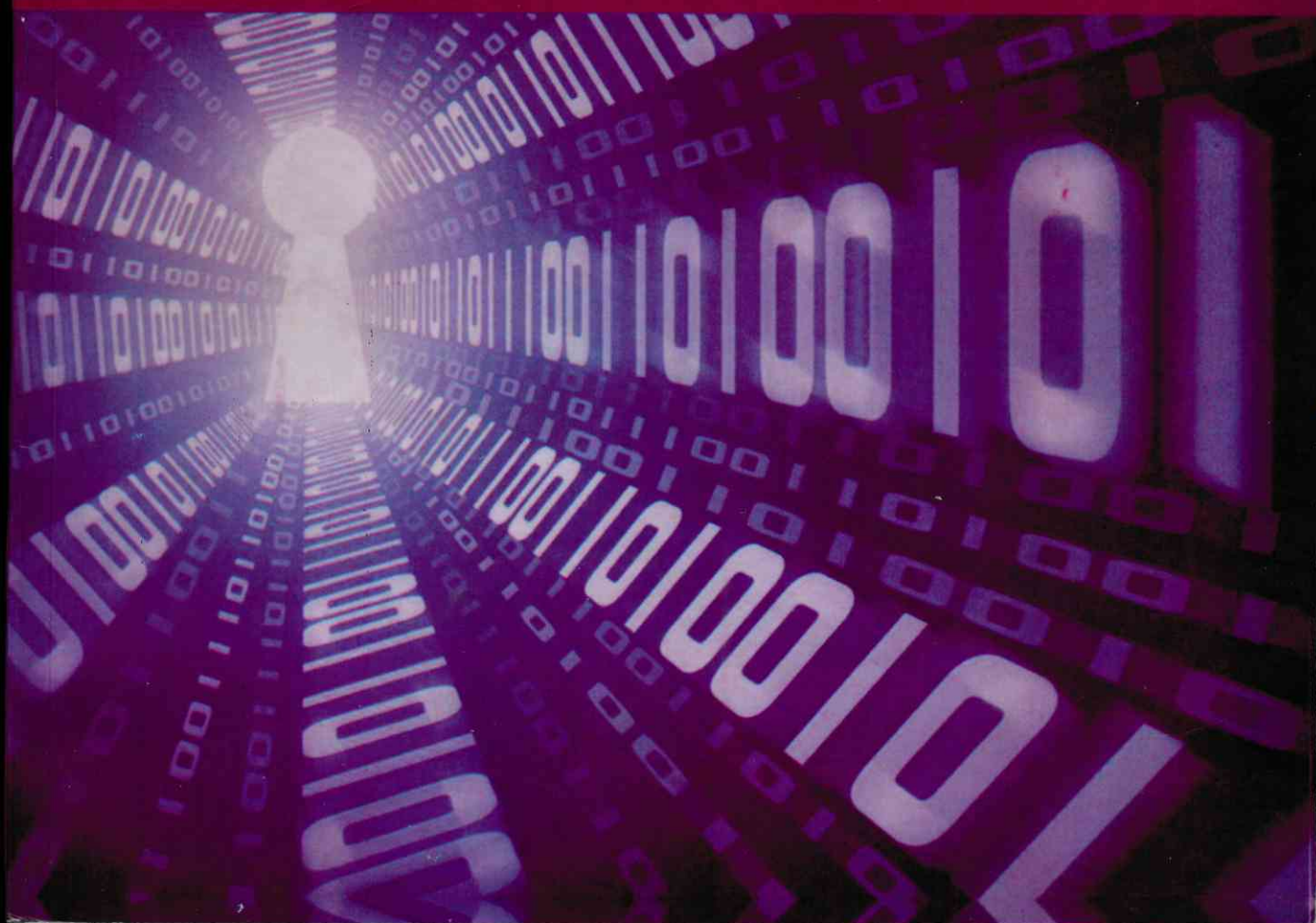


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## TRADITIONAL RULERS' POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP IN NIGERIA: A THREAT TO NATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

**Aigbovbioisa, Felix Ogbewe**

Peace and Development Studies Programme, Salem University, Nigeria  
E-mail: aigbovbioisa.ogbewe@salemuniversity.edu.ng;

**Balogun, Obasanjo Solomon**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin

**Itodo, Godwin Victor**

Criminology and Security Studies Programme, Salem University, Nigeria.

### Abstract

*The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, does not provide traditional rulers with any institutionalised political role in governance and administration. Hence, they are perceived and construed by their subjects and the general public as leaders who should remain apolitical. This is in contrast to the Nigerian pre-colonial era when traditional rulers wielded much political powers, and the colonial periods when traditional rulers were accorded constitutional responsibility on political matters in their domains. Even the post-colonial 1960 and 1963 Constitutions assigned certain political powers to the traditional rulers over matters in their domains which enabled them to better manage conflict and convoked peacemaking meetings when matters seemed out of hand and whatever outcomes of such meetings were respected by the subjects because traditional rulers' political powers then were well articulated in the enabling laws hence, were not seen as leaders who should be apolitical. This work, therefore, argues that lack of a clear-cut political responsibility for traditional rulers in the nation's current 1999 Constitution is responsible for traditional rulers' unbridled political partisanship that causes either real or imagined tension among the subjects/citizens, threatening peaceful co-existence, national peace and security. The work is essentially theoretical and qualitative hence, it utilised extant literature. It is recommended among others that government should develop constitutional frameworks that would either insulate traditional rulers completely from partisan politics or a clear-cut constitutional-political responsibility be given to them such that any infractions or ultravires by them could easily be spotted and violators dealt with accordingly.*

**Keywords:** Traditional Rulers, Political Partisanship, National Peace, Security

### Introduction

In African societies, traditional rulers are seen not only as representatives

of the gods and their mouth-piece; but also, as the custodians of the people's culture and symbols of unity to the subjects they rule. Following this logic,

therefore, traditional rulers are deemed to be "spiritual fathers" to everyone in their domains irrespective of ethnic, political, social and cultural inclinations. And the citizens understand this age-long revered tradition and thus hold it in high esteem. To this end, traditional rulers wielded much political powers in pre-colonial era and the various colonial and some post-colonial constitutions, particularly the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions gave certain political powers to the traditional rulers over political matters in their domains. Thus, deriving their political powers from the constitution, traditional rulers were not seen as leaders who should be apolitical and this afforded them to better able to manage conflict and convoked peacemaking meetings when matters seemed out of hand and whatever outcomes of such meetings were respected by the subjects and non-subjects alike in their domains.

### Literature Review

A traditional ruler or monarch is the person who heads a monarchy or kingdom or chiefdom, normally ruling for life, or until death, abdication, banishment or deposition. Some traditional rulers/monarchs ascend the throne as a result of being first in order of succession (primogeniture), while others may claim the throne by traditional selection or as a result of conflict. According to Jega (1994),

A traditional ruler is seen as a person who, by virtue of his ancestry, occupies the throne or stool of an area and/or who has been appointed to it in

accordance with the custom and tradition of an area and has traditional authority over the people of that area or any other person appointed by instrument and order of the government to exercise traditional authority over an area or ethnic group in the state recognised as such by the government of the state (as cited in Adesoji, 2010, p.417). Traditional rulers are, therefore, the official custodians of the knowledge systems of their people (Albert, 2006). It has its roots in its recognition by the people (Adekunle, 2011).

Historically, the traditional chieftaincy institution represented the focal point of the people's cultural, social, economic, political and spiritual engagements. Traditional rulers were the guardians of their various communities as well as the symbol of their collective aspirations in their pursuit for societal emancipation before the colonialism in Africa (Ashiru, 2010). Before the contact with the Western world in the 19th century and the establishment of the British and French colonial rule in most of Africa, traditional rulers were demigods. Not only were traditional rulers seen as all-in-all, they were more importantly seen as powerful deities who exercised significant influence in human affairs (Adesoji, 2010). In addition, in pre-colonial Africa, traditional rulers performed the tripartite functions of the executive, legislature as well as the judiciary (Braathen et al, 2000, Osei, 2010) and thus seen as absolute!

Traditional rulers in Nigeria do not only command respects from their subjects and even non-subjects alike, but are also accorded certain exclusive honours and privileges by the society. Such honours and privileges, according to Adekunle (2011) include gifts which come in various forms such as land, money, food, chattels, and even women on some occasions. The accorded prestige, even assume a larger-than-life image when a person is installed as an "Emir", "Igwe", "Oba" or "Obi" (Adekunle, 2011). This, therefore, explains partly, the reason traditional rulers in Nigeria get engrossed in partisan politics since politics determines allocation of powers and prestige in human society. The concept 'partisanship' from the word 'partisan', according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009) is defined as "strongly supporting a particular political party, plan, or leader, usually without considering the other choices carefully" (p.1270). Similarly, the Microsoft Encarta English Dictionary online defines the word 'partisan' as "a biased supporter: a strong supporter of a person, group, or cause especially one who does not listen to other people's opinions." Therefore, political partisanship conceptually would mean being sympathetic to the course of a political party and its candidate by deliberately drumming up public supports for such political party and its candidate while denouncing others either before or during an election.

Peace as a social concept frequently used in both the Social Sciences and Humanity, is relative; and therefore susceptible to different meanings and interpretations by different people according to biases. However, the

description of peace by Miller and King (2003) is key and germane to the understanding of the nuance of the concept 'peace'. The scholars described peace as a political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices and norms. Thus, the takeaway from the above description of peace is that peace as it were, is a conscious creation of man towards achieving a harmonious and prosperous society. This is why peace is described as a state of harmony characterised by the lack of violent conflict and absence of hostility. National peace therefore, may be described as 'a state of national harmony devoid of violent conflict and hostilities in the life of a nation.' According to Galtung (1964, 1969, as cited in Lamle & Aigbovbioisa, 2020), peace can be distinguished majorly in two folds – *negative* peace and *positive* peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence. Negative peace is simply the absence of violence, or more specifically, the absence of war. During a violent conflict, negative peace – stopping the violence is likely the immediate goal. However, as Galtung (1964, 1969) argues, violence includes more than direct – physical violence, and consequently a society might achieve peace in the negative sense without necessarily being peaceful because of the presence of structural, psychological and cultural violence (Lamle & Aigbovbioisa, 2020). One common feature of 'negative peace' is that people do not have liberty to exercise their rights; they are gagged and forced to remain calm despite the oppression of the state. Therefore, the people simply obey the state for fear of threat, force, oppression and other

negative tendencies by the state (Aigbovbioisa, 2018).

Notwithstanding these negative tendencies by the state to coerce the citizens to a state of total submission and docility, citizens often and usually ventilate their grievances either through occasional riots, violent protests and/or revolutions (Aigbovbioisa, 2018). This, of course, may be why Albert Einstein, the Theoretical Physicist, submits that "peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved and maintained by understanding" (Chukwura & Sylvester, 2008, p.3). Thus, the axiomatic submission of the renowned scientist, Albert Einstein, is in direct consonance with the idea of 'positive peace' as coined by Galtung (1969) and espoused by the Peace Studies Perspective. 'Positive peace' ensures the absence of physical, psychological and structural violence with the presence of social justice. 'Positive peace' guarantees and promotes freedom, happiness and social inclusiveness of citizens of the state in the scheme of things hence, everyone is always willing to obey the state without being forced to do so (Aigbovbioisa, 2018). Therefore, for peace to be seen or tagged "positive", it must and usually connote the absence of physical, structural and psychological violence plus social justice. Even though absence of conflict is impossible in human activities, any social condition outside the above conditions is termed "negative peace".

Security in its natural habitat simply means safety – the safety of men, groups, nations, and the world from harm and danger (Nwolise, 2013). According to Odoma (2015), "the term 'security' is ubiquitous as it pervades every facet of

human endeavour. We can talk of personal security, public security, job security, food security, communication security, national security, global security" (p. 403). Therefore, in a narrow or restrictive sense, the concept of national security would mean the protection of a nation from attack or other danger by maintaining adequate armed forces and guarding state secrets (Alao, 2012). The concept of 'national security' was first mentioned in the United States, following its usage in the Clark Memorandum of 1928. The effective use of the phrase "national security" as a modern English term however, began after the Second World War (1939-1945) when it became the guiding principle of the United States' foreign policy from July 26, 1947, the date President Harry Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947 (Nwolise, 2013; Simons, 2009).

Before the end of the Cold War, scholars have, for several generations, interpreted and restricted the understanding and meaning of the concept 'security' to the security of the nation-state and not the people (Danjibo, 2013). During this era, what was paramount and most important was that the state be secured from both external and internal aggressions (Danjibo, 2013; Gaddis, 1989). This was however, a traditional view of what the concept of security entailed – that is, the security of the state with little or no regard for the security of the people who inhabit the state (Danjibo, 2013). Today, however, the conception of 'national security' has far gone beyond this traditional nuance of the concept. It now places more premium or emphasis on the people themselves who inhabit the state and jettisons to some extent, the old

paradigm that national security is achieved once a state is free from both internal and external aggression. The new paradigm of 'national security' now supports the argument that events within a state are capable of shaping and defining the security or otherwise of a state. To this end, threats to the concept 'national security', according to the new paradigm, now embody internal social problems and cross-border activities that can throw the country off balance.

In Nigeria, for instance, such internal social problems and cross-border activities that can throw the country off balance include:

- i. Unguarded sensational inciting political statements and conducts by most traditional rulers, especially during electioneering periods in Nigeria;
- ii. The protracted and intractable Boko Haram insurgency prominent in the Northeast of Nigeria;
- iii. The traumatic banditry activities pervading and ravaging the entire Northwest of the country;
- iv. The incessant farmers-herders clashes in the North-central of the country;
- v. The Niger-Delta militancy in the South-South of the country;
- vi. The intermittent tensions from the proscribed Indigenous People Of Biafra (IPOB) in the Southeast of the country;
- vii. The menacing activities of some members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in the Southwest of the country;
- viii. The incessant politically-induced inter-ethnic and religious antagonism/intolerance among the citizens;
- ix. Perceived gross marginalisation of some ethnic groups due to unbridled and primordial considerations in political appointments and situation of developmental infrastructures/projects by political office holders;
- x. Hunger crisis arising from food shortage due to largely subsistence nature of agricultural practices cum insecurity threatening farming activities, especially in the north;
- xi. Cybercrime and the uncharitable activities of internet fraudsters popularly called 'yahoo boys';
- xii. corruption;
- xiii. Pervious and porous international borders that encourage cross-border illegal arms trafficking and drugs peddling;
- xiv. Nefarious and obnoxious activities of violent cattle rustlers and smugglers on the nation's border corridors; and
- xv. Outbreak of epidemics and pandemics such as Ebola and the current Coronavirus (Covid 19) wrecking havoc across the globe, etc.

From the foregoing therefore, national security in Nigeria, "as in most of Africa, is not threatened by conventional threats of armed attack by other countries" but by more menacing measures "many of which flow from the very weakness of the state and its absence of control over its own territory..." (Workshop on Human Security in West

Africa, 2001, as cited in Pogeson, 2013, p.21).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Meriam (1998, as cited in Olorunnisola, 2008), sees theoretical framework as the use of relevant existing theories as a platform for investigating and/or explaining a phenomenon under study...it is 'the lens' through which the researcher views the world. In a like manner, Kerlinger (1979, as cited in Olorunnisola, 2008), sees theoretical framework as a "systematic account of the relations among a set of variables." In addition, according to Danjibo (2014), "theories are considered to be established and tested hypothetical facts that provide frameworks of analysis for any academic research work" (p.53). Therefore, the theory that was reviewed in line with the subject of this study and upon which the work is anchored is the Conflict perspective.

The conflict perspective, which is championed by scholars like Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), Ralf Dahrendorf (1928-2009), etc., sees the social world in continual struggle. The conflict perspective assumes that social behaviour is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups. Conflict perspective concentrates on issues of power, inequality and struggle. Conflict theorists tend to visualise the society as composed of distinct groups pursuing their respective distinct interests. The existence of separate interests means that the potential for conflict is always present and that certain groups will benefit more than others. To this end, conflict theorists

examine the tensions between dominant and disadvantaged groups within society and seek to understand how relationships of control are established and perpetuated.

In his classic work, "Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society" (1959), Dahrendorf argues that:

Functionalist thinkers only consider one side of society – those aspects of social life where there is harmony and agreement. Just as important, or more so, are areas marked by conflict and division as conflict emanates mainly from different interests that individuals and groups have" (Giddens, 2003, p.17)

While Marx saw differences of interest mainly in terms of class, Dahrendorf relates them more broadly to authority and power. In all societies, however, there exists a division between those who hold authority and those who are largely excluded from it, between rulers and ruled (Giddens, 2003). Expanding on Marx's idea, sociologists and other social scientists have come to perceive conflict not merely as a class phenomenon but as a part of everyday life in all societies. Thus, in studying any culture, organisation, or social group, sociologists want to know who benefits, who suffers, and who dominates at the expense of others (Schaefer, 2003). Conflict theorists are, therefore, interested in how society's institutions – including the family, government, religion, education, and the media – may help to maintain the privileges of some groups and keep others in subservient positions.

Thus, a look at the foregoing conflict theory, the theory reveals the subjective reason traditional rulers engage in political partisanship during Nigerian elections which is to attract relevance and/or gain personal aggrandisement; while also giving us better and clearer insights as to why traditional rulers' political partisanship in Nigerian electioneering processes causes tension and threat to the citizens' peaceful co-existence and by extension, national peace and security.

### **Traditional Rulers' Political Partisanship: An Aberration?**

In African societies, traditional rulers are seen not only as representatives of the gods and their mouth-piece, but also as the custodians of the people's culture and symbols of unity to the subjects they rule. Following this logic, therefore, traditional rulers are deemed to be "spiritual fathers" to everyone in their domains irrespective of ethnic, political, social and cultural inclinations. And the citizens understand this age-long revered tradition and thus hold it in high esteem. To this end, traditional rulers wielded much political powers in pre-colonial era, and even the various colonial and some post-colonial constitutions, particularly the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions gave certain political powers to the traditional rulers over political matters in their domains and this made traditional rulers relevant politically. For instance, the Richard's Constitution, according to Fajonyomi, (1997, as cited in Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2015), established Houses of Assembly in the three regions and a House of Chiefs in the North. Moreover, the Houses of Assembly composed of

both official and unofficial members: official members were appointed by the Governor while the unofficial members were selected by the traditional rulers or Natives Authorities among themselves. Even under the McPherson Constitution of 1951, traditional rulers were allowed input in the selection of members of regional Houses of Assembly. This was in addition to the establishment of Regional Houses of Chiefs both in the North and West respectively. It was the Littleton Constitution of 1954 that somehow reduced the constitutional powers of traditional rulers both at the federal and regional levels (Fajonyomi, 1997, as cited in Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2015).

Following the provisions of the Littleton Constitution, traditional rulers' input was no longer sought in the appointment of members to the two Federal Houses; although at the regional level, there were still Houses of Chiefs that performed legislative functions. "The 1960 and 1963 Constitutions both created a Council of Chiefs at the regional level and some of them were even appointed regional governors" (Fajonyomi, 1997, as cited in Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2015, p.36). Specifically, the 1963 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria made provision that each region has a House of Chiefs on a second chamber upper House to the House of Assembly with which it shares the legislative power of the state (Orji & Olali, 2010). Thus, deriving their political powers from the constitution, traditional rulers were better able to manage conflict and convoked peacemaking meetings when matters seemed out of hand and whatever outcomes of such meetings were respected by the subjects and non-subjects alike in their domains.

However, from the 1979 Constitution to the current 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, traditional rulers have not been accorded constitutional powers in governance and administration of Nigeria as were in the previous constitutions. Even though the 1979 Constitution under section 178 established Traditional Council of Chiefs, it however, attenuated the political powers of traditional rulers because it was basically advisory. According to the Third Schedule to the 1979 Constitution,

A Council of Chiefs shall comprise a chairman and such number of persons as may be prescribed by Law. The Council shall have power to advise the Governor on any matter relating to customary law or cultural affairs; inter-communal relations and chieftaincy matters. The Council shall also have power to advise the Governor whenever requested to do so on: the maintenance of public order within the State or any part thereof; and such other matters as the Governor may direct.

Sadly, too, the current 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, does not even provide traditional rulers with any political role in governance and administration of Nigeria. Hence, they are perceived and construed by their subjects and the general public as leaders who should remain apolitical. This being so, the citizens' perceive and construe traditional rulers as custodians of the

people's culture, symbols of unity, and "spiritual fathers" of all. They should, by their status, remain apolitical while discharging their traditional responsibility and neutrality required of them, in order to be able to dowse and mitigate tensions of any magnitude, including the ones occasioned by electoral convulsions among the citizens before and during elections. But conversely, traditional rulers themselves are now active players of politics in Nigeria. Thus, this is seen as adding impetus to the often saturated political atmosphere by their level of overzealous partisanship. This act of partisanship often polarises the subjects (indigenes/non-indigenes) alike in their domains into opposing groups, thereby threatening peaceful co-existence, and by extension, national peace and security.

For instance, during the 2016 gubernatorial election in Edo state, a traditional ruler, Zaiki Anselm Adonjio II (the Ojuromi of Uromi) in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, according to *The Punch*, (November 9, 2016) was suspended for seven days in the first instance over what the Edo State Government considered 'overt political partisanship' and assault on one Ms. Betty Okoebor at Ward 4 Polling Unit, Uromi in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State and was ordered by the Edo State Government to apologise to the lady of which the royal father declined and this eventually earned him (the royal father) one year suspension by the Edo State Government under the then outgoing Governor Adams Oshiomhole.

According to *The Guardian*, (November 20, 2016), the Edo State Government accused the royal father of

gross political partisanship by moving from polling unit to polling unit in Uromi with the aim of influencing votes in favour of his choice political party and candidate and in the circumstance, got challenged by one of his subjects, Ms. Betty Okoebor whom the royal father was reported to assault in return. This got the Edo State Government under the then outgoing Governor Adams Oshiomhole infuriated hence, government's reaction in that manner. The Ojuromi's suspension by Governor Oshiomhole-led administration was said to be in accordance with Section 28(1) of the Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Law of 1979 (*The Guardian*, November 20, 2016). It however, took the intervention of Governor Godwin Obaseki who succeeded Governor Adams Oshiomhole to reinstate the traditional ruler to his ancestral throne.

In the build up to the 2019 presidential and gubernatorial elections, traditional rulers in Cross River State under the auspices of the Cross River Traditional Rulers Council held a meeting and came up with an instructive statement that the royal fathers in the state were giving their unalloyed supports to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its governorship candidate – Prof. Ben Ayade, insisting that Cross River is wholly a PDP state (*Daily Post*, December 19, 2018). Equally, during electioneering campaigns preceding the 2019 presidential election, and after the presidential election, in which President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) was declared winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the respected Oba of Lagos, Oba Rilwan Akiolu – in a bid to show his support for

the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its presidential candidate – President Muhammadu Buhari, made some partisan public remarks on former president Olusegun Obasanjo for supporting the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. According to *The Guardian* (May 16, 2019), “the Oba took a jibe at Nigeria former President Olusegun Obasanjo who he described as a problem creator for the country for opposing the re-election of President Muhammadu Buhari.”

Similarly, *The Punch* (May 16, 2019) quoted Oba Akiolu as saying:

The claim by former President Olusegun Obasanjo prior to the election that Buhari would not win the election because he did not support him had been neutralised by the president's triumph. Obasanjo had always arrogated to himself the divine power to determine the country's leaders, adding that Buhari's victory in the last election had demystified him. I had said that Buhari would win even before the election; unfortunately, the number one person creating problems in this country is former President Obasanjo. He arrogated to himself the powers of the Almighty Allah by saying it was the support he gave to Buhari that made him win the first term. Obasanjo said Buhari would not win the second term but did Buhari not win? Did I not say Obasanjo will be disappointed by the time the results were announced?

Earlier in 2015, the same Oba of Lagos, Oba Rilwan Akiolu was reported to have made a disturbing statement that most Nigerians considered rather inciting, inflammatory, sensational and uncomplimentary of his personality as a royal father who ought to be a "father to all" in his domain regardless of ethnic, political, social and cultural inclinations. In the statement, the respected Oba had threatened Igbo residents in Lagos to the effect that "any Igbo who would not vote for Mr. Akinwumi Ambode – governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) party would be drowned in the Lagos Lagoon." According to *The Cable* (April 6, 2015), Oba Akiolu was quoted to have threatened the Igbo residents in Lagos:

If anyone of you goes against Ambode who I picked, that is your end. If it doesn't happen within seven days, just know that I am a bastard and it is not my father who gave birth to me. On Saturday, if anyone of you, I swear in the name of God, goes against my wish that Ambode will be next governor of Lagos state, the person is going to die inside this water.

In the same vein, the electioneering campaigns that preceded the Edo gubernatorial election of Saturday, September 19, 2020 has equally witnessed barrage of partisan comments and actions from some traditional rulers in the state. According to *Vanguard* (August 14, 2020),

The leading candidates for the September 19 governorship election in Edo State, Governor Godwin Obaseki of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP; and Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu of the All Progressive Congress, APC are in a rat race of sorts for the support of traditional rulers in the state. Since the campaigns started, the duos have received a flood of royal blessings, endorsements and titles, which their campaign councils have bandied separately as having the support of the grassroots.

For instance, after conferring *Onoshiorena* of Uzairue (he that God has crowned) chieftaincy title on Governor Obaseki and installing the Deputy Governor, Comrade Philip Shaibu, as the *Oshiozekhai* (it is God that chooses) of Uzairue at his palace, the Ogieneni of Uzairue, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Kadiri Imonikhe Omogbai IV said: "your deputy is from this place and he is my son...I promise you that Uzairue people will give you 100 per cent vote..." (*Vanguard*, August 14, 2020).

In a related development, the Otu of Igarra, High Chief Joseph Mayaki Akpeji, according to Prince John Mayaki, Chairman, Edo State APC Media Campaign Council for that election, donated the sum of one million naira to Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu, and his running mate, Mallam Gani Audu. He is said to have made the donation on behalf of the Eziobe Traditional Council, Akoko Edo, on Thursday, 13 August, 2020 when the APC candidate visited his palace (*Vanguard*, August 14, 2020).

From the foregoing, the causes of traditional rulers' political partisanship in Nigeria can be summarised thus:

- i. Traditional rulers are involved in partisan politics in Nigeria, because they have a history of wielding traditional and constitutional cum political powers which the current 1999 Constitution as amended no longer allow them;
- ii. Lack of constitutional regulatory provisions for traditional rulers' conducts in politics;
- iii. Consideration of primordial sentiments/affinity with political office holders;
- iv. Anticipation of economic and social gains from the patronage;
- v. Fear of being demoted/deposed by incumbent or in-coming government should they behave otherwise;
- vi. Fear of the unknown if demoted or deposed by the incumbent or in-coming government if they refuse to show supports; and
- vii. Erroneous beliefs on the part of politicians that acceptance by traditional rulers of them translates to acceptance by their subjects of their candidatures. This is why politicians often have the penchant for dragging traditional rulers into making publicly sensational political statements, remarks and conducts espousing their candidatures.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

It should be noted from the foregoing that, incumbent political office

holders do not often react defiantly or negatively to traditional rulers' political partisanship if such action is in their favour; rather, they applaud it and tag themselves 'the people's choice.' The above cited cases of traditional rulers' political partisanship are just but a few, as similar cases abound in the country, especially during election campaigns and these often polarise their subjects (indigenes/non-indigenes alike) in the affected polity into opposing groups and generates real or imagined tensions, threatening the citizens' peaceful co-existence, and leading to a wave of national insecurity.

Since campaigns preceding elections in Nigeria are usually marked by pettiness, intolerance and violence, traditional rulers should realise that they are the custodians of people's culture, symbols of unity, and 'spiritual fathers' to all. So, they should stop showing open sympathy and solidarity with preferred choices of political parties and candidates, especially during courtesy calls on them by politicians during electioneering periods. Naturally, they should be seen as ones to douse and mitigate tensions, of any magnitude including the ones occasioned by electoral convulsions, among the citizens during elections.

Alternatively, traditional rulers should be recognised and empowered constitutionally as did the previous pre and some immediate post-colonial constitutions, which allotted certain political powers and privileges to them while they kept to it without necessarily acting beyond their given constitutional powers and privileges. This way, traditional rulers would know their constitutional powers, privileges as well as their limits such that any act of

infractions or ultravires by them would immediately be known and violators dealt with accordingly.

Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Laws of every state that usurped the various traditional mechanisms of checkmating erring traditional rulers in Nigeria and vested such powers on government should be repealed and return to status quo. The continued retention of such laws makes traditional rulers vulnerable before the politicians. Thus, such functions by these laws could be given back to the Council of Chiefs of every community as practiced in pre-colonial Nigeria.

Traditional rulers should stop making mockery and caricature of their highly sacred and revered thrones. They should desist from fraternising with the politicians for favour and contracts, and influencing employment opportunities for their subjects, which in turn makes it "obligatory" for them (traditional rulers) to often indulge in galvanising, against all odds, political supports for the politicians during electioneering periods in Nigeria.

Lastly, politicians should, in the interest of peaceful co-existence, desist from the penchant of dragging traditional rulers into making publicly sensational political statements and remarks espousing their candidatures while denouncing others. This act often generates real or imagined tensions and conflicts among the traditional rulers' subjects and the general public alike in the Nigerian polity.

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