

Emplacing Nigeria as Peaceful and Secure State in the International System: The Monarchy's Intervention as an Imperative

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With the outbreak of Boko Haram insurgency since 2009, surge in Niger Delta militancy in the Yar'Adua/Jonathan years, proliferation of kidnapping particularly of expatriates and Chibok Girls coupled with the orgy of killings unleashed on harmless and armless farmers, women, and children by some Fulani herdsmen in parts of Nigeria, the country is terrorized. Thus, it can be safely argued that Nigeria is at the threshold of becoming a failed state in terms of peace and security. Apart from the obvious implications of this state of insecurity on the State-Citizen relationship within Nigeria, it has impacted negatively on the country's external image, strength of sovereignty and integrity, as well as discouraging the much-needed foreign investment. While the Nigerian State has been making strident efforts to stem the tide of threatened peace and insecurity, it is a truism that such efforts need to be upgraded through thinking out of the box, in furthering the search for solution to these problems. In agreement with scholars on the central relevance of culture to any people's development trajectories, this paper unpacks some roles that the institution of monarchy can play in arresting the unpleasant trend. The paper argues that, given the vantage position of traditional rulers as custodians of community traditions and culture, coupled with their closeness to the people in the grassroots and the quantum of reverence they command among their subjects, they should be statutorily integrated into the mainstream of the governance architecture for direct involvement in the peace-building and security maintenance process.

[Peace; Security; Development; Cultural Diversity; Monarchy's Intervention]

Introduction

While¹ it is common knowledge that many post-colonial African states have been bedeviled with the crumbling problem of managing their

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¹ An abridged version of this paper was presented by the author with the title *Culture Mix as Instrument of Peace and Security in Multi-ethnic Nigeria: Interrogating the*

diversity as manifest in complex ethnic configurations foisted on them through the arbitrary colonial boundary adjustment and ethnic integration policy, it would seem that the Nigerian experience of this unpleasant historical reality is quite outstanding. The Nigerian State has really not experienced a wholesome peaceful corporate existence since 1914 when the southern and northern halves of the country were merged. As it has been severally opined, this merging was done without seeking the opinions and endorsement of the peoples to be so amalgamated. Lugard, the main architect of the amalgamation, implicitly made it clear that the exercise was an imposition when he remarked that he extended to the South an orderly and better system of administration, founded upon the principles of indirect rule which he had himself developed in the North.² It is in apparent reference to the consequence of this Lugardian imposition that Olaniyan argues that: *“It is now patently clear that the political history of the Nigerian State since 1914 has been a continuing story of struggle between the forces of hegemony inspired by the historical imbalance caused by the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates on the one hand, and the present contest to redress the imbalance and promote integration through decentralization and competitive federalism on the other.”*³

Indeed, in recent times, the Nigerian political space has been encumbered by numerous challenges (inter-ethnic tension and disharmony, nepotism in low and high places, ethnicity-inspired corruption tendencies, ethnicization of politics and political patronage, ethnic-based parochial considerations, imposition of narrow ethnic interest over and above the national interest, skewed citizenship and allegiance, among others) bordering on what Olaniyan (as shown above) calls *“the present contest to redress the imbalance”*. These challenges,

Roles of Traditional Rulers, as representative of Oba (Dr.) D. V. F. Olateru-Olagbegi III, the Olowo of Owo Kingdom, at the Two-Day National Conference on the theme: Culture, Peace, and National Security: Role of Traditional Rulers, organized by the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), held at the Dome Events Centre, Enugu, Enugu State, 1st-2nd June, 2017.

² I. F. NICOLSON, *The Administration of Nigeria 1900-1960: Men, Methods and Myths*, Oxford 1969, p. 180. See also T. N. TAMUNO, *British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*, in: O. IKIME (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan 1980, pp. 393-396.

³ R. A. OLANIYAN, *The Amalgamation and its Enemies: An Interpretive History of Nigeria*, Ile-Ife 2003, p. xv.

which are elements of what Ikime calls the National Question,⁴ have been threatening not only Nigeria's corporate existence and territorial integrity, it has also stifled the country's march to genuine development and 21st century civilization. The cardinal impact of these challenges in their complex dimensions is that there is pervasive insecurity and obvious lack of peace in the country. It is a truism that the contemporary Nigerian society can be easily defined in the context of activities, activism, and agitations of various ethnic nationalities in demanding for restructuring of the Nigerian geo-polity on terms favourable to their narrow ethnic interests or outright excision from the nation state. This would seem to have surged with the end of military rule and transition to democratic governance in 1999 as the different nationalities seem to be basking in the euphoria of freedom enshrined in the Constitution and expected to be fully obeyed by both the rulers and the ruled in a democratic setting and in the spirit of the rule of law. It can, therefore, be averred that, at no time since 1914 has inter-ethnic distrust been so frontal and profound in Nigeria as it has been since 1999. Many protestant groups,⁵ operating either as ethnic militias, militant groups, or a band of political activists, have emerged to demand inclusion for their ethnic groups in the political patronage process. And, where that appears too slow in coming, they resort to self-help agitation and threat to the nation's corporate integrity.

It is in the context of the above reality that this study sets to interrogate the roles that traditional rulers can play as necessary addition to the present efforts at arresting the menace of disintegration in Nigeria. It is considered expedient that the monarchy as the closest institution to the people can go a long way to oil and reposition the existing anti-disintegration architecture of government, and consequently emplace the country for enduring peace, security, and stability as planks for more engaging interface with other states in the international system.

⁴ O. IKIME, *Towards Understanding the National Question*. Keynote Address presented on the Occasion of the Opening of the Seminar on The National Question, organized by the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, at Abuja, 4th August 1986, p. 1.

⁵ Examples of such groups in Nigeria include Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG), Yoruba Liberation Command (YIL). Other older groups like Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Ohaneze Nd'igbo, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) still exist as springboard of inspiration for the new groups.

The study defines some critical terms and examines the danger of mis-managed diversity in Nigeria. It goes further to highlight some roles that traditional rulers can play, in the context of culture as instrument of peace and security, towards ensuring restoration of genuine peace and enduring security in Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

Culture

Culture defines a people and gives a beautiful, convincing summary of their life, identity, history, and trajectories of development right from the migration/settlement/state formation stage to the more advanced stage of establishing complex structures of modern human society. Indeed, culture is the cardinal signpost of any people's life and identity. It is the symbol of their distinctiveness from, and sluice gate of their connectivity with, other people(s). It has been fittingly described as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment".⁶ In a similar vein, Asiwaju calls it what gives order and meaning to the linguistic, social, political, economic, aesthetic, religious and philosophical modes and organization of a people, nation or ethnic group.⁷ He adds that, culture is the hallmark of the distinction as well as connection between one people and another.⁸ This is apt for the Nigerian case as unpacked in this paper given the fact that the quantum of emphasis a people lay on one or the other of the notions of "distinction" and "connection" determines the nature and character of such people's relationship with other distant or contiguous groups.

Culture-Mix

Arising from the above conceptualization of culture is cultural diffusion in any given multi-ethnic society where elements of intergroup connections are always upheld and respected. Such diffusion opens doors for culture mix which defines inter-cultural mutual respect and necessary consensus-building. It is a creative way of harmonizing cultures and their rich potentials in such a way that accruable benefits

⁶ Article 1, sub-section 1, *Official Nigeria's Cultural Policy*, 1988.

⁷ A. I. ASIWAJU, *The Evolution of Nigerian Culture*, in: *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*, Ibadan 1997, p. 22.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

from the peculiarities of each culture are collectively developed and shared. This is what, according to Johansson, is termed the Medici Effects. This describes an unusual advantage for people working or living outside their culture. Johansson maintains that such people “*have an incredible advantage in coming up with groundbreaking ideas – and in making those ideas happen*”.⁹ He adds that such people have far greater chance of finding some unusual combinations (in their culture and others’) and of becoming leaders. He outlines four steps for attaining the Medici Effect, which I consider pertinent for Nigeria:

- break down the barriers between cultures and keep an open mind while looking for concepts and ideas in unusual places,
- combine different concepts to come up with new, ground-breaking ideas,
- prepare to experiment with the ideas, your first try will probably not work,
- if you feel a little fear in doing all of these – that’s OK. It is a proof that you are pushing the boundaries,
- do all of the above often – the scientifically strongest correlation to innovative success is to try many times.¹⁰

Ethnicity and Ethnic Group

Ethnicity defines a state of belonging to an identified ethnic group with some cultural criteria as the defining parameters. Such criteria include, but are not limited to, language, religion, class, and at times gender. Associated with this is the concept of ethnic group. Cohen defines an ethnic group as an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other group within the same society in that they share a measure of compulsory institutions like kinship and religion, and communicate among themselves relatively easily.¹¹

⁹ F. JOHANSSON, *The Mixing of Culture Drives Innovation* (https://www.talarforum.se/article/pdf/63/the_mixing_of_cultures_drives_innovation [2017–09–05]).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ A. COHEN, *Customs and Politics in Urban Africa*, London 1969, p. 4.

In a related vein, Rose (as cited by Abimbola) sees ethnic group as a group whose members share unique social and cultural heritage, passed from one generation to the next.¹² Essentially, ethnic groups are identified by distinctive patterns of family life, language, recreation style, religion, and other customs which cause them to be differentiated from others. More importantly, members of such group feel a sense of solidarity, common identity, and interdependence of fate with those who share the customs of the ethnic tradition.¹³ Also, Sanda conceives of ethnic group as consisting of integrating members who define themselves as belonging to a named or labelled social group with whose interest they identify, and which manifests certain aspects of a unique culture, while constituting a part of a wider society.¹⁴ This explains the ethnic configuration of Nigeria with well over four hundred ethnic and/or sub-ethnic groups.

Diversity

Two descriptions of diversity suffice here. Francis Deng defines diversity as the plurality of identity of groups inhabiting a given geographical space.¹⁵ The UNESCO, in its Article 1 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity sees diversity: “embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind”.¹⁶ These two descriptions take diversity from two perspectives of geographical space and identity. Arising from this, therefore, is that the multiplicity of identities such as social, ethnic, and geographical, in a given society determines the extent of the society’s diversity.¹⁷ This has been labelled a crucial variable around which individual and social groups differentiate themselves from others.¹⁸

¹² See O. A. ABIMBOLA, *Migrations, Settlements and Inter-Community Relations in Irepo-dun Communities (now in Osun State), 1840–1965*, M.Phil. Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife 2003, p. 10.

¹³ S. T. OKAJARE, *The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800–1960: A Study in Inter-group Relations*, Ph.D. Thesis, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti 2012, p. 23.

¹⁴ A. O. SANDA, *Ethnic Relations in Sociological Theory*, in: A. O. SANDA (ed.), *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, Ibadan 1976, pp. 26–36.

¹⁵ F. DENG, *Identity, Diversity and Constitutionalism in Africa*, Washington D.C. 2004, p. 8.

¹⁶ Article 1, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, UNESCO 2001.

¹⁷ A. I. AJAYI, *Mismanaging Nigeria’s Diversity*, in: OWETE, K. I. et al. (eds.), *Freedom, Self Determination, and Growth in Africa*, Berlin 2014, p. 89.

¹⁸ A. ATTA-ASAMOA, *Overview of the Nature and Management of Diversity in Africa*.

Indeed, this creates the “we” versus “them” mentality, which is an enduring platform for inter-group tensions and conflicts in any given multi-ethnic state like Nigeria.

The Nigerian diversity is typified by three main elements namely language, ethnicity and religion, which, in turn, define the cultural identities and affinities, and provide the hibernation points around which Nigerians coalesce with narrow, sub-national considerations. The demographic configuration of Nigeria is also better appreciated in the context of these afore-noted elements. Nigeria is made up of over five hundred languages.¹⁹ This reality, which had not been so clear in the 1980s as it is today, must have prompted Coleman, relying on the proposed classificatory scheme of Greenberg, to label Nigeria as “one of the principal linguistic crossroads of Africa”.²⁰ There are also three hundred and seventy-five ethnic groups,²¹ three major ethnic groups of Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo which jointly constitute more than half of the country’s population.

Peace

Peace is never well known and appreciated until it is lost and war ensues. It can simply be taken to be a situation of absence of war. This simple definition is common in international relations parlance in which peace is taken as an antonym of war, the latter being “an act of violence or force to compel the enemy to do one’s will”.²² Peace is, therefore, seen as the suspension of violent modes of rivalry between political units.²³ In addition, among the lettered and the unlettered, peace and war are traditionally conceptualized as mutually exclusive concepts, and state of affairs. While the former implies non-violence, the latter depicts violence; and the presence of one implies the absence of the other. The debate on the concept of peace has been taken further by Gatlung who classifies peace as negative and positive, and argues that negative peace is the absence of violence and war, while it

Paper presented at Institute for Security Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa, July 5, 2004.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ J. S. COLEMAN, *NIGERIA: Background to Nationalism*, Benin 1986, p. 15.

²¹ O. OTITE, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, Ibadan 1990, p. 2.

²² C. von CLAUSEWITZ, *On War*, Princeton 1976, p. 75.

²³ Ibidem.

becomes positive when there is integration of the human society.²⁴ With this more elaborate definition, Gatlung has been able to take peace as a concept beyond the marrow confines of war as it were. He goes further to polish his argument that extended concept of violence can be linked with extended concept of peace.²⁵ With this, he links personal violence or bodily harm unto others to negative peace, and structural violence or social inequalities to positive peace. For clarification, Gatlung states thus: *“Of course, I am very much aware of changes in my own presentation of these concepts [...] whereas ‘negative peace’ remains fairly constant, meaning ‘absence of violence’ [...] ‘positive peace’ is constantly changing. I used to see it in terms of cooperation and integration [...] I would now identify ‘positive peace’ mainly with social justice.”*²⁶

Beyond the polemics generated by Gatlung’s expose as enunciated above, it is expedient to note that true peace laced with the assurance of absence of violence and genuine integration of all constituent parts of the Nigerian federation on the threshold of social justice and equality is the most needed ingredient for the survival and health of the country and its pursuit of true development.

Security

In every society, high premium is usually placed on security as a necessity for human decency, happiness and collective peace. It follows therefore that the urge to have a peaceful society is an offshoot of the universally recognized paramount importance of security. It can be defined, in its simple form, as a state of being safe and free from any form of hurt, injury, worry, attack or any bad occurrence. However, on the scale of governance and national integrity, security means a state of freedom from both internal threats and external aggressions. All countries are, one way or the other vulnerable, thus making heavy investment in security a necessary policy decision for modern governments. According to Okajare: *“Security is a major purpose of foreign policy all over the world. It is more of a structure put in place by states to forestall what they consider as threats and vulnerabilities in the (international) system. The search for security is universal as all states [...] maintain formidable military*

²⁴ J. GATLUNG, Editorial, in: *Journal of Peace Research*, 1, 1, 1964, p. 2.

²⁵ J. GATLUNG, Violence, Peace and Peace Research, in: *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, 3, 1969, p. 183.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 190.

force to sustain security. The term is also used interchangeably with national security because it is directed at protecting national interest."²⁷

Security is more importantly connected with the state of development and social justice in any given country. In other words, its quality is directly proportionate to the level at which governments meet the basic needs of their citizens. It is common knowledge that when greater majority of citizens are living below poverty line, lacking basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, they are predisposed and vulnerable to manipulation by enemies of the state (within and without). Arising from this, therefore, is that the best way to guarantee security in any polity is for government to assure steady supply of citizens minimum needs as a means to dislodge any potential enemy that may build insurrection against the social and territorial integrity of such polity. One of such minimum needs in a peculiar, multi-ethnic society like Nigeria is to provide a plain space of equality, accommodation, and social justice for all citizens from diverse persuasions and backgrounds.

Nigeria and the Danger of Mismanaged Cultural Diversity In view of the ample existing literature on history of intergroup relations in Nigeria, it is no longer contested in informed circles that groups and sub-groups in pre-colonial Nigeria seamlessly interacted with considerable frequency and collectively defined (though unwritten) procedures of relationship. This negates the colonial fallacy that tried to present pre-colonial Nigerian peoples as isolated tribes. Instances of intergroup marriages among distant and contiguous neighbours, visits, trade, exchange of ideas and cultural practices were frequent in Nigeria's pre-colonial history of intergroup relations. This, more than anything else, explains the striking similarities among the seemingly diverse cultures of contemporary Nigeria. Examples abound in language, traditional religion, food, festivals, songs and entertainment and a host of other elements of culture. However, since the colonial years, the gaze appears to have shifted from what unified the diverse (not necessarily different) peoples to what divide them. The emphasis in Nigeria appears to be more on the notion of distinction than that of connection. Consequently, the colonial and postcolonial phases of Nigerian history are awashed with many instances of inter-group

²⁷ S. T. OKAJARE, *Understanding Foreign Policy Studies*, Akure 2008, p. 28.

conflicts as against the pre-existing fellowship and solidarity. This is a case of mismanaged diversity! Ajayi notes in this vein that: *“Ethnic and religious diversity are not necessarily divisive forces. When well-managed, they could be useful assets in forging unity in diversity as is the case in the United States of America. But in the case of Nigeria, the frequent mismanagement of the essential features of diversity by succeeding administrations since 1914 has turned them into a burden of national integration.”*²⁸

He argues further that Nigeria like any other post-colonial African state “symbolizes anything but political self-determination” as such states across Africa have had to grapple with legitimacy and acceptability question. This agrees considerably with Ekeh’s theory of the dialectics between two publics: the civic and the primordial – the dialectics that have made statehood a problematic in post-colonial Africa.²⁹ This is well replicated in Nigeria where national citizenship is less national but more sectional, with citizens’ loyalty and allegiance primarily pledged in deed to individual ethnic groups and peripherally to the Nigerian State. The danger in Nigeria’s mismanaged diversity is obvious. From the colonial pretence of national integration, and the explicit positions of some leading nationalists to the postcolonial attempts through national integration and nation-building conferences, it has become clear that the Nigerian diversity is endangered. It is clear that the amalgamation exercises (1906 and 1914) were carried out by the colonial authorities as a matter of administrative expediency. The post-World War II tempo of nationalist struggle was marked by weighty assertions made by two leading nationalists on the chance of Nigeria surviving as a nation where unity in diversity would thrive. In 1947, Chief Awolowo said: *“Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no ‘Nigerians’ in the same sense as ‘English’, ‘Welsh’, or ‘French’. The word ‘Nigerian’ is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not.”*³⁰

²⁸ AJAYI, p. 83.

²⁹ P. P. EKEH, Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17, 1, 1975, pp. 91–112.

³⁰ O. AWOLOWO, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, London 1947, pp. 97–98; M. MEREDITH, *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent since Independence*, London 2013, p. 8; COLEMAN, p. 320.

A year later, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (who eventually became Nigerian Prime Minister at independence in 1960) added that: *“Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their background, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any signs of willingness to unite. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country.”*³¹

What the foregoing explications portend is that diversity in Nigeria, like many other post-colonial African countries, was not a colonial creation. But, the colonial authorities manipulated it for their own selfish considerations and created some development-stunting challenges, which the country has been contending with since independence. In a recent study Peter Lewis struck the cord by identifying three critical challenges of Nigeria about diversity and unity. He contends that: *“Poor governance and the zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics remain the country’s most important catalysts of instability. Although the 2011 elections represented an important step forward, they left the country sharply divided along northern and southern lines. Northern perceptions of social and economic marginalization, coupled with resentment toward a Jonathan presidency, could lead to instability if it is manipulated by political elites.”*³² And that: *“Social tensions in Nigeria are complex, overlapping, and deeply rooted in history. Ethnic, regional, and religious divisions are likely to produce episodes of violence. But provided these fault lines do not converge on a national scale, social violence is not likely to threaten the stability of the Nigerian state.”*³³

The last conditional sentence above is the crux of the matter in Nigeria because the fault lines indeed converge on a national scale and social violence ensues to threaten national stability. The third challenge Lewis points out is that of economic inequality and deep-seated poverty in the country. He states that: *“Economic inequality and entrenched poverty will continue to fuel competition over resources. In particular, Nigeria’s continued reliance on petroleum revenues leaves the country vulnerable to economic shocks. An economic crisis could derail the fragile*

³¹ Legislative Council Debate, 1948, p. 227; MEREDITH, p. 8; COLEMAN, p. 320.

³² P. M. LEWIS, *Nigeria: Assessing Risks to Stability. A Report of the CSIS Africa Program*, Washington 2011, p. 1.

³³ *Ibidem*.

amnesty in the Niger Delta region, and exacerbate tensions in the predominantly Muslim North.”³⁴

This is apt of the obvious reality in contemporary Nigeria. The above enunciated challenges are the dynamics of Nigeria that have converged over time to create conditions for presumably unrewarding diversity and disintegration. This is particularly so with the age-long North-South dichotomy which has remained so endemic in the country. Nigeria’s mismanaged diversity has its contours located along political, social, and economic lines. Poor governance, regime instability, lack of accountable leadership, persistent inequality and pervasive poverty, corruption in high and low places, poorly organized and thoroughly rigged elections, tension-soaked and corruption-ridden public service are some of the troubles with the Nigerian political space. These have encouraged communal competition and conflicts, prebendal and parochial tendencies for ethnic considerations over and above national interest. All these combined with related flaws (not mentioned here due to space and time) to catalyse the collapse of the First Republic and the 1967–1970 civil war, which ended with thoroughly injured national psyche in addition to huge human and logistic losses. The recent surge in agitation for Republic of Biafra from some aggrieved youths in the South-eastern Nigeria is an indication that the wounds of the civil war have not been healed. It is, therefore, apposite to note that such challenges have made Nigeria more vulnerable, with the spectre of a failed state always dangling in the country’s horizon. This reality makes the deployment of culture as instrument for peace and security, with traditional rulers as critical role players, imperative.

Culture as Instrument for Peace and Security: Roles of Traditional Rulers

While their power and functions have diminished from playing legislative, judicial, and executive roles in the day to day administration of their domains, to merely functioning in advisory capacity, traditional rulers unquestionably remain the *de facto* and *de jure* chief custodians of culture and traditions in Nigeria both at the local government and to some extent at state levels. Citizens still have high regard and respect for the traditional rulers. As Saidu observes: “*The hangover of*

³⁴ Ibidem.

authority they earned previously still lingers on to the extent that their views and instructions are being obeyed and respected with total loyalty without questions. It is believed up till today that they are sacred and extra ordinary Institutions. It is on that belief and recognition that government programs and policies are accepted by the communities when routed through traditional rulers. Special programmes such as immunizations against polio, infectious diseases, census and voter registration, for example were sometimes accepted with lukewarm attitude or rejected in many instances by some communities. However, with the intervention of traditional rulers, the communities do agree to avail themselves for the various immunizations programmes without suspicion or even outright rejection.”³⁵

This vantage position of the traditional rulers makes them very relevant in any intent or plan to address the problem of peace and security in Nigeria. This is because they remain the only viable reminder and beholder of the people’s history and culture and the veritable source of collective mobilization for collective welfare. This is in tandem with Aigbегbele’s view that: “Government comes and goes but the traditional institution has remained an integral framework of our history and the bedrock of our nation’s democracy. No government can work harmoniously without the assistance of the tradition institutions because these institutions have remained the pulse of the people and an enduring part of our cultural heritage, no society progresses without defined cultural norms and values which regulate the activities of its people. Politically, looking at the history of Africa shows that countries without defined structures for the traditional institution do not last and are much prone to wars and civil strife.”³⁶ He goes further to conclude that: “The search for an enduring solution to the challenges of nation building must be viewed in the context of our desire for unity, peace and progress. The role of traditional rulers in the task of nation building cannot be over emphasized considering their long standing historical relevance to the political and economic development of any nation. The traditional institution as our social contract with the people is forever and not for the next election. The government should immediately look into the provision of a formidable

³⁵ I. J. SAIDU, *The Roles and Challenges of Traditional Rulers in Land Conflict Resolution and Management in Nigeria: A Case Study of Bauchi State, Nigeria*. FIG Working Week 2015 *From the Wisdom of the Ages to the Challenges of the Modern World*, Sofia, May 17–21, 2015, pp. 5–6.

³⁶ K. AIGBEGBELE, *Traditional Institution as a Recipe for Peace and Unity*. Opinion Paper, in: *The Will*, February 3, 2016.

constitutional role for our royal fathers who have remained an integral historical bedrock of our nation."³⁷ In the context of the foregoing, traditional rulers are capable, with necessary logistic support and constitutional empowerment, of playing some of the under-discussed roles and even more.

One, traditional rulers can function as change agent in propagating the cultural elements that can stimulate cooperation, development, mutual respect, decent citizenship, and decorous lifestyle. This is in tandem with the clearly spelt out objectives of the Nigerian Cultural Policy. Article 3, sub-sections 1, 2, 3, & 5 of the Policy are particularly instructive, and they are captured below for clarity purpose.

- 3.1 The policy shall serve to mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness.
- 3.2 The policy shall serve to evolve from our plurality, a national culture, the stamp of which will be reflected in African and world affairs.
- 3.3 The policy shall promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our traditions and values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and the dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values.
- 3.5 The policy shall establish a code of behaviour compatible with our tradition of humanism and disciplined moral society.³⁸

From all indications, there appears no better way to achieve the above set objectives without enlisting the traditional rulers. They have the working relationship capacity and the necessary traditional bond with the citizens who are the main clients in government service delivery process. It is this capacity and bond that they will effortlessly use to mobilize the citizens (their subjects) through dissemination and propagation of ideas, ideals and public discourses that can engender national pride, feeling of solidarity, cultivation of a national culture,

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Article 3, sub-sections 1, 2, 3, & 5, *Official Nigeria's Cultural Policy*, 1988.

resuscitation of the well-known African orientation of respect for human dignity, and preference for dignity of labour as against the current quick-fix, quick-rich mentality, and promote creative and disciplined society.

Two, traditional rulers can be the vanguard for rescuing our youth from the perishing impact of Western culture. It is common knowledge today that many young minds (fondly referred to as the leaders of tomorrow) are no longer undergoing the normal inspiring process of socialization. Instead, their unfettered interaction with foreign cultures has severely damaged their original identity of an African Child. The ideals of decency, discipline, decorum, hard work, mutual respect, personal dignity and pride, humanism, patience, perseverance, determination, voluntary/community service, moral rectitude are to them avoidable irritants. All these and others are now replaced with brigandage, drug abuse, sexual recklessness, thuggery, and several other criminal tendencies. A considerable number of Nigerian youth engage in all these with reckless abandon. What it simply implies is that, except this obviously negative trend is quickly arrested, the Nigerian society has no future.

Apart from the threat of skewed hybridization the extant Nigerian cultures are now confronted with as it has been argued elsewhere,³⁹ some Nigerian youth have become ready army of criminals available for any individual or group that requires their evil services to perpetrate one havoc or the other. This is a common phenomenon in the Nigerian political space as well as in instances of intergroup conflicts in the country. In most of the conflicts that have threatened national peace and security in Nigeria, the youth have constituted the main corps of killers, destroyers and victims. This underscores the need to quickly explore the authority, vast knowledge, traditional wisdom, and influence of traditional rulers to arrest the trend, as they know the terrain of their domains more than anyone else including law enforcement agents.

Three, traditional rulers stand at a critical threshold to directly tell and convince government of the wrongness and inherent danger in the policy of removing the teaching and learning of history from the

³⁹ S. T. OKAJARE, *From Diversity to Skewed Hybridization: Interrogating Cultural Contestations as Nigeria's Burden of Development in a Globalized World*. Faculty of Arts Seminar Paper, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, July 4, 2017.

country's educational curriculum. The claim of George Will (as quoted by Adesoji) is apt here. He states: *"The study of history is the best way and, other than by bitter experience, perhaps the only way to be inoculated against the terrible simplifiers, those people who lead nations to trouble."*⁴⁰ It is common knowledge that, while more developed and powerful countries of the world hold passionately to their traditions and cultures and pass them down to the younger generation through effective teaching and learning of their history, the Nigerian democratic government under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo decided to remove history from the country's educational curriculum! Lagos State government followed suit shortly thereafter. This is not only sad, it is dangerous. In examining what can be described as the confusion of government at all levels about the alleged 'irrelevance' of history, Adesoji captures the grim reality thus: *"The apathy or neglect, which the study of history suffers in contemporary period, is no doubt (not) without its consequences. The seeming confusion in our society, the unbridled desire for power and its attendant consequences and more importantly, the inability to learn from the past experience (which has made societies prone to repeating past mistakes) are the consequences of neglect of history."*⁴¹

Yet, he brings to the fore the signature double standard, inconsistency, and policy summersault identifiable with governance and leadership in contemporary Nigeria as he notes that: *"However, despite the apathy and pretension about the 'uselessness' or irrelevance of history in this highly materialistic age, the society surreptitiously craves to enjoy the benefits of history. It thus appears that while the society want (sic) to enjoy the benefits of history, its attitude, disposition and activities work towards the annihilation of history as a field of study, a clear case of being used when needed and being dumped when considered useless."*⁴²

As the custodians of culture, norms, values and traditions of people who are concerned with the imminent eclipse of our elements of identity, traditional rulers can (and should) come together, speak with one voice and demand immediate reinstatement of History as a must-be-taught subject in our schools. Despite some make-shift efforts be-

⁴⁰ A. O. ADESOJI, Historical Scholarship in 20th Century Nigeria: The Quest for Relevance, in: *African Symposium: An Online Journal of African Educational Research Network*, 9, 2, 2009, p. 71.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 72.

⁴² Ibidem.

ing made to promote culture and tourism, it is a conviction beyond any scintilla of doubt that there is no other subject that can replace history, at any level of education, in deepening and sustaining our understanding of the dynamics of our culture and traditions. Teaching and learning History will not, in any way, endanger Nigeria's and Nigerians' chase for technological breakthrough. Instead, it will help in domesticating and properly situating such breakthroughs (if any) within the mainstreams of the country's diverse cultures and the people will be able to own whatever is achieved.

Four, the National Council of Traditional Rulers has a role to play, as the main body of traditional rulers in the country, in cultivating and deepening the spirit of collectivism across the broad demographic and cultural spectrum of the Nigerian State. It is not in doubt any longer that the 1914 amalgamation by the British was done not necessarily to unify the peoples of Nigeria, but to make the administration of the vast land easy for the colonizers. But the reality is that after staying together as a geo-political entity for over a hundred years with all the attendant consequences (positive and negative), any attempt at disintegration will definitely create more problems that it is meant to solve. In this wise, it is counselled that traditional rulers have to demonstrate leadership by example and show some measure of dynamism and royalty by ensuring, in word and in deed, that their subjects in their individual domains respect other subjects from other domains particularly in terms of individual society's peculiarities and religious sentiments.

It portends grave danger for the fledgling Nigerian unity for any traditional rulers to be seen as serving as propaganda agent for one religion or ethnic group over and above the other or others. In addition, each traditional ruler must mobilize his subjects through enlightenment and awareness programmes for understanding other people's cultures and respect them. There are more similarities in cultures across Nigeria than there are differences. By this, Nigerians can collectively and reasonably synergize and build a national, over-arching culture that will encompass significant elements of diverse (not necessarily different) cultures of Nigeria. The sustainability of the existence of the country is a reality all must accept and make functional based on social equality, justice, and fairness, in the overall best interest of all.

Five, it is a truism that governance needs thorough reform in Nigeria. Recent accounts of official misdemeanours and greed, crass and reckless policies, as well as corruption in high places are antithetical to peace, security, and national development. They make it difficult, among other factors, to effectively socialize the youth and mobilize them for positive orientations. This unpalatable scenario is playing off in our political horizon and economic space mainly because, like their colonial predecessors, our modern ruling elite have elected to utterly neglect people's traditions and culture. Consequently, public conduct of officials are no longer under community watch, nobody seems to care about the stealing spree from the public till. And, huge mental and material resources are thus wasted on poorly conceived public policies.

We chose to learn nothing from history and traditions, and we repeatedly make mistakes of the past, and know not how to sustain past achievements. Traditional rulers must roll up their flowing regalia and firmly and collectively demand for accountable political leadership and governance placed in the context of culture and traditions of the country. The ruling elite and their economic collaborators must be made to understand the danger of continuous miss-governance, which has bred unemployment, poor orientation and outright disrespect for constituted authorities, among other vices, in our youth. If we fail to reposition and emplace our society through thorough reform and sustained, wholesale anti-corruption drive, we will be doomed to witnessing horrendous attacks from the youth pretty soon, which predictably will come with untold, immeasurable catastrophe.

Conclusion

The recent surge in thinly-veiled manifestations of inter-ethnic tension and distrust in Nigeria, which has culminated in the proliferation of (and official attempts at mitigating) what has become known as *Hate Speech* makes the involvement of traditional rulers in the process of enthroning culture of peace and harmony quite imperative. On the one hand, it is patently clear that there has been over-politicization of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria since the colonial era. Politicians from the ruling and opposition divides throw verbal darts and diatribes at themselves with reckless abandon, and without any strand of consideration for the overall national interests. On the other hand, the

unsuspecting masses (particularly the youth) are vulnerable to the subtle manipulation of the politicians who seem incurably bent on promoting their narrow, enlightened political self-interest without recourse to the health and integrity of the State. Akeredolu captures this grim reality succinctly when he asserts that: *“There was no serious programme of integration of the various peoples of the nascent country into a nation. Politicians who paraded the landscape as fire-spitting nationalists soon withdrew into their enclaves in their struggle for supremacy. Nigerians remained citizens only in name and during elections. Just as the British colonialists utilized, effectively, its divide-and-rule policy, our politicians perfected the act.”*⁴³

He adds that: *“The quest for development which had started to yield good dividends was put on hold for parochial agenda. The clock of economic progress stopped ticking when self was place (sic) above collective interest and aspirations of a country.”*⁴⁴ He furthers the argument that: *“Rather than sustain and transform the philosophy which goaded the three regions to excel, politicians who succeeded the colonialists became immersed in devious schemes aimed at dominating others. The erstwhile competition among the regions, which translated into development, regressed into passion for annihilation of opponents.”*⁴⁵

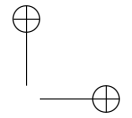
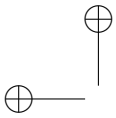
This unpleasant situation, which is still prevalent and pervasive in 21st Century Nigeria, underscores the core relevance of the monarchy in constructing the necessary architecture for thorough social re-engineering and emplacement of Nigeria as a peaceful state in the comity of nations.

Thus, this paper has modestly discussed the roles of traditional rulers, in the context of culture as instrument of peace and security, in arresting the growing trend of insecurity in Nigeria as a multi-ethnic state. It necessarily starts with definition of some critical terms and proceeds to examine the danger inherent in Nigeria’s mismanaged diversity. The main thrust of discussion is a highlight of some roles traditional rulers can play individually and collectively in deploying culture as an effective instrument of peace and security in their domain

⁴³ O. O. AKEREDOLU, *Beyond Recession: Rethinking the Nigerian Federation*. Paper presented as Distinguished Faculty of Arts Lecture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, July 6, 2017, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 17.



and by extension the entire country. The thesis here is that traditional rulers indeed have the capacity to play key roles in the use of culture to promote peace, deflate conflicts, assure security of life and property, and stimulate development.

The paper concludes that Nigeria needs to learn from the example of countries that have constitutional provisions for the functioning of traditional rulers in modern governance.⁴⁶ The human society is dynamic and not static. The passionately held opinion that the monarchy is anachronistic and/or that it must be revered by insulating it from politics, is misleading and thus needs to be reviewed. Traditional rulers, though expectedly apolitical, are human beings with human passion. One way or the other, they have political leanings, which they still retain despite any so-called attempt to de-politicize them. The claim of anachronism is unfounded, because the institution is still accepted as the people's main linking source with extant culture and traditions. Emphasis should be on how to explore the unconventional wisdom, traditional clout and pervasive local influence of traditional rulers as an added structure for modern governance. If there is nothing to hide in modern governance, it is high time we mainstreamed it and indeed all other development drives within the cultures of multi-ethnic Nigeria. Enduring democratic structures can only be built when it is situated within the people's culture, traditions, social values and norms as encapsulated in their historical experiences and trajectories, which the traditional rulers eminently symbolize.

⁴⁶ Examples of such countries include Namibia, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Zimbabwe, and Malaysia. See F.S. MIJIGA, *The Role of Traditional Leaders in a Democratic Dispensation: A Selection of International Experiences*, Cape Coast, South Africa 1998, pp. 10–26.

