during that period. The scale of the conflicts remained insignificant up to the conquest of the Caliphate by the British invading army in 1903.

### **The Colonial Period**

During British colonial rule, the colonialists realised that they needed the Traditional Institutions much more than the Traditional Institutions needed them. Thus, there was a limit to which a colonial officer could undermine an Emir, a Chief, an Oba or an Obi without hurting the wider British interests. The British asserted their authority, but soon recognised that they had no alternative, but to use the Traditional Rulers and their administrative and security system to run the country. Lady Bernard Shaw Lugard, in her book, *A Tropical Dependency*, emphasised how useful and effective the British found the system to be and how beneficially they used it. The British had no knowledge of the country; they had no personnel and had no resources to seek to establish an alternative system. They, therefore, decided to use the available manpower and local resources to govern and to manage the security. That system came to be popularly known as “**Indirect Rule**” that simply meant the utilisation of Traditional Rulers and their long and well

tested apparatus of administration to govern. Therefore, the traditional security management methods through the Emirs, Chiefs, Kings, District, Village and Ward Heads subsisted throughout colonial rule.

### **The Civilian and The Military Periods**

The role of Traditional Rulers in administration and security management during the first political period of 1949-60 was robust. In Northern Nigeria for example, with the approach of Independence, the House of Chiefs was created first in Kaduna and the House of Assembly added to it later. From the 1950s to the 1960s, the House of Chiefs in Kaduna served as a senior partner to the House of Assembly, working as the present day Senate in relation to the House of Representatives. In addition, there were high proportions of traditional figures in the House of Assembly and in Government. That enabled the Traditional Institution to continue to effectively perform administrative and security management roles.

A brief on the way the June 1966 crisis, as an aftermath of the first military coup in January 1966, was handled by Katsina Emirate may suffice to demonstrate the way the Traditional Institutions handled conflicts after British colonialism in Nigeria, no matter the magnitude of those conflicts. This Speaker, as a Senior Secondary School student, was a witness to the happenings during the 1966 riots where Igbo-Easterners were killed in Northern



Nigeria and Hausa-Northerners were killed in Eastern Nigeria. The riots in both the North and the East were spontaneous and beyond the conventional security apparatus. This Speaker witnessed when the late Emir of Katsina, Alhaji Sir Usman Nagogo, and some of his Emirate Councillors and Imams were going out on foot from one corner of Katsina City to the other calling on people to exercise restraint and leave matters to Allah, the best of all judges. The people respected the Emir's call and placed a halt to the massacres. The Emir's guest house, *Sabon Gida* (near the present Army Barracks), was used as a safe haven for the Igbo refugees who were protected, fed and cared for by the Emir. One noticeable aspect of the riot was that, Islamic war tenets were applied where women, children and the aged were not harmed.

The Katsina Traditional Institution doused that crisis of immense magnitude and cared for the victims for almost two months (June to July 1966). The counter coup of July 1966 brought some temporary relief before the conflict degenerated into a civil war a year later, in July 1967. Again, Traditional Institutions were used in the recruitment of emergency soldiers to execute that gruesome war that kept Nigeria one. After the civil war, the programme of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction was embarked upon by the government. Once more, Traditional Institutions

showed their magnanimity. Besides being the main pillars for the reconciliation, they held abandoned properties in trust and handed them back to their rightful owners after the civil war.

The late Emir of Katsina, Alhaji (Dr) Muhammadu Kabir Usman, CFR (as the then District Head of Katsina) was a member of the Committee that was set up by the late Emir, Alhaji Sir Usman Nagogo, to handle the abandoned properties issue. The late Emir (Alhaji Muhammadu Kabir Usman) once confirmed to this Speaker that all rightful Igbo owners of properties, who returned to Katsina after the civil war, got their properties back without any litigation as was done in some parts of the country.

### **The Period After The 1976 Local Government Reforms**

Despite the 1976 Local Government reforms that stripped the Traditional Institutions of their interventionist powers, they still continued to assist in security management. It is therefore most appropriate here to briefly discuss their efforts in relation to conflicts that kept on recurring since the 1976 reforms.

Since the abolition of the State House of Chiefs in 1967 and the local government reforms of 1976, the Emirs and Chiefs in Northern Nigeria had no formal forum to meet and discuss conflict, security and other issues. However, the devastation experienced during the 1987 Kafanchan

crisis in Kaduna State made them to organise an informal meeting to discuss the issue. On the inaugural meeting of that Forum in Kaduna, in June 1987, the Daily Times newspaper of June 17<sup>th</sup> 1987 reported that, “*their stated objective was the formation of a Committee of Elders that would monitor significant areas and developments likely to lead to tension and hostilities and find preventive measures through tackling their causes*”.

Since its inaugural meeting, the Committee met several times and took many important decisions. But it was noted that all the actions taken by the Traditional Rulers proved ineffective because their roles were purely advisory and many of their recommendations were not implemented either by the reigning government or by subsequent governments.

The Northern Traditional Rulers met on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1991, dismayed and disheartened by “*the bloody Shiite unrests in Katsina State in April 1991 and in Bauchi State in June 1991*” (Agi, 1998). They set up a seven-man Committee that would identify the causes of, and propose solutions to, the frequent civil disturbances and submit their report to the Emirs and Chiefs in order to enable them broker a comprehensive peace agreement. The Traditional Rulers also called on religious fundamentalists and their cohorts to, “*exercise restraints, eschew violence, intolerance and over-zealousness in their religious pursuits*”. The

Traditional Rulers went on to charge Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic origins, religious beliefs or political affiliations, to learn to live with one another peacefully for meaningful development in the best interest of the Nation.

As a follow-up, the Traditional Rulers sent a memorandum to the Federal Military Government urging it to promulgate a Decree banning religious fanaticism before the planned transition to democracy in 1992. In the memorandum, the Traditional Rulers advised that such a Decree should stipulate heavy penalty, like the death penalty or at least a life sentence, as deterrent to those who cause deaths. The memorandum went on to state that, *“it will be suicidal for such an issue to be overlooked. The phenomenon of religious militancy, which is now the bane of Nigerian Society, was not a part of the country’s culture twenty years ago”*.

Perhaps “twenty years ago” referred to the period between the time of the local government reforms of 1976 and the time the Traditional Rulers were writing the memorandum in 1992. They then warned that, *“if the government does not take an urgent step, a time will come when the country will turn into a battlefield”* (unfortunately that prediction had now come true!).

The Northern Traditional Rulers met again in the wake of the December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1994 decapitation of Gideon Akaluka and the near lynching of Christian Azubuike in Kano and

Sokoto cities respectively. The meeting, which was held in Kaduna, was intended to forge a common response to the problem posed by religious fanatics in the Region. Nothing was achieved as, as usual, government did not implement any of the recommendations the Traditional Rulers sent to it; and the Traditional Rulers had no powers to do anything else!

### **The Insurgency Period**

The poor Traditional Rulers, stripped of all legal and administrative powers, were now left only to lament and to advise the government on what to do to manage conflicts and crises. On the other hand, the public still saw them as “being powerful” and therefore capable of exerting immense influence and/or pressure on both the government and on all conflicting parties for them to succumb. With this perception, the citizenry had, on many occasions, castigated the Traditional Rulers publicly and accused them of doing nothing about the insecurity situation in the country. But the Traditional Rulers have also been victims of the gross insecurity. The case of the Northern Traditional Rulers as victims of the Boko Haram insurgency suffices!

Several Traditional Rulers at District and Village levels have been killed by the Boko Haram insurgents and three first class Emirs (those of Mubi in Adamawa State, Gwoza and Bama in Borno State) were chased out of their domains and their Palaces turned into Boko Haram Zonal



Headquarters. The Emir of Gwoza, HRH Alhaji Shehu Mustapha Idrisa Timta, was subsequently killed by the insurgents in a road ambush on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014. HRH the Emir of Ganye in Adamawa State, Alhaji Umaru Sanda was attacked at his Palace by Boko Haram insurgents on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013, he escaped but several people were killed in his town.

By Northern Nigerian ranking of Traditional Rulers, HRH the Shehu of Borno Alhaji Abubakar Umar ibn Garbai El-Kanemi, comes second after His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto and he was attacked by Boko Haram at the Central Mosque Maiduguri on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012. HRH the Emir of Kano, late Alhaji Ado Bayero comes fourth and he was attacked by Boko Haram near an Islamic School in Kano on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2013. The Successor to late Alhaji Ado Bayero, HRH the Emir of Kano, Malam Muhammadu Sanusi II, was also attacked by Boko Haram at Kano Central Mosque on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The Emir of Fika in Yobe State, Alhaji Muhammadu Abali ibn Muhammadu Idrissa was attacked by Boko Haram at the Central Mosque on Friday August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. These First Class Emirs are also Chairmen of the Councils of Traditional Rulers in their respective States. They were all attacked by Boko Haram insurgents; they escaped by the Grace of Allah, but some of their aides, body guards and nearby people were killed during the attacks. For example, in Kano alone, over 120 people were killed during the

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014 attack on Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II. Despite all these, some Nigerians accuse the Traditional Rulers of inaction and expect them to perform miracles in tackling the Boko Haram insurgency!

Would anyone deny the fact that it was His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto who publically called for the use of the dialogue option with the Boko Haram insurgents during a meeting in Kaduna on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013? Was it not as a result of that call that former President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated a Committee to that effect and refused to implement the Committee's far reaching recommendations that would have ended the Boko Haram insurgency long ago? Is it not the implementation of the Sultan's call by the President Buhari Government that has now led to the release of over 100 of the Chibok School Girls? Therefore, if successive governments had listened to the wise counsels of the Traditional Institutions, Nigeria's security challenges would not have reached their current unfortunate magnitudes!

Because of their dignified positions, Traditional Rulers do not complain to or advise government publicly. They meet and articulate their positions and forward same to government under confidential cover. This they did several times on the Boko Haram insurgency. This Speaker served on many Committees established for this purpose and even served as the Secretary in some of them. For instance, the

Traditional Rulers visited the former President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, several times to offer advice on the “State of the Nation”. In particular, a Committee of the National Council of Traditional Rulers met with President Jonathan on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011, just eleven days before his swearing-in as the newly elected President. The Committee was jointly led by His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III, CFR, mni and His Majesty the late Ooni of Ife, Oba Sijuade, CFR, and had in the entourage Chairmen of all the Traditional Rulers’ Councils in all the 36 States and the Federal Capital Abuja.

Due to the concern, particularly on the escalating Boko Haram insurgency and its attendant destruction of lives and properties, and on all aspects of the Nation’s life; the Northern Traditional Rulers’ Council, for example, wrote a strongly worded letter on the **“State of the Nation”** that was addressed to, personally handed over to, and discussed with President Goodluck Jonathan on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The letter was signed by His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto, who is the Chairman of the Council and a high powered delegation of Senior Emirs and Chiefs accompanied His Eminence the Sultan to deliver the letter. The wide ranging contents of the letter included the following:-

1. Peace and Security.

- 2.Power, Industry and Employment.
- 3.Health and Education.
- 4.Corruption.
- 5.Development of Agricultural and other non-Oil Sectors.
- 6.Safeguarding the Sanctity of the Traditional Institutions.
- 7.Justice and Fairness.

In a similar vein, the Northern Traditional Rulers Council visited President Muhammadu Buhari on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2015, about three months after his swearing-in as the newly elected President.

In all the visits, the Traditional Rulers advised the Presidents on all aspects of the “State of the Nation”. They did that by presenting written letters and by making verbal explanatory remarks.

It should be noted that, the Traditional Rulers, on their own volition and without government or any body’s prompting, formed both a Northern Traditional Rulers’ Council with headquarters in Kaduna and a National Council of Traditional Rulers of Nigeria with headquarters in Abuja. Similar Councils obtained in the Western and Eastern parts of the country. They meet periodically in order to discuss Regional and National issues and proffer advises. They visit government officials’ concerned (from Mr. President to Governors and top Security Heads) or send high powered emissaries to act on their behalf. During each

visit, they took along prepared letters/memos and discussed the contents with the recipients.

## **WHAT SECURITY ROLES COULD TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS PLAY IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA?**

### **Managing Religious and Ethnic Conflicts**

Nigeria's major areas of conflicts today are on religion and ethnicity that affect both economic and political activities as everything in the Country is seen either from a religious or an ethnic angle. Before the 1976 Local Government Reforms, which stripped Traditional Institutions of their powers, there were never any recorded serious incidences of religious or ethnic related conflicts, where hundreds of lives were lost as is obtained nowadays. Most conflicts then were handled effectively by the Traditional Institutions thereby rendering them into the regular inevitable minor conflicts, against the monumental conflicts that obtain today.

It could be recalled that the **first major religious crisis** in Nigeria, the Maitatsine riot in Kano, which claimed about 6,000 lives, occurred in 1980. The same Maitatsine was deported to his native Cameroon Republic in 1950 when he started to create problems in Kano by the Emir of Kano Muhammadu Sanusi. He returned later after the reign of Emir Sanusi and again started to cause problems. He was jailed in 1973 by Emir of Kano Ado Bayero. After his jail term, he was deported again to his native Cameroon

Republic. He returned during the 1979 political era and caused the deaths of thousands of people. That was because Emirs were then asked to “hands-off” security and legal matters by the political authorities in accordance with the 1976 Local Government Reforms!

The **first most devastating ethnic conflict** in Northern Nigeria occurred at Zangon Kataf of Zazzau Emirate in Kaduna State, in 1992. Prior to that, several Emirs of Zazzau contained the situations in that same town several times, particularly in 1959, 1963, 1966 and 1974. If the Emirs had the security powers they had before, they would have contained the 1992 Zangon Kataf ethnic crisis before it degenerated into what it did with resultant deaths of thousands of people and the destruction of properties worth billions of Naira.

These two examples from Northern Nigeria (among several others) demonstrate the efficacy of the Traditional Institutions to contain religious and ethnic conflicts. Traditional Institutions in Northern Nigeria united their people religiously and ethnically during Colonial Rule and during the First Republic. Even the critics of the Northern Nigerian political leadership under the late Premier, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto, conceded that Northern Muslims, Christians, Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv, Yoruba, Birom, Kaje, Idoma, Tarok, etc, all lived harmoniously together under that government, which

was dominated by the Traditional Institution in its management; to the extent that even Christians serving in it bore traditional titles, like Minister Michael Audu Buba who was the Waziri of Shendam in Plateau Province.

### **Maintaining Peace and Containing other Security Challenges**

The system of local intelligence and enforcement of security used by the Traditional Institutions of yesteryears are enough testimonies to their ability to maintain peace and security in their localities. After all, it has now become a common practice for Government Officials to always run to the Traditional Institutions for succour when insecurity engulfs an area and the conventional security agencies failed to contain the situation. The official enlistment of the assistance of the Traditional Institutions in security matters will therefore ensure that criminals do not find hiding places in their localities since new faces coming into the community will easily be detected and investigated.

Equally, the involvement of the Traditional Institutions in the screening of applicants into the Police Force, the Nigerian Army and other Security Agencies will go a long way in the elimination of the employment of crooks into the security forces thereby ensuring that officers and men are of good character and upbringing.

Emirs, Kings and Chiefs; Traditional Councillors; District, Village and Ward Heads; Imams, Pastors and other

Religious Leaders; coupled with Community Elders abound in nearly all community nooks and crannies. These members of the Traditional Institutions performed wonderfully well in the yesteryears in policing their communities and establishing absolute peace and security within them. Those tasks could still be performed by the Traditional Institutions as the traditional manpower is still there as could be seen from the following example.

**Katsina State is made up of Katsina and Daura Emirates. As at December 2016, the two Emirates had the following traditional manpower:-**

EMIRATE	EMIR IN COUNCIL	DISTRICT HEADS	VILLAGE HEADS	WARD HEADS	TOTALS
<b>Katsina</b>	26	44	456	6,704	7,230
<b>Daura</b>	16	16	140	2,900	3,072
<b>Sub Total</b>					<b>10,302</b>
<b>Secretariat and other Support Staff at all levels</b>					<b>3,830</b>
<b>Traditional Title Holders at all levels</b>					<b>2,490</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>16,622</b>

The table above gives a figure of 10,302 traditional personnel, made up of Traditional Office Holders who are complemented with a retinue of Traditional Police or body guards (the *Dogarai*) and Traditional Servants (the *Buwara*). In addition, the Katsina State Council of Traditional Rulers, each of the two Emirate Councils and each of the Emir's Palaces has Secretariat Staff and other Traditional Staff manning them, some of University Graduate levels. Likewise, each District and Village Head has similar Support Staff. This shows that Their Royal



Highnesses the Emirs of Katsina and Daura have under them about **16,622 Traditional Personnel** spread all over Katsina State. If the estimated figure of recognised Chief Imams of about **100,000** in the State is added, there will be an estimated **116,622** Members of the Traditional Institutions in the State. This figure by far surpasses that of the estimated **6,500 Nigeria Police, State Security Service and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps** personnel working in the State! The figure also does not include hundreds of thousands of respected Community Elders who form part of the Traditional Institution.

Studies have also shown that in Katsina State, there is the residence of a member of the Traditional Institution in about every ten streets in the major towns and at least one member's residence in each of the 9,604 Local Wards (*Unguwa*). There certainly could not be a better means of surveillance and policing of the community than this! With the Katsina State example and a series of researches on the propriety of the Traditional Institutions being involved in security management, the following could be deduced:-

1. Members of the Traditional Institutions are born and bred in their localities and they are permanently resident among their people, so they are conversant with the residents of the areas. Government Security Personnel either live in barracks or clumsily among the people and they are transferred from time to time and therefore are

never fully conversant with the local environment. Therefore, Traditional Institutions are more suited to provide effective surveillance; and effective surveillance is the key to effective security management.

2. Traditional Institutions have better potential for resolving conflicts than the conventional agencies considering their closeness to the people and the fact that they are highly revered in the society. Traditional Leaders understand the basic problems confronting their people and their society culturally, religiously and emotionally, so with this, they are better placed to approach issues with a view to resolving them amicably.
3. The involvement of the Traditional Institution in conflict and security management will contribute positively in tackling justice problems of the community. This is because, as custodians of the people's culture, tradition and norms, they would always uphold those virtues which they symbolise.
4. Traditional Institutions have the needed local experience and expertise to handle conflicts and resolve them most efficiently. There is also continuity of tenure (for those who hold traditional offices), unlike in the conventional security/justice systems whereby an investigating or prosecuting Police Officer or a Judge could be transferred or retired, thereby delaying investigation, prosecution, judgement, etc.

5. Traditional Institutions are by nature accountable to the people knowing full well that any misdemeanour by any Traditional Leader would tarnish the good name of the family where he comes from. There is therefore, family pressure on any traditional office holder to maintain the good virtues of the family tradition. This would make it impossible for the vices inherent in some conventional type of security/justice systems to find any lasting place in the Traditional Institutions.

## **COMMUNITY POLICING**

It is glaringly clear that, Traditional Institutions are the most veritable tools that could be used by the Government and its Security Agencies in the provision of security, resolution of conflicts and the sustenance of peace and stability. It is therefore time for Governments at all levels and the Security Agencies to utilise the robust and experienced Traditional Institutions for the mobilisation of the citizenry towards community security management. Therefore, the introduction of the modern COMMUNITY POLICING system has become imperative.

Community Policing is a philosophy that focuses on managing crime and social disorder through the delivery of security services that include law enforcement, prevention of crime, problem solving and conflict resolution through community engagement and partnership.

Community Policing entails building of ties and working closely between Security Agencies and members of the communities they serve. In this program, Governments at all levels, the Police Force, State Security Service, other Security Agencies, Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, Community Elders, Voluntary Organisations, Private Sector, Media Organisations and the Citizenry shall all partner to provide effective security management. Ultimately, the program shall lead to peace and security, which shall provide an enabling environment for progress, prosperity and progressive development.

**Community Policing** has become most imperative in Nigeria today for the following reasons; and all hands must be put on deck for its effective implementation:-

- 1.The very successful military operations against Boko Haram insurgents, livestock rustlers and Niger Delta militants is dislodging these criminals and making some of them to leave their forest or creek locations and get embedded into the communities. The management of such situations rests with the Nigeria Police Force, the State Security Service and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps who are jointly and severally saddled with the responsibility of fishing out these criminals before they regroup or use the opportunity to recruit new converts and unleash new mayhem. Such mayhem is extremely difficult to contain as they now live within the

communities and it is easier to fight them in their forest locations than within townships where civilian collateral damage could be excessive.

2. Insurgency, militancy, rustling, ethnic, religious and communal conflicts and other security challenges always create victims and cause massive destruction of public and private properties and infrastructure. The size of the victims and the level of the destruction of the properties generally depend on the type of security challenge. For example, kidnapping results in a small pool of victims without property destruction, while suicide bombing results in a large pool of victims and massive destruction of properties. Boko Haram insurgency has caused the displacement of more than 2.5 million people. Over 200,000 others have been rescued by the Nigerian Armed Forces. These victims are in the Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps or staying with relatives. Reports are daily being circulated on the pathetic situation of these IDPs who feel seemingly neglected by both the government and the society.

It should be noted that when someone is made a victim by another and a third party that could assist neglects the victim; such a victim sees no difference between the one who makes him a victim and the one who refuses to assist him. In most cases, the victim is more annoyed with the one who refuses to assist him than with the one who

made him a victim in the first place. The victims of Boko Haram insurgency are in such a deplorable situation and they could likely turn against the government and the society that they perceive as having neglected them.

3. Rising number of universities' and other schools' unemployed young graduates and the general rise in massive unemployment as a result of the economic crunch in the country have led to youths' and even elders' restiveness. This is a time bomb waiting to explode. Again, the Nigeria Police Force, the State Security Service and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps are looked upon to save the situation before it busts into a serious security challenge.

### **Elements of Community Policing**

1. Relying on community-based crime prevention by utilising civilian knowledge of the local environment, neighbourhood watch, and a variety of other techniques, as opposed to relying solely on security officers' patrols.
2. Re-structuring of security patrol from an emergency response based system to emphasising proactive techniques such as regular patrol and regular interaction with the local communities.
3. Increasing security officers' accountability to the civilians they are serving.

4. Building trust between security personnel and the local communities thereby enhancing respect and confidence in the security apparatus.
5. Building a strong synergy that makes members of the communities to freely share intelligence information with security officers in a truly friendly atmosphere.

### **Some Countries That Have Embraced Community Policing**

Since the late 1940s, but most significantly the early 1970s, several countries all over the World embraced the Community Policing system. Some countries integrated it directly into their Police systems while others made it into non-governmental organisations. Some others integrated both systems, as they made some parts of it as an integral part of their Police Force and some other parts of it was allowed to be run by non-governmental organisations. Examples of some of the countries that have embraced the Community Policing system are as follows:-

1. United States of America: San Francisco Police Department established a Community Relations Unit in 1962. The San Francisco model was adopted by the US Government where the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 established the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

2. Italy: The Italian Parliament passed a comprehensive Community Policing Law on March 31, 2000 that officially established the programme in the country.
3. France: In August 2002, the French Parliament enacted the *Loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la sécurité intérieure*. This law created the *Local Security and Crime Prevention Councils all over the country*.
4. South Africa: The South Africa Community Safety Forum emanated from the requirements outlined in the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996, and the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security.
5. Sweden: In 1992, the National Council for Crime Prevention began forming local security committees under the name of *Brottsförebyggande Rad* or BRA.
6. Germany: Community Crime Prevention or *Komunale Kriminalprävention* was established in Germany in 2002.
7. Malaysia: The Community Oriented Policing Strategies (COPS) organisation of Malaysia was registered in March 2008 as a non-governmental organisation that is fully participating in the country's security architecture.
8. Japan: In Japan, the centuries old local security system known as the *Koban* was officially made a community policing outfit in 1994.



9. China: Street Policing Units or Social Control System in China is perhaps the oldest form of modern security policing programme that was started in 1949 as a non-profit organisation and still exists as such. In addition, the Chinese Community Policing Centre was established in 1992 as a government sponsored community policing programme. Therefore, both governmental and non-governmental community policing outfits exist in China.
10. Israel: Community Policing Centres under the Israeli National Police began to be established on a large scale in January 1995.
11. Netherlands: Community Policing (COP) in Netherlands was established in 1977.
12. Uganda: Uganda established Community Policing in October 2013.
13. India: The Friends of Police Movement was started as a non-governmental organisation in 1993 and the *Saad Sanvaad*, a government backed community policing initiative was launched in December 2012; making both governmental and non-governmental community policing outfits to exist in India.

### **Community Policing Implementation**

Community Policing programme is concerned with creating partnerships between law enforcement agencies and other

organisations like government ministries, departments and agencies, community members, non-governmental organisations, private businesses and the media. The programme recognises that security agencies cannot solve every public safety problem alone, so interactive partnerships are created. In these regards, in the Nigerian context, even though all security agencies should be involved in the programme, only the following should direct its main operations:-

- 1.The Nigeria Police
- 2.The Department of State Security
- 3.The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

This has become imperative as these three are the only security agencies that have offices and staff in all the States and the Local Governments in Nigeria; and they are closest to the communities.

**For effective Community Policing to be entrenched in Nigeria's security system;**

- 1.The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in collaboration with the Department of State Security (DSS) and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) should create a body to be known as, **Community Policing Committee (CPC)**.
- 2.A special Community Policing Department that would handle the operations of the Committees should be

formed that will be under the direct supervision of the Inspector General of Police at the national level and perhaps to be headed by an Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) at the Force Headquarters.

3. Similar Departments should be created at States levels under the Commissioners of Police and at Local Governments levels under the Divisional Police Officers.

4. Senior DSS and NSCDC Officers should be posted to assist the AIG at the national level. States Directors of the DSS and States Commanders of the NSCDC should assist the States Commissioners of Police at States levels. The most senior DSS and NSCDC staff should assist the Local Governments Divisional Police Officers.

The Community Policing Committee (CPC) should comprise of members drawn from diverse stake-holders and interest groups. It could be made up of the following:-

1. Traditional Rulers

2. Religious Leaders

3. Respected Community Elders

4. Police Officers and Officers of other Security Agencies, like the Military, Customs and Immigration Services, etc.

5. Representatives of the Secretaries to the Federal and States Governments and those of the Local Government Chairmen, at Federal, States and Local Governments levels respectively

6. Respected retired senior Police and other Security Services Officers

7. Responsible youth and women leaders

8. Representatives of the business community and of the Special Interest Groups

9. Representatives of the Media

The above composition, when replicated at Federal, States and Local Governments levels would achieve the following:-

(1) Unique and effective security surveillance and intelligence network. For example, the arrival of a new face in town would immediately be reported to the respective traditional hierarchy of Ward Head, Village Head, District Head and Emir to the respective Community Policing Committee and ultimately to the Nigeria Police at the respective level for immediate action. In these regards, the guest and his host would be closely monitored, thereby eliminating the settlement of criminals into the communities who participate in insurgencies, livestock rustling, robberies, thefts, etc.

(2) The Community Policing Committees could serve in providing effective alternative dispute resolution and peace maintenance in their respective communities.

(3) The Vigilante Groups, the Civilian JTFs, the Muslim and Christian Aid Groups and similar Voluntary

Organisations could assist uniformed Security Personnel in night and day patrols. Even the Customs and Immigration Services could benefit from the assistance of these groups in border patrols as they know the local terrains very well.

### **Legal Status for the Community Policing Committee (CPC)**

For the Community Policing Committee (CPC) to operate successfully, it should acquire a legal status. In the Nigerian context for example, the process of enacting a fresh Law to cover the CPC may take too long and the new Law might conflict with some existing Security Laws. In these regards, two major options could be considered.

1. Amending the Nigeria Police Law to accommodate the Community Policing Committee as is obtained in the United States of America where the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 established the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services within the Justice Department.
2. Incorporating the Community Policing Committee with the Corporate Affairs Commission as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) as is obtained in Malaysia where the Community Oriented Policing Strategies (COPS) of Malaysia was registered in March 2008 as an NGO. This could be achieved via a Constitution that spells out the aims, objectives and operational guidelines of the Community Policing Committee.

With a competent legal status, the Community Policing Committee would attract budgetary allocations and/or grants at Federal, States and Local Governments levels. Nigerian communities are also envisaged to contribute both morally and financially to the Community Policing Committees as they are now involved and are the immediate beneficiaries of its peace and security activities.

There has been in existence, the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) that was established in May 1984. But it was not until 20<sup>th</sup> November 2010 that the PCRC got a standard Constitution to guide its activities.

Perhaps, as a guide, the PCRC Constitution may form the basis for an enabling amendment to the Police Law or the provision of a Constitution for the establishment of the envisaged Community Policing Committee as an NGO. In addition, the existing PCRC structures could make up the starting structures for the new CPC.

## **CONCLUSION**

It has been proved time and again that Traditional Institutions could provide the much needed succour in containing the recurring ethnic and religious conflicts and crises; and in the management of other forms of insecurities in Nigeria that have been resulting in the unfortunate losses of valuable lives and properties.

It is therefore important that concerted efforts be made to rectify the glaring mistakes of the last three decades vis-à-

vis the position of Traditional Institutions. Emirates, Kingdoms, Chiefdoms and other Traditional Councils would need to be substantially strengthened for effective management of conflicts and provision of security.

The reluctance to accord to the Traditional Institutions the authority to serve in matters affecting religion, culture, security and conflict resolution may need to be reconsidered. Also, the tacit advisory roles that Emirs and Chiefs and Religious Leaders play today would need to be formalised. They are already serving as consultants on a variety of issues including security and conflict resolution. Their expertise as peace makers and socio-cultural and religious bridge-builders should be exploited so as to bring greater amity and understanding between the different peoples of Nigeria thereby building a stronger and more viable Nation.

It is the responsibility of government to provide an enabling environment for the citizenry to carry out their legitimate acts of daily living devoid of acrimony, religious and ethnic violence. The Traditional Institutions are the most veritable tools that could be used by the Government and its Security Agencies in the provision of security, resolution of conflicts and the sustenance of peace and stability. It is time the Governments at all levels and the Security Agencies utilised the robust and experienced Traditional Institutions for the mobilisation of the citizenry

towards community security management. Therefore, the introduction of the modern COMMUNITY POLICING system has now become imperative.

For effective “Community Policing”, the Nigeria Police Force should reactivate, reorganise, strengthen, encourage and empower the Police/Community Relations Committees that have existed for over thirty years in all parts of the country. These Committees could be re-designated as, “Community Policing Committees (CPCs)”. A special Community Policing Department that would handle the operations of the CPCs should be formed that will be under the direct supervision of the Inspector General of Police at the National level, perhaps to be headed by an Assistant Inspector General of Police. Similar Departments should be created at States levels under the Commissioners of Police and at Local Governments levels under the Local Governments Divisional Police Officers.

For the CPC to perform effectively, its membership should be made up of Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, Respected Community Elders, mature Youths, Police Officers, Officers of other Security Services and some respected retired senior Police and other Security Services Officers. This composition, when replicated at Federal, States and Local Governments levels would provide a unique and effective security surveillance and intelligence network. For example, the arrival of a new face in town



would immediately be reported through the traditional hierarchy of Ward Head, Village Head, District Head and Emir to the Community Policing Committee and ultimately to the Nigeria Police for immediate action. In these regards, the guest and his host would be closely monitored, thereby eliminating the settlement of criminals into the communities who could participate in insurgencies, livestock rustling, robberies and other vices.

Clear operational guidelines for the Community Policing Committee should be drawn, incorporated into the Police Law or registered as a non-governmental organisation but which has strong government backing and control. Its formation and activities should be given high publicity so as to enlighten the public on its existence and on its modes of operation. With a competent legal status, the Community Policing Committee would be able to attract budgetary allocations and/or grants at Federal, States and Local Governments levels. Communities are also envisaged to contribute both morally and financially to the Community Policing Committee as they are now involved. In this program, the Governments at all levels, the Traditional Institutions and the Citizenry are all partnering to save Nigeria from the clutches of the multifarious security challenges bedevilling her.

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