


Chapter 14

Traditional Institutions and Security Management in the Niger–Delta Region of Nigeria: Periscopic Appraisal of Akwa– Ibom and Delta States

Edidiong Akpabio

Trinity University, Nigeria

Efehi Raymond Okoro

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5373-4780>

University of Benin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Across the globe, traditional institutions have continually played a centripetal role in the governance structure of states. This involvement in the political structure of states by non-state actors has become more expedient for states in the developing world grappling with security infractions and dislocations. For Nigeria, which has become increasingly famous for security infractions, this work appraises the role of the traditional institution in security management by using qualitative methods.

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INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Over the years, Nigeria's Niger-Delta region has suffered and continues to suffer one security infraction after the other. From armed banditry, militancy, sea piracy, hostage taking, and cult clashes to a plethora of other negatives, the region has always been in a state of uneasy calm. Hence, it will not be out of place to state that the security disruptions in the region are oiled by crude oil, which she is richly endowed with. This region, laden with an abundance of oil resources, has been referred to as the lifeline of the Nigerian economy as the crude oil that the nation trades on to keep its economy afloat is domiciled there (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). This demonstrates the relevance of the region to the Nigerian State. However, despite the significant role she plays in oiling the machinery of the State, she has been riddled with insecurities for several decades. This State of affairs, apart from being worrisome, can produce detrimental outcomes if not nipped in the bud, hence the utilitarian functionality of this paper as a blueprint that can serve as Nigeria's bailout strategy in the area of security management in the Niger-Delta region.

Granted that the government has adopted conventional approaches towards combating the rising tide of insecurities in the Niger-Delta, what she seems to have failed to do is to promote the use of community based initiatives such as the traditional institutions to tackle the rising spate of insecurities in that clime. It is essential to put the concept of traditional institutions into proper perspective to set the tone for this discourse while promoting clarity in our use of terms. Who, then, is a traditional leader? A traditional leader is any individual who occupies a place of authority and is recognized by the people (Kurebwa, 2020). We must understand that traditional rulers play a significant role in promoting peace and fostering cohesion (Igwubor, 2020); this view is supported by Akinwunmi et al., who described traditional institutions as a potent instrument for managing security breaches or infractions (Akinwunmi et al., 2023). Hence, failure to sufficiently engage them would short-change the existing security strategies and deliberately exacerbate pre-existing insecurities.

It is worth noting that in some African states, the intersection between traditional institutions and modern governance structures has been clearly enunciated, while in others, it remains shrouded in ambiguity (Fuseini, 2021). However, this denial or exclusion of such an important security partner negates the views of Mawere et al., who posited that as far as the African continent is concerned, the traditional institution remains highly relevant to her governance structures and security management (Mawere et al., 2022). This is largely because they have a stake in their domiciled societies (Cheka, 2008). In the words of Bennet, although in the past their roles were contested, recent happenings have brought to the fore their relevance in security management (Bennet, 2013).

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