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Nigeria: Managing Intra-ethnic Conflicts in Ebiraland, Kogi State

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Abstract: It is incontrovertible that mono-causal analysis of conflict is no longer tenable, as conflict is caused by a confluence of factors. Over the years, intra-ethnic conflict in Ebiraland has attracted scholarly works. However, amid the myriad of variables accentuating conflict in Ebiraland, clan politics seems to be dominant but the intensity of the conflict has reduced since Governor Yahaya Bello's administration in Kogi state in 2015. Hence the relative peace in an area hitherto embroiled with hostilities. Anchored on conflict management theory, with reliance on primary and secondary data sources, the study attempts to answer the following questions: What was the state of the conflict in Ebiraland before the Yahaya Bello's regime? What conflict resolution mechanisms did the Governor deploy to achieve the relative peace in that part of the state? What

measures should be in place towards sustaining the prevailing peaceful atmosphere in the area even at the expiration of the tenure of the current administration? These, among other issues, constitute the theme of this study.

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Introduction

The Ebira Tao, who constitute the focus of this study, are people of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta Local Government Areas of Kogi State with a total population of 844,774 people. They are collectively called Ebira Tao. The word *Ebira* refers to the people themselves, their language and

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geographical location. The Ebira Tao occupy the hilly stretch of land Southwest of the Niger-Benue confluence area and share boundaries with the Bassange, Bassa Kwomo and Igala; to the North and East is the Nassarawa Emirate, to the West are various Nupe speaking groups of 170 Kakanda, Eggan, Kupa and Nupe of Bida Emirate and the South-West are the Bini, the Yoruba speaking people of Akoko, Owe and Ijumu (Joshua, 2018, Adinoyi-Ojo, 1996).

Over the years, there appear to be a burgeoning literature on the phenomenon of intra-ethnic conflict in Ebiraland. Scholars, like Joshua (2013, 2018), highlighted clan politics, masquerade festivals, political affiliation of clan and clan leaders, clan headship succession among others as the causes of conflict in Ebiraland. Audu (2010) sees elite competition for political power in the region, the issues of centralized leadership among others as some of the factors raising the dust of disunity, thereby, degenerating into conflict in Ebiraland. Tenuche (2009) explicates that the struggle for chieftaincy titles and local power structure and the mobilization of sub-ethnic identities are the major cause of violent conflict in Ebiraland.

There is, however, a missing link- a concentration on the phenomenon of intra-ethnic conflict in Ebiraland till recent times, without a focus on the resolution mechanisms put in place by the present administration in Kogi state to restore peace to an area hitherto embroiled with hostilities, hence the need for this study to fill the lacuna in the literature.

Literature review

The word conflict is traceable to a Latin word “*conflictus*” meaning “struck together”. Conflict means clash, contention, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or quarrel (Nwolise, 1997). Conflict, as an element of social interaction, has evoked a lot of arguments. Suffice to say that there are as many definitions of conflict as there are scholars. Coser (1956) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims over status, power and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. To Donohue and Kolt (1992), conflict has to do with the expression of differences by interdependent people in the course of achieving their needs and goals. To Deutsch (1973), conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur: an action that is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes, injures or in some ways makes the latter less likely to be effective. Bernard (1953, cited in Joshua, 2013) has contended that conflict arises as a result of incompatible or mutually exclusive goals or aims or values espoused by human beings. It is a scenario in which what two parties in conflict are fighting for cannot be made available to the two of them at the same time, hence their goal(s) are incompatible and the resultant effect of this development is conflict.

Audu (2021) explicates this further by asserting that conflict is inherent in all forms of social interaction. In every conflict there are parties to the conflict and there is also

a conflict realm- that is the social environment where the conflict takes place which is defined by context and process. He gave an instance that the realm of a conflict between two siblings over a disputed property of their deceased father is the family. But when such conflict escalates in a manner that threatened the properties and life of other person in the community, the realm has snowballed into community realm.

Though there exist avalanche of perspectives of the concept, but an examination of the various definitions and views shows that conflict is a fact of life. It is indeed an integral aspect of social existence brought about by contradictions arising from difference in ideas, perceptions, goals and competition for acquisition of scarce resources. This lends credence to the statement credited to the Marxists in extant literature that to understand society is to understand social conflict. Thus, an ideal society is not noted for absence of conflict but rather its ability to manage conflicting interests constructively so that it will not snowball to violence that will threaten the continued existence of such a society.

Conflict resolution is a more comprehensive term, which implies that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and transformed. This implies that behaviour is no longer violent: attitudes are no longer hostiles and the structure of the conflict has been changed (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2011). Apart from the concepts of conflict and conflict resolution, other concepts that are relevant to this study include: conflict management, conflict transformation and conflict suppression.

Conflict management is a process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through some measures by working with the parties in conflict. This concept is synonymous to conflict regulation. The term conflict management predisposes that, conflict is inevitable and is not all conflict that can be resolved, therefore, the need to manage and regulate it (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011).

Conflict transformation goes beyond conflict resolution. This is because it aims at building longer and lasting relationships through a process that change the attitudes, perceptions of parties to a conflict, improve communication between them, and address the conditions that created the conflict. It also seeks to understand cultural patterns and values of parties to a conflict so as to transform the negative aspects of the conflict into positive ones to maximize opportunities (Lederach, 1995; Jeong, 2000).

Conflict suppression happens when powerful parties or stronger interveners who have the ability to manage or transform the conflict situation fail to take necessary measures that would have resulted in the management or resolving the conflict, rather, rely on the use of force or power to push away the issues under the carpet or impose a solution that is neither sustainable nor satisfactory to the parties in conflict. This is usually the case in unequal relationships. Governments and repressive regimes are usually guilty of this situation. Sometimes, the state uses its coercive apparatus to suppress conflicts, but this cannot be sustained (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011).

Intra-ethnic conflict is a conflict that occurs within an ethnic group. It can also be called an intra-group conflict. Warren and Troy (2015), Joshua (2013), and Tenuche (2009) have argued that intra-ethnic conflict or intra-group violence remains understudied. In addition, some scholars that have worked on intra-ethnic conflict in Ebiraland as mentioned in the introductory part like Joshua (2018; 2013); Audu (2010), Joshua and Oni (2010), Tenuche (2009) only focus on the causes of conflict in Ebiraland. Some of the causes of conflict in the region as highlighted by the authors included masquerade festivals in which some masquerades performing often used the opportunities to castigate people from other clans, thereby, resulting in inter-clan conflict. Struggle for the traditional stool of Ebiraland was another issue discussed by the authors that triggers conflict in Ebiraland.

Thus, Audu (2010) opines that Ebiraland is ridden with phenomenon of violent conflict. The people have taken to nerve explosion and self-immolation borrowing a leaf from if it is not a violent contest between political parties; it is one Epira community versus another (Audu, 2010). At other time, it could be one masquerade group versus another or one clan against another. At a time, it was Idozumi versus Idoji in Okene, at other time it was two clan groups in Adavi that engaged in war of attrition. Again, in the Adavi area, it was Adavi versus Ihima and two clan groups in Ogaminana tore each other apart. Today, it is Ogu and Omoye clan groups mauling each other to bits. The violent conflicts are often occasioned with the use of guns and other dangerous weapon, leading to razing down of magnificence building of opponents, cremation of lives and fleeing of people who also become refugees in neighboring towns and villages.

However, above the aforementioned, politics is the major cause of conflict in Ebiraland. Politicians used masquerade cultural festivals for campaigns, unleashing terror and witch-hunting political opponents. They also play one clan against another for their selfish political interests (Joshua, 2013, 2018). However, there seems not to be recent studies interrogating the relative peace that have pervaded an area embroiled with hostilities before recent times, hence the need for this study.

There are different approaches to the peaceful resolution and transformation of conflict situation. There are also different methods of settling conflicts, and different stakeholders and participants in the conflict management spectrum. The next section captures as theoretical exposition probes into that.

Theoretical Exposition

This study adopts a Multi-Track Approach to Peace as a framework for analyzing the transformation of the conflict situation in Ebiraland. Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1996) introduce Multi-Track Diplomacy as a system approach to peace. To them, there exist at least nine tracks of conceptual and practical framework that assist and work in peace building sector. This approach emphasizes the fact that, there are

different stakeholders and parties that should be, and are usually involved as far as management and transformation of conflict is concerned. It is believed that, unlike the traditional Africa belief that, state through the machinery of government is charged with the responsibilities of bringing peace, which has made many African communities to have waited in vain for their governments to give them peace, it has been discovered that, sometimes, government is part of the problem rather than the solution. Hence, the need to identify, enlist and ginger other actors to play their roles in peace building becomes pertinent.

Diamond and McDonald (1996) gave a concise summary of the nine tracks of peace building activities as follows:

- a. Government: government is involved in peace-making via the formal processes, using its various institutions, as in official diplomacy, policy making, management of crisis and maintenance of law and order.
- b. Non-governmental/professional or peace-making through conflict resolution: in this case, conflict is managed by professionals, or non-governmental organizations. They are often involved in analysis, prevention, management and resolution.
- c. Business or peace-making through commerce: the business sector can serve as a catalyst to peace by helping to build friendship, understanding, opens informal channels of communication, provides economic and commercial opportunities, which prevent conflict.
- d. Private citizens, peace-making through personal involvement: individual citizens can be involved in peace-making through citizen diplomacy.
- e. Research, Training, and Education, or peace-making through learning: it includes think tank and special research centers (e.g center for conflict and studies, emphasis ours), training programs in conflict and peace and specialized skills of negotiation, mediation and general conflict transformation.
- f. Activism or peace-making through advocacy: this include campaigns against proliferation of small arms and light weapons, protest against policies of government that threatened peace, protest for social and economic justice, campaigns for human rights protection among others.
- g. Religion or peace-making through faith action: this track deals with appealing to the spiritual and religious peace beliefs of the affected communities. It emphasizes, non-violence, humanism, brotherliness as promoted by dominant religions.
- h. Funding or peace-making through provision of resources: many foundations exist, especially in the developing countries. They help to provide resources to government and private groups engaging in peace building activities.
- i. Communications and the media, or peace-making through information: the media and all the channels for dissemination of information encapsulate what constitute the critical mass of public opinion and the voice of the people. It could come in print, electronic, video, film and so on. The media can promote peace if it chooses

to and can as well promote violence if it selects to do so through reportage and many other means.

The section on the analysis of strategies for peace in Ebiraland will beam a searchlight on how some of these tracks were employed in transforming the conflict in the area under study. The next section looks at materials and method and a historical excursion into the origin of the Epira Tao.

Materials and Methods

Because of paucity of data on contemporary history, politics and violent conflict in Ebiraland, efforts to engage in a systematic study run into difficulty. The study, therefore, relied essentially on few available works, complemented largely with in-depth interviews carried out with some knowledgeable individuals, opinion leaders, clan spokesmen among others, on conflict, violence and its management/resolution in Ebiraland. (The interviews were conducted in 2021). This was the method used by the few studies on intra-ethnic studies already mentioned in the literature. In all, ten respondents of Epira extraction from the four Local Government Areas in Ebiraland were interviewed. Our respondents crave our indulgence to be anonymous because of the sensitive nature of the study and we promised not to reveal their identities, hence we could not reflect it in the reference section.

History of Epira Tao

Attempts have been made by various scholars to trace the origin of Epira Tao. However, there seems to be different versions of the origin of the people. It is therefore, not a surprise that Sani (1993) contends that, attempts to trace the actual origin of Epiras have not been easy. For instance, Sani (1999) claims that the Epiras migrated along with their Junkun brothers from Egypt and Sudan regions, before settling down in their present place of abode, others traced their origin to Yemen in the Middle East. Hussaini (2009) in his own account traced their origin to Gongola Valley down the middle and the lower Benue river region in the old Kwararafa Kingdom. They moved from that place, traversing different areas before settling down in their present place of abode. Audu (2010) posits that, the idea that Epira was part of the confederacy of Kwararafa confederacy lacks concrete evidence and difficult to prove. Looking at the various claims of the origin and migration of Epira people, there is clear indication that most of these stories are shrouded in myths which tend to obscure the historical process. Little wonder that Ohiare, as far back as 1988, submits that in-depth research indicates that the Epira have been part and parcel of what is now generally known as central Nigeria since 4000 BC. The next section focuses on the situation in Ebiraland before Yahaya Bello's administration.

Conflict in Ebiraland before the Yahaya Bello's Administration: An Overview

Although the Ebiras can be said to be a monolithic entity, in the sense that, they speak the same language, have the same culture and have been living together as a group for a long time, however, there is division along clan and religious lines. Conflict seldom erupts along religious line, however, division along clan lines and masquerade cultural festivals seem to be easily susceptible to manipulation by the political elite, resulting in conflict.

Historically, Ebiraland is almost synonymous with conflict. Historically, Ebiraland had had its fair share of conflict. Previous studies earlier stated like Joshua's (2013), Audu's (2010) and Tenuche's (2009) highlighted some of the issues that often-triggered conflict in the region. The present study also validates some of these factors as highlighted below.

Intra-Elite Struggle for Power

Most of our respondents corroborated the fact that elite contestation for political power is one key issue responsible for conflict in the region. Politicians fan the embers of disunity among clans by playing one clan against another because of their political ambition. One medium they perpetrated this, are the Masquerades, used to insult and malign the reputation of opponents.

Similarly, the youths, many of whom are unemployed were used as cannon fodder by these politicians to unleash violence on their rivals.

External Factors

Kogi state is divided into three Senatorial Districts. The Igala in the East, The Okun-Yoruba in the West and the Ebiras in the Central (Omede, 2020). Some of our respondents argued that most of the conflicts in Kogi central were orchestrated by "outsiders" for purely political gain. To this group, they saw the major players in the Ebira conflict as "cronies" of political patrons in other parts of the state, especially Kogi east, from where the leadership of the state had always emerge before the Yahaya Bello's administration. The "conspiracy theory", to these respondents, is that, keeping Ebira people permanently divided, did not only jeopardize the need for a formidable force against their political opponents from other tribes, but also ensure the dominance of the governorship seat, by candidates from Kogi east. To achieve this, according to our respondents, "these external actors employed some thugs among Ebiras, equipped them and used them to cause mayhem in Ebiraland". As one put it "they turned Kogi Central to a battle ground through divide and rule tactics". They made their supporters in Ebiraland rich with state funds, as a means of compensating them for being used". This scenario resulted in frequent crises in Ebiraland, especially at the approach of every election, leading

to the death of many Ebiras, as loss of properties of indigenes, and the attendant bad blood, between the different clans.

The Emergence of Yahaya Bello as Kogi sate Governor

The Kogi state gubernatorial election that paved the way for the emergence of Yahaya Bello as the Governor of Kogi state took place on November 21st, 2015. Prominent candidates that vied for the Governorship position under the platform of All Progressive Congress (APC) included Prince Abubakar Audu and Alhaji Yahaya Adoza Bello, while Idris Wada was the key contestant under the People Democratic Party (PDP). Prince Abubakar Audu won the APC primaries and became the flag bearer for the party. Yahaya Bello was next to him at the primaries. The election was declared inconclusive by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as a result of cancellation of the elections in some areas. The returning officer Emmanuel Kucha had claimed that, while Abubakar Audu of the APC scored 240,867, Idris Wada of the PDP scored 199,514 votes. The returning officer stated that the margin of votes between Audu and Wada was 41,353. The implication of this is that the election was inconclusive based on the fact that the total number of registered voters in 91 polling units in 18 local government areas, where election was cancelled was 49,953. Thus, the figure is higher than the 41,353 votes with which Mr. Audu was ahead of Mr Wada of the PDP. Based on the above, the returning officer in compliance with Section 26 and 53 of the Electoral Act argued that, until supplementary election is held in the areas where elections were cancelled before the true winner of the election could be declared (Premium Times, 2019; Halidu, Bdaru, & Gambo, 2016).

It was in the midst of this political brouhaha that the candidate with the highest number of votes- Prince Abubakar Audu of the APC died. This development plunged the country into a serious constitutional crisis. Some legal experts and social commentators argued that the deputy governorship candidate of the APC Mr. James Abiodun Faleke should be elevated to occupy the position of the deceased candidate, while others opined that the second runner up in the APC's primaries in person of Alhaji Yahaya Bello should be given the flag. Others called for countermanded so that fresh election could be held since APC was not the only party in the election. The PDP called on INEC to declare its candidate winner in the absence of Prince Abubakar Audu. James Abiodun Faleke could not be declared as winner as the election was inconclusive. Had it been that Prince Abubakar Audu had been declared winner before he died, it would have been possible for Faleke to emerge as the governor. At long run, Alhaji Yahaya Bello was declared the Governor of Kogi State (Halidu *et al.*, 2016).

Some of our respondents said the emergence of Alhaji Yahaya Bello as the Governor of Kogi State was a divine arrangement orchestrated to fulfill the yearnings of the Ebiras, who has been aspiring to occupy the topmost position in the state. The major task before him among others after his electoral victory was how to restore peace to Ebiraland.

Discussion

Strategies for peace in Ebiraland and matters arising

Some of our respondents assert that, peace process in Ebiraland predates the administration of Governor Yahaya Bello. However, for analytical purposes, Multi-Track Approach to Peace will be adopted in analyzing strategies for peace in Ebiraland. It is necessary to state from the outset that it is not all the tracks in the Multi-Track Approach to Peace that are relevant in our analysis, as such, only those tracks that are necessary in our analysis will be adopted.

a. **The Government** under the administration of His Excellency Alhaji Yahaya Bello has adopted some strategies in resolving conflict in Ebiraland. The researchers observed through interviews conducted that, while some Epira respondents are pro-Alhaji Yahaya Bello, some are anti-Alhaji Yahaya Bello, or better still, they appear to be objective in their analysis of the situation without sympathy for the Governor, even though he is from their tribe. Some of our respondents said the governor adopted carrot and stick game. When Alhaji Yahaya Bello got to office, he told all political thugs to submit their weapons and embrace peace. Some of them that did, were rewarded with jobs some with political appointments. He deployed soldiers and policemen to the region. Those thugs that were recalcitrant were promptly picked up and were severely dealt with. Masquerade festivals that used to precipitate violence were also brought under control. For any masquerade to perform, it must have a guarantor who will sign an undertaking that they will not cause violence or aid violence and if violence is recorded during their performance, they will face the full wrath of the law. Use of foul language by a masquerade against another clan that normally causes violence was prohibited. Those masquerades that conducted their activities peacefully were given financial rewards.

Another measure that the Governor took to foster peace was that he brought equity and fair play to the front burner of governance. He made sure that important posts in the various offices in the state are shared equitably in such a manner that no parts of the state will complain of being marginalized. For instance, one of our respondents who wanted to be treated anonymously stated that such measure has been implemented in the state ministries. He went further to state that if an Okun man (somebody from the Kogi West) is appointed as a commissioner for a ministry, another qualified person within the ministry from another Senatorial District like Kogi East could be appointed as a Permanent Secretary, and somebody from Kogi Central could be appointed as the Director of Finance and Administration. Some believe the aforementioned steps taken by the governor engender peace in the region.

b. **Non-governmental/professional or peace-making through conflict resolution** — some of our respondents pointed attention to the impact of Epira Youth Congress (EYC) in bringing peace to Ebiraland. The association is made up of intellectuals of

Ebira extraction. This particular association does organize programs, sensitizing people on the need to maintain peace in their domains. The Care-Taker Chairmen of the various Local Government Areas also organize vigilante groups in their various domains. They were empowered to punish erring youths. If they get to know about unruly behavior of any youth in any quarter, they get such youth arrested and hand him/her over to appropriate authorities.

- c. **Business or peace-making through commerce** — efforts made in this direction towards peace in Ebiraland according to some of our respondents include the state government giving jobs to some repentant thugs, some youths were also employed in some Local Government Areas and state ministries. Few were also empowered through skill acquisition and some were provided with tricycles to eke a living. All these were done to engage the youths so that they will no longer be available for use as instruments to wreck violence.
- d. **Private citizens, peace-making through personal involvement** — quite a number of our respondents also narrated the enviable role played by Alhaji Yahaya Karku the Chairman of Okene Local Government Area in bringing peace to the troubled region, even before the emergence of Alhaji Yahaya Bello as the governor of the state. He introduced disarmament programs, appealed to the political thugs to surrender their weapons. Some did and were given money to start businesses ranging from 50,000 to 500,000, put some of the repentant political thugs on his pay role. Some did not surrender all their weapons and some did not surrender at all. He equally invited policemen who raided the hideouts of political thugs and recovered some guns. Even though there was reduction in violence at that time, some political thugs that did not surrender their weapons, or surrendered some continued to wreak havoc before the governor came to complement his efforts.
- e. **Activism or peace-making through advocacy** — some of our respondents mentioned the advocacy for peace by well-meaning Ebiras. The Governor and the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, invited clan leaders to a congress at Okene aimed at dialoguing on the restoration of peace to Ebiraland. At the meeting, people were made to understand that what they have been advocating for which was power shift to the Kogi Central is already achieved. Their son is now the Governor of the state, so there was no need to fight again, or do they want to fight their son? That irrespective of your clan, Ebira is one family and there shouldn't be division through clan differences. It was equally reiterated at the meeting that the properties that were destroyed belongs to their fellow Ebiras. That if there is no peace, the leaders too will find it difficult to lead. The Governor made them to understand the negative implications of violence and that government could enforce peace forcefully if the people failed to embrace peace. They should not even allow differences in political party affiliation to cause violence in Ebiraland. The clan leaders were to do same in their respective domains, so that there will be peace in the nooks and crannies of Ebiraland.

- f. **Religion or peace-making through faith action** — this track deals with appealing to the spiritual and religious peace beliefs of the affected communities. It emphasizes, non-violence, humanism, brotherliness as promoted by dominant religions as stated before. In the case of Ebiraland, the various religious bodies also played some roles in ensuring peace in the troubled region. For instance, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organized some programs, calling the attention of the people to the fact that, Ebira is known for peace and that violence is alien to Ebira culture. One of such programs was tagged “divine peace” which was held at the Gospel Assembly Church in Okene on the 19th October, 2019, purposely for the re-election of Governor Yahaya Bello and for peace in Ebiraland. The Pastors in the various churches in Ebiraland also emphasize the need for peace in Ebiraland in their preaching. The Muslim faithful were not left out. They also reiterated the need for peace in Ebiraland in their preaching in their various mosques. The adherents of traditional religion were not left out. They also perform some rituals for peace to return to Ebiraland.
- g. **Funding or peace-making through provision of resources** — our respondents also said the Governor to ensure peace in Ebiraland, bought cars for some traditional rulers as part of their compensation for promoting peace in their localities. This gesture will enable them to move round their localities easily to maintain peace. It will also serve as a morale booster for them to put in more efforts in promoting and sustaining peace in their domains.
- h. **Communications and the media, or peace-making through information** — some of our respondents during interview sessions highlighted the crucial role played by the media in ensuring peace in Ebiraland. Notable among such media houses include Jatto FM, Tao FM, Radio Kogi and Otite most of them based in Ebiraland. Prominent among them according to one of our respondents are the Jatto FM and Tao FM. The two radio stations have contributed immensely to ensuring peace in Ebiraland through their various peace related programs. They have a session through which people from various communities in Ebiraland can air their views as regards happenings in their areas, and such will be brought to the attention of the authorities concern before such degenerate into uncontrollable conflagration. The radio stations also sensitize people on the need for peace, especially when election is approaching that politics is not a do or die affairs, that democracy is not for violence and that there cannot be development in the midst of acrimony.

Results

Unresolved issues

From the above, it is clear that peace effort in Ebiraland is all encompassing, given the role of the different stakeholders. But it is not yet *uhuru* given the avalanche of unresolved issues in the area that could jeopardize the fragile peace. One of such issues is

the battle for the Chief Imam of Ebiraland. The Chief Imam of Ebiraland Musa Galadima died in 2019. Before his death, even though he was very old and was not physically fit to lead prayer, instead of handing over to his deputy, he preferred to be supported on both sides in order to lead the congregation in prayers. The reason for this is not far-fetched according to some of our respondents. Principally, the Chief Imam and his deputy belonged to two opposing clans, with enmity entrenched on both sides. In addition, even, though they both belong to the Muslim faith, they belong to different sects. So, the hostility between them was both clannish and sectarian, making it more volatile. Before the demise of the Chief Imam, the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland wrote to the Chief Imam that he was stepping him down as the Chief Imam on grounds of ill-health and his inability to perform his religious obligations as he should. It was the timely intervention of the Governor that saved the situation from degenerating into uncontrollable violence. The Governor sent heavy security men to the area and the Mosque was shut to prevent violence that would have been perpetrated by the two groups. The Governor warned that everybody should maintain status quo, knowing full well the tense nature of religion can lead to clan issues. When the Chief Imam died, the Ohinoyi wanted to install the Deputy Chief Imam (who belong to his group Tijamiyya) as the new Chief Imam, but the other group (Izala led by the son of the late Chief Imam) called for fresh election to fill the position. Alhaji Abere from the Tijamiyya groups was eventually appointed as the Acting Chief Imam of Ebiraland. While the camp of the Acting Chief Imam addresses the Acting Chief Imam as the substantive Chief Imam, the opposing camp addresses him as Acting Chief pending the time a substantive Chief Imam will be elected or selected by whatever means. Some of our respondents saw this development as a time bomb that will erupt one day if not totally resolved.

Another crisis was the aftermath of the 2019 Senatorial election in Kogi Central. The election pitched Barrister Natasha Apoti of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) against Mallam Yakubu Hussaini of APC. The election witnessed large-scale violence, loss of lives and properties, with the supporters of SDP largely at the receiving end. The bitterness this generated across the zone still lingers and constitutes a major threat to the peace building initiative in Ebiraland.

Another sour point in the peace initiative was the fall-out of the administrative reform embarked on by the Governor on assumption of office in 2016, notably the screening exercise in the civil service that led to some job losses. The exercise was done in a transparent manner. Many who lost their means of livelihood among the Ebiras through the screening exercise remained aggrieved. In “ethicizing” this reform, some of the Governor’s kinsmen were bewildered that their tragedy could be orchestrated by one of their own. The concern raised by one of our respondents was the possibility of the Governor’s successor from another ethnic group reinstating other sacked workers from his group and leaving out the Ebiras on the grounds that the Ebiras were sacked

by their “own son”. That to him, if it happened, was another recipe for clan conflict and violence in the area?

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this article, we argue that attempt at bringing peace to Ebiraland was not the singular effort of the Governor as there were other stakeholders in the peace process even before the Governor came on board. Currently, there seems to be relative peace in Ebiraland, except some hanging issues are addressed. Sustaining the peace, especially after the expiration of the tenure of the present Governor may be difficult. Hence, the need to do the following:

The lingering issue over the appointment of the Chief Imam of Ebiraland should be permanently resolved. The administration of Yahaya Bello, in liaison with the relevant Islamic organization responsible, should set the machinery in motion towards achieving this.

The Governor should reconcile with all the aggrieved clans and individuals with a view to winning the confidence of the people. One sure way of achieving this is ensuring that campaign promises are fulfilled, particularly in areas of job opportunities for the youths with a view to positively engaging them for productive purposes.

Some of the mechanisms established for peace maintenance such as the meeting of the Ohinoyi with clan leaders, and the clan leaders driving peace in their respective domain irrespective of clan and political party affiliations should be maintained.

The efforts of the various media houses that have contributed to peace in Ebiraland should be sustained.

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Ethiopia:

Chalo — Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism of Yem People and Its implication on Peace, Security, and Good Governance

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Abstract: In Ethiopia, many ethnic groups have developed their own conflict resolution mechanisms. The ethnic group of Yem in south-western Ethiopia is one of those with its own conflict resolution mechanism (the Chalo judicial system). The objective of the study was exploring the practice through which the studied community deals with conflicts by using the Chalo judicial system and its implication for peace, security and good governance. A qualitative research design was employed under which, key informants' interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis and observations were conducted and the data was analyzed qualitatively.

The finding of the study revealed that, the Chalo judicial system plays an important role in maintaining the peace and security of the community. The Chalo judicial system has its own execution time, process, and actors involved. Theft and betrayal, inheritance, boundary conflict, and divorce are some of the sorts of conflict that are presented and handled in the Chalo judiciary. Besides, the study revealed that, while it is used to resolve a wide range of conflicts on the ground, it is not adequately recognized by national law and lacks a strong link with the formal court system. Therefore, this research recommend that the members of the community, the worda culture and tourism office, higher educational institutions, and the government shall collaborate in order to conserve and pass on this sort of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism which upholds community peace and security to future generations.

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Introduction

Not just for the proper running of society, but also for human growth, peace, security and good governance are essential ingredients (Beyene, 2007, *apud* Muluken, 2020). Conflict, on the other hand, has a long history in human life and is an unavoidable event. In any relationship, conflict is unavoidable. Whether we like it or not, it will happen. Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in human life since the prevalence of conflict within society manipulates the entire life of humanity when people set opinion against opinion, run interests against interests (Abebe, Samson, & Tesma, 2015). Conflict may generally exist wherever or whenever incompatible activities occur and may result in win-lose character. As a result, conflict mostly defined as a social situation in which at least two parties (actors) compete for the same goal.

Because conflict is inherent, the question is how to resolve it instead of how to avoid it. Here, the issue of conflict resolution is brought up. When we talk about conflict resolution in this study, we are talking about indigenous conflict resolution. In this context, conflict resolution refers to a range of strategies that can be utilized to meet the requirements of all persons involved in a conflict for security, identity, self-determination, and quality of life (Sanson & Bretheton, 2007). Similarly, Dereje (2010) defines conflict resolution as the suppression of a conflict that has already broken out in the form questing for solution that will minimize the levels of violence and prevent it from intensifying, either formally or by indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. The indigenous conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital that implies the ability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and making possible the terms of their relationship (Murithi, 2006).

Indigenous mechanisms have long been utilized by societies around the world to prevent and settle conflicts (Ajanaw & Hone, 2018). Indigenous conflict resolution system, which are typically founded on community norms, familial relationships, or institutional practices, coexist with the formal state sanctioned process in every community (Macfarlance, 2007; Mapara, 2009 both cited by Ajanaw & Hone, 2018). More than 80 ethnic groups are thought to live in Ethiopia. They speak different languages and have different customs (Kebede, Aregash, & Lensa, 2021). Apart from the formal conflict resolution systems, these diverse ethnic and cultural groups have developed their distinct political, administrative, economic, social and judicial systems over many years. For instance, Oromo, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Hareri, Somale, Sidama, Walayeta, Gamo, Tigray and others develop their unique indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution with certain peculiar features (Daniel, 2016).

Similarly, the Yem people of southwestern Ethiopia have their own kingdom, with a centuries-old system of indigenous conflict resolution, political, and administrative framework (Lemma & Mandefro, 2019). Indigenous conflict resolution procedures are part of a societal structure in the Yem community and they play an essential role in

resolving private and family conflicts, as well as a variety of other crimes. This system is made up of the structure, strategies, processes, and institutions that people use to manage their differences and maintain social unity. According to Osi (2008), the indigenous conflict resolution techniques are essential, well-practiced, and pre-colonial methods and institutions for addressing community disputes in a cooperative and shared manner. However, despite their extensive utility and implications, indigenous conflict resolution systems have the difficulty of not being constitutionally well acknowledged and documented as contributive to peace and security. It usually arises when communal cohesiveness is lost to violent conflict that the relevance of such community virtues begins to get recognized. Furthermore, modernity and civilization of the western world pushed to extremely fail to appreciate fully the role of indigenous conflict resolution and peacemaking mechanisms to the maintenance of a community and society solidarity.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic relationships and community networking are always valued, preserved, and strengthened in Africa (Brock-Utne, 2001). When there is a conflict between two groups, the restoration of relationships takes precedence. The immediate goal of this type of conflict resolution is to repair a broken or damaged relationship, as well as to right wrongs and restore justice. Another goal is to restore the complete integration of parties into their society and to develop a cooperative attitude (Abdinasr, 2020). Indigenous conflict resolution processes in Africa are often tightly linked with socio-political and economic realities of community lifestyles (Tafese, 2016). These mechanisms are entrenched in the African people's culture and history, and are unique to each community in some way. The Rwandan Gacaca court, Kacokemadit gatherings in northern Uganda, Yourba and Igbo in Nigeria and Pondo in South Africa, for example, are prominent for providing rapid solutions to genocide perpetrators, trauma rehabilitation and consensus building (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

Ethiopia is a country where people of diverse ethnic groups coexist. Each ethnic group has its own method of resolving conflict (Yitayew *et al.*, 2020). Different social groups have unique traditional settings and relationships, where the indigenous mechanisms could play an important role in resolving and preventing violent conflicts. For example, Oromo, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Hareri, Somali, Sidama, Walayeta, Gamo, Tigray and others have their distinctive indigenous conflict resolution mechanism that pay a significant role not only in reconciliation but also in constructing social well-being throughout the country (Daniel, 2016).

Many scholarly works in southwestern Ethiopia also revealed that various ethnic groups in the area have used their distinctive indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. Bisrat (2018), Tagel (2021), Wasihun and Admasu (2022), for instance, discuss the Kaffa, Benč,

and Shekacho communities' indigenous conflict resolution mechanism. However, Yem is only mentioned in a small proportion of the literature reviewed. Scholarly works like Lemma and Mandefro (2019) attempt to explain the importance of the Hebo New Year ceremonial rite in social stability and progress. The Yem, on the other hand, have indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms constructed on their own traditions and customs, which have not yet researched. Thus, the aim of this research is to explore Yem indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and its role in promoting peace, security and good governance, particular emphasis on the *Chalo* judicial system.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study constitutes the following general and specific objectives.

The General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to scrutinize the indigenous conflict resolution mechanism of Yem People and Its implication for peace, security, and good governance

The Specific Objectives of the Study

- To identify the types and primary sources of conflict in the study area.
- To investigate the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution system and actors participating in it.
- To examine the interconnection between the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and the formal court system.

Research Questions

- What are the types and main causes of conflict in the study area?
- How does *Cahlo* work, and who are the actors in the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism?
- What is the interconnection between the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and the formal court?

Significance of the Study

The study of the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism in Yem special woreda (district), *Chalo* Town in south-western Ethiopia, is relevant from the following perspectives: it will provide valuable information about the role indigenous conflict resolution mechanism play among the Yem people. In addition, public organizations and other interested groups may use it as a model for promoting indigenous peoples values, in general, and indigenous conflict resolution, in particular. It is also intended to serve as a significant and reliable foundation for policymakers and development partners (government bodies, nongovernmental organizations, and so on) in their efforts to

initiate, implement, manage, and supervise the holistic and sustainable development of the study area and other similar localities throughout the country.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study delimited to explore the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism. Geographically, the study was conducted in Yem special woreda, *Chalo* Town. And methodologically the study was used qualitative research technique. Thematically, the study focused to examine *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and its implication for peace, security and good governance.

Limitation of the Study

Doing research in one's own society has both benefits and challenging experiences. During conducting this research there was different constraints bear limitation on the study. These are scarcity of reference materials, financial difficulties, transportation shortages, security concerns, translating local language Yemsa to English language. Incidence of Covid-19 has also created a few gaps in our study due to a lack of freely available individuals who are familiar with the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms.

Methods of the Study

The study area

Yem special woreda is found in the Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPRs) of Ethiopia. It occupies a surface area of 724.5 km². The area is bordered by Oromia region in the North-West, Gurage zone in the North-East and Hadiya Zone in the East. The principal town of the district is Saja, situated 242 km southwest of Addis Ababa, on the Addis Ababa Jimma tarmac highway. The Saja town is the administrative center of the Yem special woreda. The *Chalo* place is covered the total area of 2,878.1 hectare (28.78 km²). *Chalo* is a place where the Yem peoples celebrate the festival of Meskel (an annual religious holiday in the Ethiopian Orthodox church) and the area where the local elders resolve conflicts by selected elders (judges). The area is located 27 km far from the town of Saja, and 10 km from the Fofa (former administrative town of the Yem) and near to Borry mountain forest area.

Research design

The research design for this study was a qualitative approach which aimed to investigate the role of the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism in upholding peace, security and good governance. The use of a qualitative method is justified since it provides in-depth and comprehensive information about the issue of the study.

Participants

The sample for this study was selected from members of the community, under which, 26 informants were selected as sample of the study. The informants of the study were chosen using purposive sampling strategy to conduct interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). This means that only those people in the community who are thought to provide enough and relevant information were included. As a result, interview and focus group discussion (FGD) informants were chosen based on the criteria that they would have better accumulated information and experiences on the area of the study.

Instruments

A combination of primary and secondary sources of data was employed to accomplish study objectives and come up with appropriate data from the field.

Primary Data Collection Instruments

The researcher employed the following primary data collection methods;

Interview

We employed interviews in this study to scrutinize the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and to examine the major cause and effect among the study population. We selected (12) twelve key informants from the study community, including elders, community members, and clan leaders, for this interview.

Observation

In this research observation was used as part data collection techniques. Because people say things that contradict one other, observation is another key method of data collection to get reliable data. By watching day-to-day activities and the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution process in the study area, the researchers were able to gather first-hand information. In the villages, we saw diverse cultural practices related with *Chalo judiciary*.

Focus Group Discussion

One of the most common data collection strategies used in qualitative research is a focus group discussion. The participants are chosen based on the focus group discussion topic. We employed two (2) focus group discussions in this study. Each group included seven (7) participants of the people partaking in conflict resolution.

Secondary data

To support the study and to get a comprehensive understanding of the issue of the study, we used secondary data. Secondary data for this research was collected by reviewing the existing secondary documents already collected and organized in the form

of reports from Yem special woreda culture and tourism office, and other published and unpublished materials which reinforce this work.

Data Analysis

We have analyzed the study in detail using qualitative research approach after we have collected all of the essential data. The primary data for this study was gathered through focus group discussion (FGD), key informants interviews, and observation. The secondary sources of data were reports, published and unpublished documents pertaining to the study undertaken. Lastly, the collected data was analyzed though in a qualitative way.

Results and Discussion

Types and Primary Sources of Conflict in the Area

As researchers have recognized from the literature, conflict can occur inside families, communities, and nations (Gowok, 2008, cited in Wasihun & Admasu, 2022). As a result, conflict may arise for a variety of reasons at all levels. Informants and FGD discussants were indicated that conflict happens in the Yem community in multiple causes, and these disputes are classified as land, marital conflict, and interpersonal conflict.

Theft and betrayal

Theft and betrayal are among the causes of conflict in the area. Conflicts arise when there is burglary, theft of crops, and looting of property. When such conflicts occur, they come to *Chalo* for judgment. We were able to observe a number of people who robbed and betrayed present their cases to *Chalo* during the trial.

Inheritance

Although the Yem community has its own traditions and customs regarding inheritance, occasional conflicts and family conflicts can arise as a result of inheritance. When this happens, the matter comes to *Chalo* judiciary.

Land

In an agrarian community, land is a major or critical component. Land ownership is a vital resource for socioeconomic development in Yem, as it is an agrarian community. As a result, when one of the neighbors crosses the border, interpersonal boundary conflict occurs. As a result, land is the most prevalent and frequent sort of conflict among the Yem people. Such conflicts, according to FGD discussants, are one of many cases brought to *Chalo* judiciary.

Marriage

If a husband and wife abuse each other during the course of their marriage, it can lead to conflict and divorce. In the event of such a conflict, one of the two may bring the matter to *Chalo* judiciary.

Actors in the *Chalo* judicial system

In the *Chalo* judicial system, an independent traditional judiciary (elders or Judges) is chosen from one tribe, and the tribe is called Gazewa. The title of *Chalo* traditional judiciary and judicial system is not found by education and knowledge, but only by ethnicity. Not everyone who is not a member of the Gazewa tribe can claim the title. When the judge is died the first born son takes over the reins of power. In this case the age, life style and ethnicity of the first born son are taken in to consideration. In the absence of a first-born son, as mentioned above, the rein is handed over to his younger brother. Not everyone who is a member of a tribe who does not have authority in this way can be a judge. *Chalo* judiciary and judicial system has three judges:

1. Mengagna (The first judge)

As a judge, the title *Mengagna* acts as the president of the House of Representatives. He is a good news bearer who proclaims about love, unity, belongingness, serving for other and morality. The person holding this title must convene a hearing and decide on the offense committed by the party that allegedly committed the crime. If a defendant fails to appear in court to determine whether or not he or she has been convicted of a crime, an adjudicator may find him or her guilty of a felony.

2. Aulongagna (The second judge)

Aulongagna is the second judge, and he is also a law enforcement officer. He prevents trouble during the holiday season, imposes appropriate punishment in the event of a crisis, ensures that the judicial process is carried out in a proper and conventional manner, avoid space constraints in the *Chalo* judiciary, defining and protecting where the system is taking place, keeping people away from the locations where the trial is being takes place, preventing other acts that may obstruct the court system, and preventing unethical acts from taking place.

3. Kongagna (The third judge)

Kongagna, the third judge, is in responsible of offering the sacrifice and monitoring the judicial process as a whole. If property is stolen during the judicial process, he seeks out the property of those who have lost it and brings those who have stolen it to justice. In addition to three chief judges, 12 tribal elders from different ethnic groups who oversee the traditional judicial process, is just as much a part of the legal system as the jury. Juries are individuals who are represented by members of the Yem community who are engaged in a variety of disciplines. However, these representatives of the twelve tribes do not interfere with the three judges' judicial proceedings.

Chalo Judiciary and Judicial Process

The first phase of the *Chalo* judicial process will be held on September 17 and the second phase held on April 27–28 each year at *Chalo* Kancha (the first phase of the ceremony will be announced in the *Chalo* place of execution the feast of the cross by light up *demara*). In the past, September 17–23 and April 27–28, the case was decided by the plaintiffs, who received the money from the gift for the execution of the judgment. The proceeds from the gift will be used to buy a goat. On September 17, the goat will be slaughtered in *Chalo* Kancha and then the plaintiff and the defendant are called in to hear the case. After the hearing of the three judges and the observer elders, the petitioners sit in rows according to their sequence. The judges view will ensure that the complaint is not handled by formal court. The major reason for this is to respect and uphold the formal court's sovereign jurisdiction. If the complaint is heard to the best of their ability, they will ask whether or not the defendant is present at the hearing. If the defendant is present, he or she will appear and give an answer, just as in any case, in accordance with the formal code of civil procedure of the country. The judges will ask the plaintiff whether the defendant believes or not. If he accepts the appeal, he will be ordered to pay immediately, but he does not have money he was ordered to pay by appointment. He or she is not required to call a bail the main reason for this is because it is considered to doubt the judgment of the creator. According to informants and FGD discussants, however, if he or she is accused and convicted of theft or any other crime and denial during the *Chalo* trail, and if he believes he committed the crime afterward, he is required to invite the people gathered during the *Chalo* trail by slaughtering an ox or sheep, in addition to compensating the plaintiff.

What is Unique in the *Chalo* Judicial System?

All judicial systems are appealed, except for the *Chalo* judiciary. Informants and FGD discussants stated that the main reasons for not appealing to a *Chalo* judge is that,

1st. This is due to the fact that the trial is unique in that, like the common law legal system, there is a body that checks evidence and disciplinary issues to ensure that the process is fair.

2nd. If the convicted party denies or does not believe the case, the judge will render the case to the creator. Then cursing will take place. The curse of the judges is because it is thought to happen and is seen in action.

The Main Reasons Why the *Chalo* Judicial System is Preferred

Various crimes or conflicts have occurred, however the crime cannot be prosecuted in a regular court if there is no proof to punish the perpetrator. In this scenario, if the victim brings the case to *Chalo*, the defendant may accept a guilty plea and be sentenced. The victim may also be compensated. According to informants and FGD discussants, this

is because the community believes that if the *Chalo* judges curse the perpetrator, he would be cursed directly.

The Interconnection between *Chalo* Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism and the Formal Court

In this sub section, we have sought to place the relationship between indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and the formal court system in their collective endeavor to maintain peace and security issues in the study area. The formal court system and indigenous conflict resolution structures are clearly sources of peace and stability in the study area. As a result, it is clear that their collaboration is inevitable. In terms of maintaining peace and resolving conflicts, these institutions collaborate in specific areas. These mutual efforts are carried out for the mutual benefit of institutions on the one hand, and to maintain peace and stability in society, on the other.

According to elders and FGD participants, the *Chalo* judicial system and the formal court system have a relationship and collaborate, despite the fact that it is not strong. Informants and FGD discussants also indicated that, one institution cannot succeed without the other because the formal mechanism has its own legal means to maintain order in the area (community policing, police force, militia, etc.), whereas the indigenous institution has the experience and traditional authority to harmonize people's relationships and strengthen social cohesion. Although the scope of their involvement in resolving conflicts varies, indigenous conflict resolution methods are now working in conflict resolution and drawing the attention of the government whenever the community feels threatened, according to data acquired from informants.

On the other hand, indigenous methods are used to resolve any disputes and conflicts that lack evidence and require social reconciliation. Both institutions collaborate to promote societal peace and security. Elders advise and recommend that the community refrain from criminal conducts because they are heard by the community. When both institutions identify difficulties involving a family disagreement, such as land, divorce, property inheritance and division, they see cooperative effort for mutual benefit. Furthermore, both have similar approaches towards preventing injustice and preserving the peace and security of the community. For instance,

- In the *Chalo* legal system, the decision is not made without allowing the defendant to respond to the charge, as in a formal court.
- The plaintiff also reports the injury to the elders. The elders will hear the case and decide on a date that they feel appropriate, like the regular court.
- The judge in a formal judicial system should be free and independent. In the *Chalo* judicial system, no one interferes with the three judges' legal proceedings.
- In the *Chalo* judicial system, the *Chalo* judges exclusively consider cases that are not addressed by the formal court system.

- In formal courts, a system is in place to ensure that judges make decisions based on rules and procedures in order to avoid injustice. Similarly, jurors (as much part of the legal system) oversee the impartiality of decisions in the *Cahlo* judicial system.

In general, the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution system and the formal dispute resolution mechanism, both significant drivers of peace and stability in the area, work together for community's benefit.

Conclusion

The major goal of this research was to look into the Yem People's indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and its implications for peace, security, and good governance in south-western Ethiopia. To achieve the objectives of study, the researcher used a qualitative approach. Moreover, a variety of tools were employed to gather in-depth information about the issue under investigation. During the study, data was collected through key informant interviews, observation, focus group discussions, and document analysis.

Theft and betrayal, land, marriage, inheritance, and other factors all contribute to conflict in the Yem community. Theft and betrayal are two of the most common causes of conflict in the study area, which occur from burglary, crop theft, and property looting. The other is Yem as an agrarian society, where the most common and frequent type of dispute among the Yem community is over land. In order to resolve conflict that arises as a result of the aforementioned causes, the Yem people have had their unique indigenous conflict resolution processes (the so-called *Chalo* judicial system) based under their own traditions and customs. Three judges (Mengagna, Aulongagna, & Kongagna) who are chosen from Gazewa tribe based on ethnicity and 12 tribal elders (juries) from different ethnic groups are the major actors in the *Chalo* judicial system. In terms of conflict resolution practices, the finding of the study revealed that the Yem community elders/judges mostly depend on the type and nature of the conflicts to be handled when it comes to conflict resolution practices. They also believe that any disputes within their community should be settled amicably using an indigenous process that has been in place for a long time. The system is made up of certain procedures and rules that govern the extent of sanctions and compensation payments based on the sternness of the crimes.

The study also revealed that, even though both *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution system and the formal dispute resolution mechanism are significant drivers of peace and stability in the area, the formal court lacks the infrastructure to forge a formal and strong partnership with the indigenous institution. Furthermore, regardless of whether traditional conflict resolution institutions are utilized to handle a wide range of offenses on the ground, the country's law limits the purpose of traditional conflict resolution institutions to private and family problems, specifically excluding serious criminal concerns.

Recommendation

Based on the aforementioned conclusion, the research suggests the following recommendations,

- The *Chalo* traditional conflict resolution mechanism is a historic institution dedicated with disciplining and reforming illegal behavior, maintaining peace and order, and promoting good governance. But, the fundamental issue is that the strategy is not proactive, in that it does not prevent criminal activities before they occur in the community. To overcome these drawbacks, it would be preferable to create a platform that allows the *Chalo* elders to collaborate with the government to prevent conflict in the first place.
- The value of the *Chalo* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism deteriorates over time as a result of religious expansion and a failure to educate and pass such knowledge to the younger generation. Therefore, the community, the woreda culture and tourism office, and the government need work together to preserve and pass on this type of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism that promotes community peace and security to future generations.
- In order to strengthen the interconnection of traditional indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms with the formal court system, it is preferable that the government in general and woreda authorities in particular, establish a framework and grant legal foundation to the *Chalo* judicial system.

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Ethiopia: *Asha* Indigenous Conflict Resolution Apparatus of the Me'en Community

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Abstract: Every community has its own indigenous institutions meant to deal with its social, political, economic and peacemaking endeavors. Focus of this article is *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution institution of the Me'en community. For the studied community, *Asha*, signifies a payment for 'blood' and exhibits ritual restitution. Ritual restitution within *Asha* is administered by ritual chiefs known as *Komoruts*. Objective of this article is exploring the *Asha* approach for conflict resolution. To realize this objective, the researcher employed qualitative research design enhanced with twelve key-informant interview and two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Built up on such data, findings of the study revealed four conclusions. First, irrespective of the fact that *Asha* is an approach owned by Me'en communities, adjoining communities abide by it. Secondly, *Asha* is the only approach potent to solve conflicts that end up with human demise. Thirdly, notwithstanding the endeavor by local and regional governments to make *Asha* compatible with notion of human right principles, there is trivial acceptance by the study community members, especially by lowlanders. Fourthly, the research finding unpacked that *Asha* has weakness when it comes to promoting human right of the teenage girl given for reconciliation. Additionally, *Asha* also botched to respect due process of law. Generally speaking, the article concluded that *Asha* is as a doubled edged sword, vivacious and viral. On one side, *Asha* is the only approach for restoring broken social relationships and reconciling conflict cases that end up with human demise. On the other side, *Asha* is an approach that contravenes human right of the teenage girl. In glimpse of these, the researcher recommends neither deserting nor romanticizing Ethiopian indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms such as *Asha* without further research and remedial measures to make them compatible with Universal Human Right principles.

Keywords: *Asha*, conflict, conflict resolution, Me'en, indigenous conflict resolution.

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1. Introduction

All societies across the globe have both indigenous and endogenous values, resources and institutions (Murithi, 2008). Murithi, further goes to assert that the difference between them is subtle. Here, indigenous processes argued as being articulated for centuries and can thus be seen as “inherent, innate and instinctive to a society”, while endogenous processes are those, seen as “temporal process of continuously reformulating and crafting additional ways of doing things” (Murithi, 2008, p. 18). The foremost emphasis of this article is indigenous values, resources and institutions for conflict resolution, in general, and *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution, in particular. Henceforth, the principal discussion in this article will focus on *Asha*’ indigenous conflict resolution apparatus of the *Me’en* community.

As it is acknowledged by various literatures, in most parts of Africa, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are widely practiced. With this regard, Yakubu, who observed most African indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, defined them as conflict resolution mechanisms “guided by the principles of consensus, collective responsibility and communal solidarity (cited in Murithi & Murphy, 2007). As part and parcel of Africa, the various Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples have their respective indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (Tagel, 2021). Here, the well-known Conti Rossini’s’ expression of Ethiopia, as ‘museum of peoples’ can also be useful in expressing the prevailing diversity on indigenous conflict resolution within the country (Assefa, 2017). To substantiate this assertion, we may look into the *Gadaa* system of Oromos, *Shimagelle* adjudication of Amhara, *Reda*, *gogata* and *ilammo* of Kambata, *Ye tib dana*, *Shengo* and *Yejoka* of Gurage, and others (Tagel, 2021).

All these being mentioned, the focus of this article is not an extended discussion on the prevailing multiplicity of indigenous conflict resolution within Ethiopia, but it is about an indigenous conflict resolution in Southwest Ethiopia, namely *Asha*. Thus far, there are dozens of studies on indigenous conflict resolution within the region, in general, and that of *Me’en* community, in particular. For instance, Bisrat (2018), who studied the Kaffa community of the region, identified Eqqo (*Kalecha*), *Tommo*, *Shimgelena* and others. Adinew (2017), who studies the immediate neighboring of *Me’en*, named the Dizi people, recognized the *Dofie* approach. Based on Adinew’s observation, *Dofie* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism works through ritual slaughtering of sheep/goat.

Furthermore, he noted that the *Dofie* apparatus is supplemented with subsequent examination/reading of its intestine by ritually skilled clan leaders named *Geima*. Similarly, my recent work on indigenous conflict resolution among ethnic Benč Communities of the same region, revealed how the traditional or old style *Tomo* accent morality as the basis for adjudication (Tagel, 2021).

When it comes to research focused on *Me’en* community, Abbink (1988, 1992, 1997) could be cited as significant for the very research issue, given the fact that he nuancedly

studied the funeral myth of the Tishana-Me'en. Yet, none of these reserches explored the *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution mechanism of the studied community. To that end, this article endeavors to fill the prevailing knowledge gape on indigenous conflict resolution within the study community, in general, and the *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution, in particular. To do that, the following research questions were raised:

- What is the basic nature of *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution?
- Who are the beneficiaries of *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution?
- What are the merits and demerits of *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution?
- What might be done to decrease demerits of *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution?

2. Literature Review

Indigenous conflict resolution denotes to the institutions and methods that seek to resolve conflict and reestablish balance between members and groups (Lundy, Collette, & Downs, 2022). As dozens of researchers reveled, indigenous conflict resolution function excellently within communal societies who exhibit a collectivist approach to conflict and conflict resolution in which members keep each other informed on conflict situations (Barnes, 1994 cited in Walker, 2004). Walker (2004) furhter goes to assert that, in collectivist cultures, the primary purpose of resolving conflict is to bring harmony to the group. Thus, conflict is viewed holistically, not analytically or broken into parts; it is embedded in the networks of the community. When it comes to conflict resolution, collectivist cultures emphasize the restoration of relationships within the network of interconnections that defines the community, which contrary to the conventional western model.

From the perspectives of most African societies, Tafese (2016) argued that “indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms as part of a well-structured, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships” (quoted in Duri, Marongwe, & Mawere, 2019, p. 350). Moreover, in the history of indigenous communities, in general, and Africa, in particular, the indigenous institution of traditional leadership has succeeded in retaining its position and continues to play a role as guardian of the culture, customs, origins, and history of its people (Mboh, 2021). In such context, the roles of traditional authorities as custodians of the values of society of custom and tradition and as moral authorities are vitally important, lending traditional authorities social legitimacy (Marrengane, Sawyer, & Tevera, 2021). In terms of effectiveness built upon their comparative on the overall effectiveness and applicability of indigenous conflict resolution approaches to managing, resolving, and transforming conflicts, Lundy, Collette and Downs, (2022) concluded that “indigenous conflict management strategies are more effective than non-indigenous conflict management strategies in indigenous contexts” (p. 9). These being noted, in this article we will examine *Asha* indigenous conflict resolution of the Me'en community so as to

answer the aforementioned four research questions. To do that, the researcher has conducted a total of twelve qualitative key-informants' interviews with selected Me'en rituals leaders and government officials combined with two FGDS and along with critical document analysis on the very research topic.

3. Me'en Communities & their Indigenous Conflict Resolution Apparatus

The Me'en community dwells formerly within Benč-Maji Zone along with other indigenous peoples of the area, specifically Benč, Sheko, Dizi, Suri and Zilmamu on one side and with various non-indigenous Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples within Benč-Maji Zone (Central Statistics Authority [CSA] , 2007). In terms of administrative abode, the Me'en community mainly dwells within Menit Shasaha and Menit Gobdiaya *Woredas*. Currently, Benč-Maji Zone has devolved into Benč- Sheko and West Omo Zones, given that the Me'en community dwells within the jurisdiction of West Omo Zone, which one of the numerous zones within Southerner Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS).

In terms of ethno-history, the Me'en community are a group of about 130,000 to 140,000 agro-pastoralist (CSA,2007). According to Abbink (1988), the Me'en are located within northwest of the Lower Omo and Sharma River. In terms of naming there is variation on identifying the study community. For instance, Abbink (1988) calls the study community as Me'en, formerly they were known as the Mekan. Abbink further defined the name *Me'en* implying the word *people* or *human*. On his letter publication entitled 'The Myth of the Tishana-Me'en "Kingship" (Southern Ethiopia)', Abbink (1997) calls them as *Tishana* and *Tishana-Me'en*. Yet, outsiders call the Me'en community as Me'enit and Menit. Hitherto, the name Me'en is preferred by the studied community, as it is their self-name. In terms of residency, the study community predominantly dwell within Me'enit Golyid and Me'enit ShAsha *Woredas* of West Omo Zone, which is some 720 KM from Addis Ababa towards South-West Ethiopia. Due to the prevailing affluence indigenous knowledge that speculates inevitability of conflicts, the Me'en community has established their own indigenous and age-old institutions known as *Oneh*, *Tusha*, *Asha* and others. According to our key informants, each of these indigenous approaches have their own case and context specific procedure and purpose in solving conflict within and between Me'en community.

For example, the *Oneh* approach, is used to resolve rape cases. Ethymologically speaking for the *Me'en* community *Oneh* denotes *purification by blood*. If a married women bump into a rape incident, her husband recives justice by the *Oneh* adjudication apratus. Through *Oneh*, the raper purifiies the women he raped assisted by *Me'en* ritual chies designated for purifing such cases through lamb blood while, the *Tusha* approach is used to settle conflict issues that dearth credible eye-witness and the *Asha* apparatus is used to resolve conflict dyad(s) that end up with intended or unintended human

demise. As indicated on the introductory part of this article, the focus of this study is unpacking *Asha's* indigenous conflict resolution apparatus of the Me'en community.

4. The Anatomy of *Asha* Indigenous Conflict Resolution

If a man kills a man, he should be brought to justice by passing him over to the government ... if the government cannot catch the killer to punish him by law, [then] the following will apply ... the family of the killer should give 30 cattle and a girl to the family of the dead man.

The above quotation is a speech made by the Suri representative on UN OCHA Pastoralist Communication funded Pastoralist Peace Gathering (2007, p. 21). Such sort of indigenous conflict resolution apparatus is used by Suri, Hamar and the Me'en, most importantly. As it is clearly comprehended, the representative from Suri insists that, if the justice system by the government fails, then customary justice has to be made and the proposed communal conflict resolution has two sorts of restitutions. These are restitution paid in the form of cattle and restitution paid in the form of a girl. The proposed conflict resolution resembles the *Asha* apparatus of the Me'en community. The question is what does *Asha* mean? How does it work? What are its components? Etymologically *Asha* refers to a 'blood payment'. The FGD discussants and ritual leaders assert that "if a person kills someone, then he/she has to pay *Asha* to prevent retaliation. There are different types of *Asha* or 'blood payments'. The most commonly known *Asha* are *dog Asha*, *weapon Asha* and *family Asha*. Unpacking these bunch of 'blood payments', key informants elucidated the *dog Asha* in the following manner:

... if your dog attacks someone else and then the bitten person dies due to the incident then you, as the owner of the dog, will be liable to pay Asha for the victims' family/clan. Otherwise, there will be retaliatory killing from the victim's family/clan on you or your family/clan/group.

The same rule applies for other incidents as well. Of these of *Asha* typologies, this section will focus on *Asha* remunerated for inter clan/group/ethnic conflict dyad with human death. According to key informants, for the Me'en communities located both within highland and lowland, *Asha* reconciles hostile groups through restorative compensation of cattle and a teenager girl. For the studied community, any interpersonal conflict with human fatality transforms into inter-clan conflict. That being the case, *Asha* is seen not as an approach meant to solve interpersonal conflicts, rather, it is seen as an approach meant to transform a conflictual group relation into a cordial one. Whatever the causes within any conflict dyad, if it ends up with human fatality, then *Asha* has to be paid so as to curtail retaliatory killing to restore social cohesion, but also for his family/clan or else extensive retaliatory killing will follow. For the Me'en community, interpersonal conflict, if it causes human causality then, swiftly, the conflict will transform into an

intergroup conflict. One of my key informant assets that:

... in our community, if you kill someone who is different for your clan and if you fail to resolve the incident through Asha, then the feud will be twofold on one side and the conflict transform from interpersonal into inter-clan on the other ... for example in terms of retaliation, if the diseased is a teenager, the retaliation will not be on another teenager, as a replacement it will be on reputed village /clan chief. Nonetheless, if Asha is rewarded or at least initiated, it can restore peace.

Within the studied community, conflict incidents that end up with human death must be resolved through *Asha* on one side and formal institutions on other. Irrespective formal state institutions' capacity on investigating, persecuting and pardoning wrongdoer, *Asha* is nonnegotiable. In other words, if formal institutions became capable on the prosecution of the wrong doer, then he/she will not be exempt from *Asha's* adjudication, hence the wrong doer will be punished both by the state as well as the *Asha*. In this regard, *Asha* is resemblant with the way the Gypsies use their traditional conflict resolution system and other traditional communities in the world (Sandu, 2018). In confirming this, one of key informant asserted that:

... in our [Me'en] community, if you kill someone else from a clan, which is different from yours and as perpetrator you were sent to custody by government for your offense, you will pay at least the initial Asha, payment while being in detention so as to make peace for your clan in general and family in particular ...

Which intern fits with what, Ife (2007), calls 'peace from above and peace from below'. Ife argues that peace achieved only from above will only be a partial peace that can leave many conflicts and tensions unresolved. True peace can only be achieved if peace from below can be realized along with peace from above. When it comes to the Me'en community, peace has to be served at the local level through indigenous institution of *Asha* and at official level through formal courts. That is why a perpetrator, even arrested by the government, is responsible to pay at list the initial *Asha* payment, which is one cattle to prevent strife's against his family/clan. If the killer pledged such culturally induced *Asha* commencement, he/she will finalize it after his/her release from custody.

Overall, within the studied community, following a conflict dyad that end up with de-
cease, the offender discharges two cases and context specific culturally built responsibilities. These are:

- I. The first task is sending early warning message for his family/clan/group to alert them for the forthcoming retaliatory measure from the victims' family/clan/group, and
- II. The second task is, supplementary with the first, disclosing the victims' identity by pronouncing the victims' family/clan/group.

According to my key informants, in the Me'en community, if interpersonal conflict end-up with human death, then it will transform into inter-group/clan conflict. Thus, following such incidents, the offender not only hides for himself/herself, but also warns his family/clan/ to evacuate from their accustomed abode. The warning is accompanied by meddling of neutral clan ritual leaders, known as *Komoruts* for adjudicating the situation through *Asha*. According to Abbink (1992), the *Komoruts* are:

ritual chiefs without coercive powers, who were acting as guardians of the land and as rain-mediators with Turna [Tuma], the Sky-God, who is seen as responsible for the fertility of land, livestock and people. The Komoruts were active in blessing the land, asking for rain in drought periods and as mediators in inter-lineage murder cases and other conflicts (p. 224).

In line with the first duty of informing, the perpetrator is also expected to disclose the victim's identity in terms of family/clan for two purposes. The first and foremost, it is meant to inform potential sources of threat for his/her family/clan/group due to the incident. Secondly, disclosing the victims' identity is helpful for conflict prevention intrusion of neutral family/clan party. The logic is that following a conflict incident that end up with human fatality, within the study community, everyone from the victims' clan will be the enemy of the perpetrator's clan, regardless of age, gender, social and cultural status. Above all, anyone from the perpetrators' clan will be prey for the victim's' family, clan/group on the spot he/she was found, until justice is served via *Asha* (Andualme, 2012). Given that, the special neutral third-party chief, in its turn, will approach the victims' clan by acknowledging the guilty committed by perpetrators' clan and by rendering culturally accustomed dialogue for *Asha* commencement. All in all, for *Asha* adjudication instigation case and context, the neutral third party will command the victims' clan by the axiom "the offending clan has acknowledged their guilty hence please forget your revenge and let us resolve this issue through *Asha*".

Following such deliberation, neutral third party elders, together with third party ritual chiefs chosen by the victim's clan, facilitate the ritual burial of the deceased. Here, it is vital to realize that, within the study community, burial of a deceased person on conflict incident will not be commenced until the initial *Asha* payment is made or retribution action was taken. Once *Asha* initiation restitution of a single cattle is given due to the intrusion neutral third party chief's, then *Asha* payment will be accomplished and the burial will be done by given cattle. To that end, the third party ritual will bring one cattle for this purpose from the perpetrators' clan and such move commence the conflict resolution process. Following the ritual funeral ceremony, natural elders from both sides will decide the date, time and venue for the final *Asha* reconciliation which will be accompanied by the arrival of stakeholders. These are the offending clan, the victim clan, the teenager girl and neutral parties.

Generally speaking, built upon the information from key informants and FGD, the *Asha* approach for conflict resolution within Me'en community has the following five steps:

- I. The first step for *Asha* among the studied community is a conflict incident with human death, be it intentional or unintentional.
- II. The second step is early warning information dissemination from the killer to his family/clan.
- III. The third step is the involvement of third party ritual *Komorut*. The *Komorut* has to be from a neutral family/clan and his first task is conflict containment by becoming the channel of communication between the two families and rendering *Asha* commencement, which is one cattle.
- IV. The fourth step has two activities; these are the burial ceremony through fresh leather /skin of the ritually slaughtered cattle and settling *Asha's* due date, which in most case lasts from 20 to 30 days.
- V. The last step is *Asha's* payment phase. At this stage, the *Komorut* facilitates the entire ceremony for *Asha* and a teenage girl will be given.

Following this steps, starting from the second step, the *Asha* approach gears towards effective conflict containment, conflict management, conflict resolution and transformation within the study community.

5. Merits of *Asha* indigenous conflict Resolution

Following any conflict dyad that end up with human decease, the conflict transforms into inter-family/clan conflict. One key informant narrates the situation the following manner:

... in a conflict context that end up with intended or unintended human death, everybody from the killer family/clan will be hunted until justice is served through Asha. Moreover, the victim's clan not only hunt down members of the killer family/clan, but also possessions and wealth's belonging to the killer family/clan. In such situation, belonging to the killer family/clan will be destroyed, tents will be turned into ashes via fire, cattles will be slaughter if not they will be looted so it is chaos ...

As the above quotation can entail, the retaliatory attack is harsh. Furthermore, key informants elucidated that following such incidents and the subsequent hostility, members the victim's and killer's family/clan, will not trade together; will not share the same market and will not share the same road and so on. In such context, *Asha* gears towards healing and reconciling the conflicting parties through restorative compensation. According to FGD participants,

Restorative compensation of seven cattle, each having its own meaning along with a teenage girl or unmarried women. The cultural ramification behind this

teenage girl given for Asha connotes' is the resurrection of the deceased due to the skirmish. For Me'en community, a teenage girl given for Asha is believed to grow up and become adult and subsequently give a birth and replace the deceased. Owing to such culturally defined consequential value of the teenage women, the victims' clan receive here with Ululation. Moreover, the victim's clan will contribute a sheep for sacrifice, signifying the union of the two clans.

As indicated previously, the first cattle is given for funeral purpose while the rest are meant for reconciliation. Key informants clarified that the teenage girl given as *Asha* signify the resurrection of the deceased. Hence, family's/clan members of the deceased accept her through *ululation*. In short, she is the one that transform the conflict situation into a cordial one.

6. Demerits of *Asha* indigenous conflict Resolution

Indigenous conflict resolution, in general, and indigenous conflict resolution in African are not spared from criticism. They have often been criticized for being arbitrary and disproportionate in passing sanctions. It is also argued that customary institutions that represent dominant interests may pass judgments that are against the interests of vulnerable groups like women, children and minorities (Tsegai & Rammala, 2018). In light of this observation, *Asha* has its shortcomings. To understand the drawback, let us see the speech forwarded by Meseret Kala, a Humar Student (The UN OCHA Pastoralist Communication, 2007, p. 21):

... I am a high school student ... as I am a daughter of a pastoralist. I do not want a girl to be given as a replacement for a dead person. All girls from pastoralist communities are interested in learning and changing the life of our communities ... It makes me sad to hear the idea of giving a girl to replace someone who is dead. I beg you once again to send your girl to school, thus they can change their life as well as changing their country ...

The speech of Meseret Kala on the Peace gathering at South Omo Pastoralist Gathering, indicated the girl's reaction on being given for *Asha*. Regardless of this pursuit and aspiration, if there is conflict incident within agro pastoralists of the extreme southwestern fringe of Ethiopia in general and Me'en community in particular, a teenage girl is being given for victim's family /clan so as to prevent retaliation on one side and restore the broken social peace on the other. Yet as rightly argued by Meseret Kala this will loss her right to education, her right with who to make marriage and when to get marriage.

Furthermore, Andualme (2012), who studied the Me'en community ethnography for his master's thesis, proclaims that:

In the past ... if the teenager girl given for Asha and if she is sort of toddler, the members of the victims' clan apply corporal punishment; they even beat here

in the name of the deceased family member. Moreover, males from the victims' clan in some circumstances' also try to rape her. However, nowadays there is no such violation of human right of the girl.

Contrary to Andualme's observation, one FGD participant recalls a recent epoch human right violation on a teenage girl given through *Asha*:

... a teenage girl given for Asha is not seen as human rather as an enemy. In some cases, she might be stabbed with knife or raped ... for example when I saw, a 45 years old adult, who raped a 7 years old girl given for Asha. And we sued him and the formal justice system sentenced him for 14-year custody.

Furthermore, the key-informant also complain the Andualme's observation of recent time improvement for a teenage girls given for *Asha* as false. The key informant challenges that:

... a teenage girl compensated for Asha, will be a lifetime asset of the victims' family/clan. Moreover, as a norm, she will make marriage only from the victims' family /clan and within such marriage she has no say. With this regard, a teenage girl given for Asha will lose her marital rights cherished within international women right documents and that of 'Federal Democratic republic of Ethiopia (FDERE)' Constitution, especially those stated on Article 34(2).

According to Article 34(2) of the FDERE constitution, *Asha* is injustice due to the fact that *Asha* approach has contradictory norm with the constitution. In simple terms, the constitution stipulates that, "marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses". Yet, a teenage girl given for *Asha* enter into the marriage not because of her free and full consent, rather due to the conflict incident and the subsequent cultural norm. According to FGD participants, these culpabilities of *Asha* forced the local, zonal and regional government to label *Asha* as one among top 142 Harmful traditional practices.

7. What could be done to make *Asha* compatible with Human rights

The *Asha* approach for conflict resolution is a quite interesting restorative justice mechanism in Africa. As we have seen it from the above discussion, *Asha* restores broken relationship between conflicting parties and the communities. Notwithstanding this, the *Asha* approach is criticized for failing to respect the human right of the teenage girl. In glimpse of this shortfalls, the regional government labeled it as one the prevailing 142 harmful traditional practices within SNNPR. In line with this, one key informant added that:

Given the fact that there is a serious of human right violation on the teenage girl given for Asha, the government has labeled it as a harmful traditional practice.

Similarly, we [Me'en community] noted the suffering on the teenage girl given for Asha and labeled it as harmful.

These being the case, the local government, tried to modify the Asha approach by replacing the teenage girl with additional cattle's. With this regard one FGD discussant elucidated that:

These days, we [the Me'en community] have modified Asha. We modified it by substituting the teenage girl with additional seven cattle. We raised the total number of cattle's give for Asha into fourteen. Plus, recently, the community has made a discussion and agreed that fourteen cattle's for Asha restitution to be the right decision.

Yet, some FGD participants noted that this is functional only on highland areas of the study community, while the lowlanders didn't abide by it due to the fact that they are transhumant pastoralists. In addition to violation of the human right of the teenage girl given for Asha, the FGD noted the need for further community wide discussion on human right issue of the condemned. They noted that he/she is liable to double punishment. One is the peace making from below through Asha and the other through state institution and courts, which, in turn, is contrary prohibition of double jeopardy stated on Article 24 the Constitution. All these binges considered further public discussion focused on promoting the right of the teenage girl and that of the convicted person right to prohibition on double jeopardy is need. In addition to that, the Asha approach requires further policy oriented research so that it can be used in critical circumstances, just like *gacaca* and *Ubuntu*.

Concluding Remarks

The Asha approach for conflict resolution is extensively employed by the Me'en community, also known as the Menit, Mekan and Tishana. Seldomly their neighbors (Suri and Hammer) also use it. The Me'en are a numerically minority agro-pastoralists located within southwestern fringe of Ethiopia. The Me'en has numerous indigenous conflict resolution approaches, nevertheless, the most widely accustomed indigenous approaches for conflict resolution are *Oneh*, *Tusha* and *Asha*. Each one of these approaches has its own cultural defined issues. For example, the *Oneh* approach is meant to solve rape cases. When it comes to *Tusha*, it is an approach preordained to manage conflict incident that lack eye witness while *Asha* is an approach meant for solving conflict dyads that end up with human decease.

In Me'en language, *Asha* signifies a payment for blood. To accomplish such a thing, the Asha approach requires culturally predetermined seven cattle's and a teenage girl. In terms of effectiveness, *Asha* is an effective approach for conflict containment, conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Hitherto, it has drawbacks with respect to issues of human rights, in general, and women's human right, in par-

ticular. In other words, the teenage girl given for *Asha* adjudication loses her right to education, marriage and movement. Likewise, occasionally, she encounters enduring physical violence, including rape. These demerits of *Asha* forced the regional government to label it as a harmful traditional practice rather than a favorable indigenous conflict resolution. The *Asha* approach for conflict resolution is not only contrary to the human right of the teenage girl alone, but also the perpetrator who committed the killing, be it deliberate or accidental, as he will be punished both by state institution, on one side, and inside the cultural institution of *Asha*. Once again, these makes *Asha* contrary to contemporary notion of human rights in general and the principle of prohibition of double jeopardy. In both contexts, *Asha* requires modification to fit with contemporary notion of human rights, hitherto the existing experience shows an impasse.

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Nigeria: The Imperatives of Internal Security and Development — Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: Among the issues of governance confronting Nigeria, security is generally regarded as crucial. There is no doubt about the strong relationship between security and development. This paper takes an opposing view to the dominant approach of a colonially-foisted statist and *law-and-order* conception of security by successive administrations in Nigeria. The paper emphasizes certain *small things* that matter for securing the lives of Nigerians, and ensuring sustainable development in the country. These include socio-cultural, economic and political factors that should catalyze citizens' participation in the national security architecture and in the country's development aspirations and goals. Data is drawn from secondary sources for the conceptual and theoretical sections of the paper. Primary data is drawn from events analyses, interviews with selected experts in University of Ibadan and from content analyses of selected documents on contemporary politics, economy and society in Nigeria. This is supported by interactions with respondents in selected markets and locations around the country. Political culture, with focus on the prebendalist perspective, is deployed for the paper's analytic frame.

Keywords: Security threats, Endemic corruption, Political culture, Citizens' participation.

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Introduction

In the first two decades of the 21st century, living in Nigeria increasingly became a life of great and constant challenges¹. As the most

1 Part of the author's initial interactions with the Head Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, on Monday, 28 June 2021. On the same day, the author had telephone conversations with an Emeritus Professor of Civil-

populous country in Africa, the country has found itself in poverty faced with massive unemployment, social inequality, corruption, ignorance, ill-health and insecurity. There is a desire and search for security and development while at the same time the average citizen holds on to a life of lawlessness, chicanery and daily uncertainties that feed a life of hustle². In government circles, the notion about security architecture is mostly about the superstructure. This includes the national security apparatus being in place, having policies and action plans, training of military personnel in security schools and universities around the world, and making budgetary allocations to the security sector.

Virtually all through Nigeria's six decades of post-independence history, there has been an observable unwillingness or even refusal to allow appropriate indigenous knowledge to dictate policy. Yet, among the indices of the wellness of organized human society in which the treasures of the knowledge, skills and values possessed by indigenous people stand out, the issue of security is regarded the most crucial. This importance is captured by Nigeria's 1999 constitution (as amended) where section 14 (1) states, "security and welfare of the people shall be primary purpose of government" (Federal Republic of Nigeria — FRN, 1999).

Research Questions

The research sets out to address the following questions:

- How has Nigeria performed in terms of its internal security in the first two decades of the 21st century?
- How well have the citizens prospered and how is this connected to the country's internal security?
- How should the people focus or refocus on the need for a more efficient economy and a law-governed country for attaining higher levels of internal security?

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to analyse the performance in Nigeria's internal security sector 20 years after the commencement of the 21st century. The objectives are joining the collective search for a more efficient, safe, secure and prosperous country and proffering suggestions on the way forward.

Military Relations and a retired Professor of Strategic Studies, both from the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

2 Six out of ten or 60 percent of respondents in a survey around Agbowo Community, Ibadan, Oyo State, did not agree that illegal dumping of waste, traffic offences and similar "small" offences constitute security threats.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Conceptualization of internal security and development, and review of literature; analysis of status of internal security in Nigeria; outstanding issues and challenges; policy recommendations/conclusion.

Conceptualization of internal security and development, and review of literature

Internal security is a component of national security, the latter which has been described as the “requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, power, diplomacy, power projection and political power” (Adesina, 2019, p. 4). According to Odekunle (2007), internal security is broadly conceptualized as “protection or defense against *all* kinds of victimization”, including “protection/defense against economic want, poverty, illiteracy, disease/ill-health, social exploitation, psychological trauma, oppression and criminal victimization” (p. 2). This is perceived in terms of the economic, political and social security of the average citizen. It implies that the major indices of the level of internal security of Nigeria are for the overwhelming majority of the population to be economically well and for the system to be politically stable, while there is also an appreciable level of peace and harmony.

There is a consensus that an average citizen in a peaceful country, which is characterized by justice, fairness and equity, regards himself a stakeholder in the sustenance of the society’s stability and progress. This disposes citizens toward law-abidingness and against lawlessness or criminal conduct. Nonetheless, there is hardly a crime-free society, making the fact of crime in every society normal. The problematic, according to Odekunle (2010), is ‘where and when’, in terms of volume, extent, nature, character and pattern, “it constitutes a threat to the security of life and property of the citizens, or even the credibility of the state” (p. 739). The state addresses such problematic and counters its consequent threats by relying on its criminal justice system. This comprises law-making by the legislature supported in many cases by policy think tanks; policing and law-enforcement by the police and related security agencies; criminal justice administration by the courts; and offender sanctioning/correction by the prisons and correctional centers.

In Nigeria, the multi-dimensional sectors of security include the external/territorial dimension, natural and human-made disasters, and internal security dimensions. The Armed Forces (Army, Airforce and Navy) and the external arms of the Intelligence Agencies are assigned the duty of external and territorial security. However, they have been actively involved in restoring peace during emergencies such as political and electoral violence, insurgencies, insurrections and acts of terrorism³. Flood, erosion, fire,

3 The Armed Forces have been involved in election duties and, in particular, in the efforts to crush the Boko Haram and bandits in parts of Nigeria’s northern states.

collapsed structures, road, sea, air and other accidents, and the like of these aspects of security are covered by para-military and specialized agencies established for such. These include Fire Service Departments, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and specialized agencies indirectly assigned the purview of security include the National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and, Independent Corrupt Practices and related offences Commission (ICPC). The Police is the primary government agency responsible for the internal security dimension, which is all-pervasive in terms of actual and potential effects on the generality of the population.

There is a consensus on the need for these agencies to perform their delineated functions as sub-systems in the larger Nigerian system, which has a goal of a well-secured society of a happy and prosperous people. A dysfunction in any of the sub-systems threatens the functionality of the entire system. This has been captured in several scholarly works on the idea of planning for crime-prevention and crime-control in the context of socio-economic development planning and inter-agency collaborations⁴.

Viewed from this point on the interactions between sub-systems for their well-being and the credibility of the whole system, the dilemma of the big things and the small things that matter should become less complex in unraveling. For example, it is clear that a country is as strong as the well-being of the greatest number of its population. This point can be illustrated using the story of China's Great Wall constructed in 221 B.C as part of the country's fortification systems⁵. It implies that security is not guaranteed simply by the availability of military hardware, arms and ammunition or other physical infrastructure.

Understanding oneself, as a country, and the engagement with the rest of the world constitute a critical part of security. Tzu (1910) had warned:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle (p. 6).

4 See, David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, New York: Wiley, 1965; UNESCO, *Social Development: From Research to Policy to Action. Draft Concept Paper, Revision 2*. United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007.

5 History has it that in the first 100years of its existence with the Great Wall in place, China was invaded thrice. Each time, the hordes of enemy infantry needed not to penetrate or climb the wall, they bribed the guards and gained access.

In the context of this paper, the enemy or threats to security include poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, ill health, disease, malnourishment, hunger, deprivation, exclusion and frustration among others.

Development, in view of the multifarious contextual usage of the concept, is a term which does not lend itself to a universal or ultimate definition. It simply can be described as an improvement or an advancement. It involves becoming more mature, more complete, more organized or more transformed. Todaro (cited in Usman, 2010, p. 845) sees development as a “multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system”. This involves, in addition to improvement in income and output, “radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as popular attitudes, customs and beliefs”.

Development, unlike economic growth which emphasizes numerical strength in terms of finances, physical infrastructure and other material resources, is more about the well-being of people. In the light of this, Sen (1999) is apt in his view. For him⁶, development should focus all but, in particular, society’s poorest. According to Sen (1999), development entails “a set of linked freedoms”. This includes political freedoms and transparency in relations between people, freedom of opportunity, including freedom to access credit. For Sen, human development, “is about the expansion of citizens’ capabilities” (p. 1). This is negated by poverty in which people “lack the most basic capabilities to lead a reasonable life”. Freedom means increasing citizens’ access and opportunities to the things that they have reason to value. Chief among these is security because every other thing is worthless without security.

Development is security and vice versa. Both are mutually-reinforcing. There are supporting evidences from around the world⁷. According to the Annual Prosperity Index (API) that the London (UK) — based Legatum Institute introduced in 2007, countries are ranked (from low to high prosperity) on the basis of their performance across eight equally weighted sub-indexes: economy, entrepreneurship and opportunity, governance, education, health, safety and security, personal freedom, and social capital. Seven out of these eight sub-indexes are more or less identical with the four criteria of the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG): sustainable economic opportunity, safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, and human development (education, health and welfare). The Human Development Index (HDI) introduced by the United

6 Amartya Sen, the Indian economist, philosopher and human development expert, was a Nobel Prize winner in Economics, in 1988, and has been widely cited for his views on development.

7 This study has selected the Annual Prosperity Index of Legatum Institute, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance and the annual UN HDI’s for their relative visibility. Six out of ten or 60 per cent respondents in a random survey among professors and students of Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, have deployed these documents for the purposes of research.

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 to measure standard of living (a crucial aspect of prosperity) uses three criteria, which overlap with four of the API sub-indexes: income per capita, health (longevity and life expectancy at birth), and education (literacy rate and combined gross enrolment ratio).

There is much resemblance in the above and the three pillars of prosperity identified by Adam Smith (1723–1790)⁸. According to Smith (cited in Adamolekun, 2016, p. 10), little else is required to carry a state to the highest level of opulence, “from the lowest barbarism”, but “peace, easy (to collect) taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice...” Viewed from this prism, it implies that the absence of peace tends to undermine the unity of a country as well as its development aspirations. Therefore, assuring peace and security within the territorial area of a state is an incontrovertible precondition for socio-economic development.

Corruption, especially the variant that involves elected and appointed public officials in Nigeria, is an issue which constantly forms part of any important discussion about the country. By various accounts such as those from Transparency International (TI), the Berlin, Germany-based global watchdog on anti-corruption, Nigeria is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The purpose of political participation for majority of its leaders or joining government services is not public service but access to state money and deployment of privileges for private ends⁹. In the light of this, it is hardly practicable to analyze any aspect of socio-economic life and public policy processes in contemporary Nigeria without referring to corruption, corruptive tendencies and the consequences.

The evidence summarized in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 shows that achieving prosperity, both in terms of human development and ensuring security, is an enormous challenge for Nigeria. The country has remained a low human development country from the 1990s to the first two decades of the twenty-first century, with no indication of a significant improvement soon. For Toyin Falola¹⁰, except some radical changes are made, Nigeria may be moving rapidly towards the brink.

8 Adam Smith, the eighteenth century economist, philosopher and author is widely cited for his classic, *The Wealth of Nations*.

9 Peter Ekeh, Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 17, no. 1 (1975) and Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Cambridge University Press, 1987 have elaborated Weberian (Max Weber, 1854–1920) themes on the abuse of government positions and resources for personal ends.

10 The author monitored a chat with Toyin Falola, the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin, on November 16, 2021, at a public lecture delivered by the latter in Ibadan, Nigeria.

In its selection of political culture, in which the prebendalist perspective is emphasized, for its analytic frame, the study notes that politics or the policy process is grounded in the nature of the society in which it takes place. The nature of politics or public policy in Nigeria is largely determined by the nature of the society, especially the values which govern behavior in public realm. This includes the implication of the premium placed on wealth, material possession and status in politics as well as the consequences of the highly plural and divided nature of the Nigerian society. Ekeh (1975) and Joseph (1987), both cited above, as well as Dudley (1982) have been widely cited for their works on the consequences of the nature of the Nigerian society in moulding the character of the state and the performance of its laws, regulations and policies¹¹.

Drawing from this is a Nigerian saying, “government’s business is no man’s business”, implying that the government is alien. Thus, there was nothing seriously wrong with stealing state funds, especially if they were used to benefit not only the individual but also members of his community. Those who had the opportunity to be in government were expected to use the power and resources of their disposal to advance these sectional interests. While they may have served the needs of the anti-colonial situation, since they originated from colonial rule, negative attitudes toward the state and government have, according to Osaghae (2002), become “the Achilles heel of the post-colonial state” (p. 21), and have caused many of the problems making Nigeria an example of a *soft state*¹², including corruption, scant regard for constitutional rule, the absence of a national society governed by common moral, cultural and behavioral norms.

This is unlike in the pre-colonial societies where, despite the importance of money, emphasis was more on moral values of integrity, honesty, selflessness and communal feelings. For example, among the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria, all of these were encapsulated in the *omoluabi* ethos, which personify an individual in whose conduct the society is satisfied not because of his/her material possession but because of being trustworthy, kind and endowed with personal discipline.

Attempts to address the debilitating perception and attitudes have achieved insignificant success. These have been largely admonitory and mobilisatory, and they include the Jaji Declaration of 1977 by General Olusegun Obasanjo, the ethical revolution program launched in 1982 by President Shehu Shagari, the anti-corruption and patriotism,

11 The views have helped in explaining the abuse of government positions and resources for personal ends in terms of patron-client relations. These disjunctures between state and society underline the legitimacy crisis which debilitates the state in Nigeria.

12 *Soft State* is concept deployed for describing countries and political systems afflicted by serious problems of capacity, including lack of capacity to guarantee security of life and property of its citizen, lack of ability to formulate and implement effective laws, lack of capacity to punish offenders appropriately and, by implication, lack of capacity to attain development aspirations.

discipline, self-reliance and mobilizing programs by the Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha military regimes of 1983–85, 1985–93 and 1993–98 respectively. There have been programs designed to address the causes and effects of the various challenges associated with internal security threats in Nigeria, especially since the reintroduction of civil rule in 1999. However, none has hardly actualized set goals because offenders appear to have a general feeling that they can hardly be caught, and if caught they can hardly be prosecuted and if prosecuted, they can hardly be punished appropriately.

Analysis of Status of Internal Security in Nigeria

Since about the mid-1970s, after the civil war, the greatest indication of the dire situation of Nigeria's internal security is the existence of what Odekunle (2010) described as a "crime problem". This implies crime passing from the normal or tolerable level to the pathological in which it becomes a *social problem*¹³(p. 740). With implications for the wellbeing and prosperity of the people, the criminality-scene in Nigeria is littered with assorted kinds of common theft, burglary, cheating, petty fraud in the markets, petrol/gas dispensing stations and other workplaces. There have been crimes of violence such as aggravated assault, armed robbery terrorism, insurgency, cattle rustling, banditry, abduction, kidnapping, human trafficking, trading in human parts and ritual killing. Others include economy-and-polity damaging elite and leadership offences such as corruption, embezzlement, large scale fraud, and money-laundering as well as organized crime such as smuggling, oil-bunkering, arms smuggling and oil pipeline destruction. There have been the usually unattended crimes of indiscipline and lack of law-abidingness epitomized by the conduct of vehicular and commercial motorbike road-users and even pedestrians¹⁴.

Apart from the debilitating impact of corruption, a phenomenon which, as stated above, underpins almost every serious social issue in Nigeria, the direct cost and consequences of the problem have been manifold for the population: material loss and/or personal distress caused by actual criminal victimization and unquantifiable but costly expenditure of scarce resources on anxious fear of, and precautionary care against, potential criminal victimization, among others. The credibility of the state in Nigeria has been questioned on occasions as to whether it can provide for the security of life and property

13 Professors Femi Odekunle and Rashidi Okuola, both criminologists, at different fora during the 50th independence celebrations of Nigeria, analysed the elements of a *socialproblem* in terms of incidence/prevalence, seriousness/quality, and recalcitrance to prevention and control.

14 Vehicular road-users often drive facing motorists from opposite directions on the Lagos-Ibadan Highway in traffic logjam, while in commercial cities, in particular, commercial tricyclists, and motorbike rides beat traffic light as pedestrians run across highways instead of using foot bridges.

of the citizen¹⁵. Yet, law-enforcement, justice-administration and correctional agencies have been unable to reduce the problem of crime to tolerable level. The response of successive governmental administrations has mostly been within the *law-and-order* conception of crime prevention, control and security strategy. Declaration of war against criminals, especially considered *draconian* and violative of human rights has been largely state-centric and in favor of the elites, the political class and political leadership¹⁶.

Despite the existence of the police, correctional and other specialized agencies including NEMA, NAFDAC, SON, NSCDC, ICPC and EFCC, the many occasions of acute internal insecurity — social/ethnic/religious and related strife, disorder and riots — have contributed in no small way to people's feeling of insecurity in Nigeria. The associated loss of lives and property as well as social dislocations among the affected population have worsened anxiety and apprehension among citizens and residents in general¹⁷.

Outstanding issues and challenges

While the foundation for achieving effective and efficient crime prevention and control and the enhancement of internal security in Nigeria may have been laid, in the structures of the agencies listed above, the country's internal security and, by implication, human development have deteriorated.

In this light, two main issues: remedial attention (development plans of successive administrations) and the fight against corruption are being examined in this section. Nigeria's policy documents in these specific areas are juxtaposed with the country's performance, in a decade, in the API, IAG, TI's CPI and UN's HDI. Consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic on security issues and other development aspirations in Nigeria are considered as circumstantial variables in the analyses.

15 Examples include the 2020 #ENDSARS protest against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigeria Police, and the agitation for the establishment of Regional Police by Separatists including Mr. Sunday Adeyemo Igboho.

16 Information gathered by the author and a doctoral student, during visits to Police cells and prisons (correctional centres), in parts of Ibadan and Lagos (Oyo and Lagos State respectively), February–October, 2020 showed that majority of detainees and those on *remand awaiting trial* were held for petty crimes, while "big time" offenders were hardly detained or remanded. Also visible is lack of rich, informative, valid and reliable data appropriately collected, collated and analysed for requisite knowledge projection and planning against criminality and, by implication, enhancement of security.

17 Seven out of ten or 70 per cent respondents in a survey, in Ibadan and Ede (Oyo and Osun State respectively), said they live in fear of being attacked. Also, there have been travel warnings for foreigners in Nigeria by foreign governments (see Travel. State. Gov. — US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs — October 29, 2021).

There are annual budgetary allocations to the security, health and education sub-sectors of Nigeria's national economy but certain policy documents have been selected for the analyses of remedial attention by successive administrations in the country. These are the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), 1999–2007; the seven-point Agenda and the Transformation Agenda, 2007–2010 and 2010–2015 respectively; and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), 2016 — date.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy was, according to the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2004), targeted at attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and designed to achieve four main goals: wealth creation; employment generation; poverty reduction; and value reorientation. The strategy to achieve these goals was anchored on certain strategies of empowering the people through health and other services, including safety nets and pensions, as well as changing the approach to government work through public sector reforms. The successors, seven-point agenda and transformation agenda, were not significantly different from NEEDS in that their objectives entail: transparency, accountability, enhanced service delivery and all that the country needs to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment (Yagboyaju, 2019, pp. 270–285). As in NEEDS, the latter programs were also aligned to both the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an initiative of the African Union (AU), and the MDGs (UN initiative).

The ERGP has been different, remarkably not in terms of its contents and context, but more in view of the approach to the actualization of the goals. The Social Investment Programme is the component that specifically focuses on poverty and unemployment reduction strategies¹⁸. These include the N-Power, the Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), the *TraderMoni*, *FarmerMoni* and the Anchor Borrowers Program, the latter being specifically for farmers. Government alone cannot employ most of the employable youth and, therefore, the programs above are designed to provide enabling environment for micro, small and medium enterprises to grow. Aiyede, Sha, Haruna, Olutayo, Ogunkola and Best (2015) have alluded to this assertion and, indeed, they are of the opinion that the programs should help in diversifying the national economy and lifting tens of millions out of poverty if they are effectively pursued.

Corruption, as noted in section 2.0 above, is a matter for serious concern both within and outside official circles in Nigeria. In 1996, the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) rated Nigeria as the most corrupt out of the 54 countries surveyed¹⁹.

18 Part of the telephone conversations with the Emeritus Professor of Civil-Military Relations and retired Professor of Strategic Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, on June 28, 2021.

19 Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 1996, https://images.transparenccydn.org/images/1996_CPI_EN.pdf. Nigeria has not improved significantly in subsequent surveys.

The Nigerian government, starting from 1999 under President Olusegun Obasanjo, adopted a multi-pronged anticorruption war by creating the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Due Process Office in the Presidency and, the Independent Corrupt Practices and related offences Commission (ICPC). There have been other bodies put in place and equipped at varying degrees for preventing, tracking and prosecuting financial crimes, in particular. Falola (2021) provides a somewhat comprehensive list, including “the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), Public Complaints Commission (PCC), Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), and Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML), Treasury Single Accounts (TSA), Bank Verification Numbers (BVN), and Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS)” (p. 270).

Regardless, there is very little to show in terms of prosperity and safety of the greatest number of citizens and residents in Nigeria. The country’s score and ranking in issues of sustainable economic opportunity, safety and rule of law, political participation and human rights, human development, social services and social capital, criteria deployed for prosperity and safety assessment by IAG, Legatum Institute and the UNDP, indicate consistent abysmal performance. It is hardly possible for Nigeria to attain internal security and development goals in the face of the challenges that the tables below imply.

Table 1: Nigeria’s Prosperity Assessment, 2010–2019

Year	Legatum Prosperity Index (Ranking of Countries)	Ibrahim Index of African Governance (Ranking)
2010	106 th out of 110	40 th out of 48; 43.0
2011	104 th out of 110	41 st out of 53; 43.4
2012	123 rd out of 142	43 rd out of 52; 44.9
2013	123 rd out of 142	41 st out of 52; 43.4
2014	125 th out of 142	37 th out of 52; 45.8
2015	125 th out of 142	36 th out of 54; 44
2016	136 th out of 142	35 th out of 54; 48.1
2017	132 nd out of 142	Not Available
2018	129 th out of 149	33 rd out of 54; 47.9
2019	148 th out of 167	Not available

Source: Author (based on information available on the websites of Legatum Institute and Mo Ibrahim Foundation, accessed on 16/02/2022)

Table 2: Nigeria’s Score and Ranking in HDI, 2010–2019

Year	Value	Ranking	Year	Value	Ranking
2010	0.493	158/177	2015	0.514	152/188
2011	0.499	156/187	2016	0.532	152/188
2012	0.505	153/186	2017	0.532	157/189
2013	0.511	153/187	2018	0.534	158/189
2014	0.514	145/187	2019	0.539	161/189

Source: Author (based on information available on the websites of UNDP)

* The bounce from GDP rebasing in 2014 accounts for the significant improvement in the scores since 2010 — the impact of GDP rebase was used to re-calculate the HDP up to 2010 on UNDP website, accessed on 16/02/2022. (The scores are out of a total of 1.0).

Table 3: Nigeria’s Score and Ranking in IAG, 2019 & average score, 2008–2018

CRITERIA	2019 (Ranking and Score)	2008–2018 Average Score
1. Sustainable Economic Opportunity (Infrastructure, Public Management, Business Environment, Rural Sector)	29 th (43.5%)	34.1%
2. Safety and Rule of Law (Personal Safety, National Security, Accountability, Rule of Law)	38 th (46.4%)	48.8%
3. Participation and Human Rights (Participation, rights, gender)	24 th (53.2%)	47%
4. Human Development (Education, Health, Welfare)	34 th (48.7%)	45.7%
OVERALL RANKING	36 th (47.9%)	43.2%

Source: Author (based on information available on the websites of Mo Ibrahim Foundation, accessed on 16/02/2022)

Table 4: Nigeria’s Ranking in Legatum’s Prosperity Report, 2018

Sub-Indices	2019 Ranking (Total = 167)
1. Economy: Macro-economic policies; economic satisfaction and expectations	157 th
2. Entrepreneurship and Opportunity: Entrepreneurial environment, promotion of innovative activity, and evenness of opportunity.	131 st
3. Governance: effective and accountable government, fair elections and political participation, rule of law.	126 th
4. Education: access to education, quality of education, and human capital	138 th
5. Health: basic health outcomes, health infrastructure, and preventive care	162 nd
6. Safety and Security: national security and personal security	157 th
7. Personal Freedom: individual freedom, and encouraging social tolerance	102 nd
8. Social Capital: social cohesion and engagement, and community and family networks.	69 th
OVERALL RANKING	148 th

Source: Author (based on information available on the websites of Legatum Institute, accessed on 16/02/2022).

Table 5: Nigeria's score and ranking in TI's CPI, 2010–2019

Year	CPI Score	Nigeria's CPI Ranking	Remarks
2010	2.4	134/178	44 th most corrupt
2011	24%	143/182	39 th most corrupt
2012	27%	139/174	35 th most corrupt
2013	25%	144/175	31 st most corrupt
2014	27%	136/174	38 th most corrupt
2015	26%	136/167	31 st most corrupt
2016	28%	136/176	35 th most corrupt
2017	27%	148/180	35 th most corrupt
2018	27%	144/180	34 th most corrupt
2019	26%	146/180	34 th most corrupt

Source: Author (based on data from the website of Transparency International, accessed on 16/02/2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic accounted for several measures, including movement restrictions and in certain instances, total lockdown around the country. These have had devastating consequences on living and livelihoods of the generality of Nigerians, especially the ordinary citizens who rely mostly on daily earnings. Government offices were shut²⁰, leaving certain cadres of officials physically in the office. Salaries were paid while the offices were shut, but this was not applicable to employees in the private sector, including banks, manufacturing industries and other businesses that were shut on government orders. Government provided palliatives and relief materials while support also came from donor agencies but this was insufficient and not sustainable.

A survey by the author among residents of urban and semi-urban settings in Ibadan, Oyo State, as well as group discussions with businesspeople in selected major food markets, including Moniya, Sasa, Bodija, Oje, Agbeni and Orita-Merin, in the capital city of Oyo State, and in Wuse and Gwarinpa markets, in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, immediately after relative normalcy returned in economic activities, indicated some serious issues. First, one out of ten respondents or 10 per cent among the employed is in the formal sector of the economy. It implies that nine or 90 per cent among the employed earn their living from the informal, out of which many live on daily wages. Secondly, four out of ten respondents or 40 per cent named people who were yet to return for business activities owing to reduction in capacities. For an economy that draws strength from the informal sector, it is not difficult to explain why poverty has become profound in Nigeria²¹,

20 Nigerian government response to COVID-19 Pandemic (<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/advisory/>).

21 Nigeria still capital of the World Poverty – This Day Live (<https://www.thisdaylive.com,09/06/2021>). The country was, for the first time, in 2018 ranked by the Brookings Institution as the Poverty Capital of the World.

and how this threatens internal security and the actualization of development goals in the country.

COVID-19 cases and deaths caused by the pandemic in Nigeria²² were among the lowest in Africa and, by far, lower than in the USA, Europe and Asia. Studies²³ have linked Nigeria's huge population of below age 40 both to the number of probable asymptomatic carriers and recovery rate. However, the country's ill-preparedness for the national health crisis which, for instance, was apparent by way of the "non-availability of 500 ventilators in a country of about 200 million" has implications for national security. For example, the interruptions in employment and subsequent layoffs, in particular for the youth, imply unpredictable chaos for society (Falola, 2021, p. 591).

Policy Recommendations/Conclusion

The following recommendations are structured in two parts: broad views involving civil society; and specific issues concerning individuals and government agencies.

- The treasures of the knowledge, skills and values possessed by indigenous people: as part of the introductory remarks of this paper, certain "small things that matter" were emphasized. One critical component of this is *understanding oneself* which, in the traditional Nigerian culture, largely include knowing and caring for one's neighbor. This has security implications in many dimensions. The civil society has a critical role in aggregating and articulating individual views of indigenes/citizens for policy formulation, implantation and implementation.
- Need for directional and transformational leaders: the need for directional leadership in actualizing development goals, key among which is internal security of the society, cannot be overemphasized. In a bottom-up approach, civil society can identify indigenes/ citizens with leadership qualities, nurtured from community to national levels.

In specific terms, immediate and long-term policy recommendations include:

- Restoration of the autonomy and functionality of public institutions. In this, directional leaders identified by the civil society should initially be the pivot around which strong and functional institutions would revolve. History across ancient, medieval

22 By February 17, 2022, this stood at 254, 137 and 3, 141 respectively (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>). This was lower than figures in many countries around Africa and much lower compared to the USA and countries around Europe and Asia

23 See, Ahmad Ibrahim Al-Mustapha *et al.*, Socio-Demographic Characteristics of COVID-19 Vaccine Receipts in Kwara State, North Central Nigeria (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.773998>, 05/01/22). Also, Sola Ogundipe, Young people most affected as COVID-10 impacts worsens unemployment in Nigeria (21/02/2022).

and contemporary societies is replete with examples of “strong men”, building strong institutions.

- Evidences from Australia and Germany among other countries that exited the lockdown effects of COVID-19 pandemic early are indicative of what strong institutions did. Also, the consistency in the high ranking of Finland, Sweden and Switzerland among others in the HDI, IIAG, CPI and Legatum Prosperity Index did not come as an accident. It is a result of discipline, commitment and purposiveness, being best practices for realising effective governance, which internal security partly stands for.
- The Social Investment Programme, a component of the ERGP which has been commended, must be sustained and strengthened in view of its relative success. For example, the *Farmermoni* and the Anchor Borrowers Programmes have been linked to recent bumper harvests in grains in Nigeria. The government bought off excess from the farmers, for the National Strategic Grain Reserve, and this enabled the release of 70,000 metric tonnes of grains to the poor and vulnerable, ordered by President Buhari in April 2020. This practicalises the usefulness of food storage and its connectivity to national security.
- The CCT and the Federal Government aided public schools feeding programme among others have been impactful but can be improved. These should be sustained.

Conclusion

Internal security has not significantly improved in Nigeria despite the 22 years of democratization, after the return to civil rule in 1999. Security and welfare of the people is declared in the constitution as the primary purpose of the government in Nigeria. However, successive administrations in the country have performed abysmally in such key areas as sustainable economic opportunities, rule of law, human rights and personal freedom, human and social capital development, which determine the wellbeing of the citizens and residents as well as the internal security of the country. Public institutions saddled with the responsibility of implementing policies for the realization of these goals are largely personalized and captured for the vested interests of the officials in charge and their acolytes. Problems of underdevelopment have been traced to the colonial beginnings of the state in Nigeria. However, the civil society, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and other NGOs have roles to play, by helping first in identifying directional and transformational leaders who are urgently needed in formulating and implementing policies for the actualization of development goals.

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