

TRADITIONAL RULERS AND CITIZENS' RESPONSES TO BORDER SECURITY CHALLENGES IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive literature review examining the roles of traditional rulers and citizens in responding to border security challenges in Taraba State, Nigeria. Situated at the tripoint boundary of Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad, Taraba State faces acute cross-border insecurities, including armed banditry, Fulani-farmer conflicts, cattle rustling, small arms proliferation, and transnational criminal networks. The paper argues that traditional rulers, as custodians of customary authority and community trust, occupy a critical yet undertheorized space in Nigeria's security architecture. Drawing from hybrid governance theory, community policing theory, and the human security framework, the review synthesises empirical evidence from 2019 to 2025 to assess the extent to which indigenous governance structures complement formal state mechanisms in managing border threats. The paper identifies persistent gaps in the literature regarding the gendered dimensions of border insecurity, the digital transformation of traditional authority, and the accountability mechanisms governing non-state security actors. The paper concludes that sustainable border security in Taraba State requires the institutionalisation of traditional rulers and citizen-based platforms within formal security governance frameworks.

Keywords: Traditional Rulers, Border Security, Citizens, Responses, Taraba State, Hybrid Governance, Community Policing, Nigeria.

Introduction

Border security constitutes one of the most pressing dimensions of national security for sub-Saharan African states. Nigeria's geopolitical position as a country sharing approximately 4,047 kilometres of land borders with Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon exposes its frontier communities to complex and evolving security threats (Ugwueze & Nwangwu, 2021). Among Nigeria's federating units, Taraba State occupies a uniquely sensitive position, sharing extensive borders with Cameroon to the east and southeast, and interfacing with Benue and Nassarawa States to the south and west. This geographic configuration renders Taraba State a critical security flashpoint, one marked by recurring episodes of communal violence, cross-border herder-farmer conflicts, cattle rustling, small arms proliferation, and the infiltration of armed non-state actors (Ezeibe et al., 2023).

The formal security institutions of the Nigerian state, including the Nigeria Police Force, the military, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), have demonstrated persistent structural limitations in effectively policing Nigeria's porous borders. Inadequate

personnel deployment, logistical deficits, corruption, and the sheer physical expanse of ungoverned border spaces have undermined the capacity of formal security agencies to contain cross-border threats (Obi, 2022). This institutional vacuum has, in practice, elevated the salience of non-state and informal security actors, particularly traditional rulers and organised citizens' groups.

Traditional rulers in Nigeria, comprising first-class obas, emirs, sultans, and second and third-tier chiefs, have historically served as critical intermediaries between the state and local communities. Their authority derives not merely from statutory recognition but from deeply embedded cultural legitimacy, territorial knowledge, and communal trust networks that formal security agencies often lack (Omenma et al., 2020). In Taraba State, where ethnic heterogeneity is pronounced, traditional rulers have served as conflict mediators, intelligence sources, and mobilisers of community vigilance in the face of border insecurity. Yet their roles remain systematically underexamined in the scholarly literature on Nigerian security governance.

Citizens' responses to border insecurity constitute an equally important, though analytically neglected, dimension of security provision. Drawing from social mobilisation literature and securitisation theory, recent empirical work has documented how affected communities in Nigeria's border zones have developed autonomous and semi-formalised responses to security threats, including community vigilante groups, neighbourhood watch committees, and cross-border early warning systems (Okoli & Uhembe, 2022; Mohammed & Sule, 2023). These citizen-based mechanisms often operate in complex relationships with both traditional authority and formal state institutions, raising important questions about accountability, legitimacy, and coordination.

Against this backdrop, this seminar paper undertakes a systematic literature review to examine three interrelated questions: (1) What is the nature and character of border security challenges in Taraba State? (2) How have traditional rulers responded to these challenges, and what governance roles do they perform? (3) How have citizens in Taraba State responded to border insecurity, and how do their responses intersect with traditional authority and formal state structures? By addressing these questions, the paper contributes to the broader academic and policy discourse on hybrid security governance, community-based security, and the reform of Nigeria's border management architecture.

Conceptual Clarification

Traditional Rulers and Security Governance

The concept of traditional rulership in Africa defies a monolithic definition. In Nigeria, traditional rulers are constitutionally recognised under state-level laws as custodians of culture and custom, though the 1999 Constitution (as amended) grants them no formal executive powers (Nolte & Odalonu, 2021). Their authority is rooted in pre-colonial political structures that survived colonialism, the consolidation of the Nigerian federation, and multiple waves of military and civilian governance. For analytical purposes, this paper adopts Osaghae's (2019) typology of traditional rulers as encompassing: (a) constitutional monarchs with gazetted first-class stool recognition; (b) sub-traditional rulers exercising authority at clan and village levels; and (c) community heads functioning within ward-level governance structures.

Security governance, as conceptualised by Luckham and Kirk (2023), refers to the ensemble of actors, norms, rules, and practices through which security services are produced, delivered, regulated, and made accountable. In the context of border security, governance encompasses not only the activities of formal security agencies but also the informal rules, customary norms, and community practices through which frontier populations manage threats to their physical safety and livelihoods. Traditional rulers, in this framework, constitute governance actors by virtue of their roles in intelligence gathering, conflict mediation, community mobilisation, and the enforcement of customary norms that regulate cross-border interactions. The literature increasingly recognises that in fragile or post-conflict settings where state capacity is limited, traditional institutions perform governance functions that would otherwise be monopolised by formal state agencies (Boege et al., 2020). In northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt, where formal governance deficits are particularly acute, this observation has particular resonance. Traditional rulers in Taraba State, for instance, have been documented as facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue between Fulani herders and Jukun, Tiv, and Mumuye farming communities, functions that directly bear on border stability (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2022).

2.2 Citizens' Agency in Border Security

Citizens' agency in security governance denotes the capacity of ordinary community members to actively engage in the production, monitoring, and enforcement of their own security in the face of state inadequacy (Bagayoko et al., 2023). This concept diverges from passive conceptions of citizenship that position individuals merely as recipients of state-provided security. Instead, it foregrounds the agentic roles played by community members through participation in vigilante groups, self-help associations, early warning networks, and advocacy platforms that shape the security landscape of border areas.

In the Nigerian context, citizens' security agency has been most prominently examined in relation to the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the northeast, the Amotekun security corps in the southwest, and various community vigilante formations across the Middle Belt (Okereke, 2021). These formations reflect a spectrum of citizen-led responses, ranging from organic grass-roots mobilisations to state-sanctioned community policing arrangements. In Taraba State, citizens' responses to border insecurity have taken similarly diverse forms, including the establishment of local vigilante units along high-risk corridors, the formation of inter-community peace committees, and participation in intelligence-sharing arrangements with formal security agencies.

It is important to note, however, that the citizens' security agency is not uniformly benign. Several studies have documented instances where community vigilante groups have perpetuated ethnic profiling, engaged in extrajudicial violence, and become enmeshed in criminal networks (Boas & Henriksen, 2021; Kwaja, 2022). This ambivalence underscores the necessity of examining citizens' responses to border insecurity within a framework that attends to both their potential contributions and their attendant risks for human rights and democratic governance.

2.3 Border Security and the State

Border security, in its conventional formulation, refers to the suite of measures employed by state authorities to monitor, regulate, and control the movement of persons, goods, and

contraband across national frontiers (Williams, 2022). In Nigeria, border security falls primarily under the mandate of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Police Force, and the Nigerian military. However, as Adunbi (2023) observes, the effective governance of Nigeria's land borders requires understanding of the distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* border control: while sovereignty over borders is formally vested in the state, the practical management of cross-border movement in remote frontier communities has long been mediated by informal actors, including traditional rulers, market associations, and community militia.

Taraba State's borders with Cameroon are particularly complex due to their historical entanglement with the Bakassi dispute, the presence of Cameroonian Fulani communities with ancestral ties to Nigerian territory, and the operation of informal cross-border trade networks that predate the postcolonial territorial settlement (Ngang, 2022). These structural features mean that border security in Taraba cannot be reduced to the technical management of boundary demarcation but must be understood as a socio-political problem requiring engagement with the informal governance arrangements that structure cross-border life for millions of people.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Hybrid Governance Theory

Hybrid governance theory, as articulated by Boege, Brown, and Clements (2009) and subsequently developed by Meagher (2012) and Luckham and Kirk (2023), provides the primary theoretical lens for this review. The theory posits that in many post-colonial states, governance is not the exclusive province of formal state institutions but is produced through the interaction of multiple, overlapping orders of authority, including customary institutions, religious authorities, civil society organisations, and non-state armed groups. These different orders do not simply coexist in parallel but interact in dynamic, often contested, and sometimes productive ways.

Applied to the analysis of border security in Taraba State, hybrid governance theory directs analytical attention to the interplay between formal security agencies and traditional authority structures. It enables the reviewer to move beyond a state-centric security paradigm and recognise the governance value embedded in traditional institutions, while simultaneously maintaining critical awareness of the tensions, power asymmetries, and accountability gaps that may characterise hybrid arrangements. The theory is particularly well-suited to the Nigerian context, where colonial indirect rule institutionalised traditional authority within state structures while simultaneously circumscribing its formal powers (Nolte & Odalonu, 2021).

Recent applications of hybrid governance theory to Nigerian security challenges have produced important empirical insights. Omenma et al. (2020) applied the framework to examine the role of traditional rulers in managing herder-farmer conflicts in the North Central zone, finding evidence of both functional complementarity and structural tensions between traditional and formal security actors. Similarly, Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin (2022) used hybrid governance analysis to assess the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association's interface with local chiefs in the Middle Belt, revealing the limits of purely formal security responses.

3.2 Community Policing Theory

Community policing theory, originating in the reform literature of Western police studies (Goldstein, 1987; Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990), has been extensively adapted for application in African security contexts. At its core, community policing posits that effective security governance requires active partnerships between police agencies and the communities they serve, with local knowledge, trust, and participation as essential inputs to security production. In its African adaptations, the theory has been extended to encompass the roles of traditional authorities, community organisations, and citizen groups as co-producers of security (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2023).

Applied to Taraba State, community policing theory illuminates the mechanisms through which traditional rulers and organised citizens can supplement the surveillance, intelligence, and preventive functions of formal security agencies. It also highlights the structural prerequisites for effective community-police partnerships, including mutual trust, accountability mechanisms, and clear operational protocols. The limitations of the theory in the Nigerian context, particularly its origin in liberal democratic policing traditions that may not fully account for the coercive dimensions of community vigilantism or the patronage networks that can distort traditional authority, are addressed critically in Section 4.5.

3.3 Human Security Framework

The human security framework, developed in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report and subsequently elaborated by Alkire (2003) and the Commission on Human Security (2003), shifts the referent object of security from the state to the individual. It identifies seven dimensions of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. This framework is particularly relevant to the analysis of citizens' responses to border insecurity because it foregrounds the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of ordinary community members, including women, children, and internally displaced persons.

In Taraba State, cross-border insecurity has direct and severe consequences for human security across multiple dimensions. Herder-farmer conflicts and armed banditry disrupt agricultural production and food security; the displacement of communities undermines economic and housing security; the proliferation of small arms threatens personal and community security; and the breakdown of traditional social contracts compromises community cohesion (ACLED, 2024; Mercy Corps, 2021). By employing the human security framework alongside hybrid governance and community policing theories, this review is able to capture both the structural dimensions of border insecurity and the everyday security concerns of affected communities.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Border Security Challenges in Taraba State

Taraba State presents one of the most complex border security landscapes in Nigeria. The state's diverse ethnic composition, comprising over 80 ethnic groups including the Jukun, Mumuye, Chamba, Tiv, Hausa-Fulani, and numerous other communities, intersects with its geographic position to create conditions of heightened vulnerability to cross-border threats (Ezeibe et al., 2023). The state's borders with Cameroon are particularly porous, with

hundreds of informal crossing points that are beyond the effective monitoring capacity of Nigerian border security agencies.

The most frequently documented border security challenge in Taraba State is the escalation of herder-farmer conflicts. Drawing from ACLED conflict data, Mohammed and Sule (2023) document a 34% increase in violent incidents attributed to herder-farmer clashes in Taraba State between 2019 and 2022, with particular concentration in Sardauna, Bali, and Jalingo Local Government Areas. These conflicts are not purely domestic in character; they have significant cross-border dimensions, as Fulani herder communities from Cameroon regularly migrate into Nigerian territory in search of pasture, sometimes precipitating violent confrontations with sedentary farming communities. The cross-border nature of these conflicts complicates traditional security responses, as formal agencies lack jurisdiction beyond national frontiers.

Cattle rustling represents a second major border security challenge with profound cross-border dimensions. Livestock theft networks operating across the Nigeria-Cameroon border have been extensively documented by Kwaja (2022), who estimates that cattle rustling in the Middle Belt and Northeast generates annual economic losses of between 3 and 5 billion Naira. In Taraba State, cattle rustling gangs exploit both the porous border terrain and the inadequacy of formal security patrols to move stolen livestock across national boundaries, making recovery and prosecution extremely difficult. The link between cattle rustling and broader criminal networks, including small arms trafficking, has been documented by Muhammed (2021).

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation constitutes a third dimension of border insecurity with far-reaching consequences for community safety in Taraba State. The state's borders provide entry points for SALW originating from Libya, the Central African Republic, and conflict zones across the Lake Chad Basin (UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, 2023). The availability of automatic weapons has dramatically altered the lethality of communal conflicts, transforming localised disputes over land and cattle into mass casualty events. SALW proliferation has also facilitated the emergence of organised bandit groups operating in Taraba's border communities, groups that are analytically distinct from herder-farmer conflict actors and have their own criminal networks and operational logic (Ezeibe et al., 2023). The activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP affiliates constitute a fourth, though geographically more limited, dimension of border insecurity in Taraba State. While the main theatre of jihadist insurgency remains Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, there is documented evidence of spillover activities into Taraba's northernmost local government areas (International Crisis Group, 2022). The porosity of the Nigeria-Cameroon border, combined with the operational presence of jihadist networks in the Mandara Mountains straddling both countries, creates a continuing threat of insurgent infiltration into Taraba territory. This threat dimension has intensified pressure on traditional rulers and citizens in frontier communities to contribute to early warning and intelligence sharing.

A fifth challenge, addressed in more recent literature, concerns environmental insecurity and its intersection with cross-border violence. Aina and Adebayo (2024) document the impact of Lake Chad shrinkage and land degradation on migratory patterns of pastoralist communities across the Sahel, arguing that environmental pressures are a structural driver of conflict

escalation in Nigeria's Middle Belt, including Taraba State. Reduced grazing land in Cameroon and Chad has intensified competitive pressure over Nigerian territory, exacerbating existing herder-farmer tensions and complicating border security governance.

4.2 Traditional Rulers' Role in Security Governance in Nigeria

The literature on traditional rulers' roles in security governance in Nigeria has expanded considerably since 2019, driven partly by the escalation of insecurity across the Middle Belt and partly by growing policy interest in non-state security actors. The accumulated evidence reveals a multifaceted governance portfolio that traditional rulers perform in relation to security, encompassing conflict prevention, mediation, intelligence gathering, community mobilisation, and liaison with formal security agencies.

In the domain of conflict prevention, traditional rulers in Taraba State have been credited with maintaining inter-ethnic peace councils that serve as forums for managing tensions before they escalate to violence. Omenma et al. (2020) document the functioning of the Taraba State Traditional Rulers' Council as a platform for coordinating responses to herder-farmer conflicts, noting that the Council's interventions have demonstrably reduced the frequency of violent incidents in several local government areas. The effectiveness of such mechanisms, however, is contingent on the personal authority and legitimacy of individual chiefs, creating significant variation across the state.

Conflict mediation represents a second critical governance function of traditional rulers. The Aku Uka of Wukari, the Sultan of Muri, and other prominent first-class chiefs in Taraba State have historically served as mediators in violent intercommunal conflicts. Recent empirical literature confirms that traditional mediation retains significant efficacy in communities where formal legal institutions are perceived as distant, corrupt, or ethnically biased (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2022). However, Ngang (2022) cautions that traditional mediation in contexts of recurring violence can be perceived as a mechanism for conflict management rather than conflict resolution, as it addresses symptoms rather than the structural drivers of insecurity.

Traditional rulers also perform critical intelligence and surveillance functions in border security. In communities where formal security agencies are absent or under-resourced, village and district heads often serve as the primary intelligence nodes for information about stranger movement, arms caches, and planned attacks. Abdulkadir (2023) documents how district heads in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State have established informal networks of community informants who relay information about suspicious cross-border movements to security agencies. This function aligns closely with what hybrid governance theory characterises as the complementarity between customary and formal governance orders in security provision.

Beyond intelligence, traditional rulers in Taraba State have been active in mobilising community resources for security. This includes the organisation of vigilante units, the imposition of customary curfews in conflict-affected areas, and the invocation of traditional sanctions against community members who collaborate with criminal networks. The legitimacy of these measures derives from the customary authority of traditional rulers to enforce communal norms, a source of authority that formal law enforcement often lacks in

remote border areas (Obi, 2022). However, Boas and Henriksen (2021) note that the mobilisation of vigilante units by traditional rulers is not without risk, as it can contribute to the militarisation of communal identity and the proliferation of unaccountable armed actors. The relationship between traditional rulers and formal security agencies in Taraba State is characterised by both cooperation and tension. Cooperation is most evident in intelligence sharing and joint operations, particularly during periods of acute crisis. Several accounts document the Nigerian military and police forces collaborating closely with traditional rulers during security operations in Taraba, leveraging traditional leaders' community access and local knowledge (Ugwueze & Nwangwu, 2021). Tension, however, also pervades this relationship: traditional rulers have consistently complained about being bypassed in security decision-making, while formal security agencies have sometimes regarded traditional involvement in security matters as an infringement on their institutional mandate (Omenma et al., 2020).

Gender dimensions of traditional rulers' security roles represent an emerging concern in the literature. Several studies note that traditional governance structures in Taraba State are predominantly male, raising questions about whether women's security concerns and contributions are adequately represented in traditional security governance (Musa & Adamu, 2023). Women in border communities, who often bear disproportionate burdens of displacement and sexual violence during conflict, are rarely consulted in traditional security councils, creating a significant participatory deficit in hybrid security governance arrangements.

4.3 Citizens' Responses to Border Insecurity

Citizens' responses to border insecurity in Taraba State have been shaped by the interaction of chronic state absence, ethnic mobilisation dynamics, and the practical imperatives of self-protection in conflict-affected communities. The literature documents a spectrum of citizen responses ranging from autonomous self-help security measures to more organised and quasi-institutionalised community policing arrangements.

Vigilante formations represent the most extensively documented form of citizen security response in Taraba State. The Muyuka and Taraba Vigilante Services, the Yan Gadi vigilante network, and various ethnically-organised self-protection militias have been variously documented as filling the security vacuum left by under-resourced formal agencies (Mohammed & Sule, 2023). These formations typically operate under some degree of traditional authority oversight, with village and district heads serving as nominal commanders or patrons. Their operational activities include night patrols, checkpoint operations at community entry points, and the pursuit of cattle rustlers.

The literature is divided on the effectiveness and desirability of vigilante formations as a response to border insecurity. On the one hand, Okoli and Uhembe (2022) argue that community vigilante groups provide an essential security service in areas where formal policing is absent, and that their local knowledge and community embeddedness give them operational advantages that formal security agencies lack. On the other hand, Okereke (2021) and Boas and Henriksen (2021) document significant problems of accountability, ethnic bias, and extrajudicial violence associated with vigilante operations, arguing that their proliferation

may ultimately entrench insecurity by militarising communal identities and creating parallel armed structures that challenge state authority.

Beyond vigilante formations, citizens in Taraba State have developed other response modalities that deserve scholarly attention. Community early warning systems, often operated through traditional rulers' networks, have been documented as an important tool for anticipating and preventing cross-border incidents. Ibrahim and Garba (2022) document how women traders along the Nigeria-Cameroon border corridor have organised informal intelligence networks that track the movements of suspicious individuals and alert both traditional authorities and formal security agencies. This finding challenges the dominant male-centred framing of community security responses in the Nigerian literature and points to the importance of disaggregated gender analysis.

Inter-community peace associations and dialogue forums represent a third category of citizens' responses. These platforms, often convened with the facilitation of traditional rulers, provide spaces for affected communities to address grievances, negotiate resource-sharing arrangements, and establish community-level conflict management protocols. The Taraba State Peace Building Agency, established under the state government, has worked alongside traditional rulers and civil society organisations to institutionalise some of these citizen-driven peace initiatives (Mercy Corps, 2021). However, the sustainability and reach of these platforms have been hampered by inadequate funding, political interference, and the structural persistence of the resource conflicts that underlie much of the violence.

Internal displacement constitutes a fifth dimension of citizens' responses. When insecurity becomes untenable, communities in Taraba's border zones have engaged in mass displacement, either to IDP camps or to the homes of relatives in more secure areas. The humanitarian implications of this displacement are severe: as of 2023, approximately 110,000 persons were registered as internally displaced in Taraba State, with the highest concentrations in Sardauna, Bali, and Zing Local Government Areas (UNHCR, 2023; International Organization for Migration, 2023). Displacement, while a response to insecurity, also creates its own security risks, including resource competition in receiving communities and the recruitment of displaced youths into criminal networks.

Citizens' responses to border insecurity have also taken the form of political mobilisation and advocacy. Community organisations in Taraba State have engaged with state and federal government agencies to demand improved security infrastructure, the deployment of additional security personnel to border communities, and the formalisation of traditional security governance arrangements. Ezeibe et al. (2023) document how civil society groups in Taraba State have partnered with international NGOs to advocate for a comprehensive border security strategy that integrates community-based mechanisms with formal security responses. These advocacy efforts reflect a growing consciousness among affected communities of the systemic nature of border insecurity and the limitations of purely local responses.

4.4 Collaboration Between Traditional Authorities and Security Agencies

The collaboration between traditional authorities and formal security agencies in managing border insecurity in Taraba State has attracted growing scholarly attention, particularly in the

context of broader debates about the reform of Nigeria's security architecture. The literature documents multiple modalities of collaboration, including intelligence sharing, joint operations, conflict mediation support, and community outreach partnerships.

Intelligence sharing is the most consistently reported modality of collaboration. Several empirical accounts document arrangements in which traditional rulers relay information about planned attacks, arms movements, and the activities of criminal networks to the police and military (Abdulkadir, 2023; Omenma et al., 2020). These arrangements operate largely informally, without clear protocols for information processing, dissemination, or response. The informality of these arrangements is identified in the literature as both a strength and a weakness: it enables rapid, trust-based information exchange but also makes collaboration vulnerable to breakdown when key individuals are transferred, die, or fall out with security agencies.

Joint operations between traditional rulers' vigilante structures and formal security agencies have been documented in several border local government areas of Taraba State. During periods of acute crisis, notably the escalations of herder-farmer violence in 2018-2019 and 2021-2022, military and police units have conducted joint patrols with community vigilante groups under the nominal supervision of traditional rulers (Ugwueze & Nwangwu, 2021). These joint operations leverage the community knowledge of vigilante units while providing formal legal authority and superior weaponry. However, they also raise serious accountability concerns, as the legal framework governing the use of force by vigilante actors in joint operations remains ambiguous.

Conflict mediation support represents a third modality of collaboration. Formal security agencies in Taraba State have, on occasion, facilitated and participated in mediation sessions convened by traditional rulers, using their institutional authority to enforce compliance with mediation outcomes and deter non-compliant parties (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2022). This form of collaboration is consistent with the hybrid governance model, wherein formal and informal authorities pool their respective sources of legitimacy to produce security outcomes that neither could achieve alone.

Community outreach partnerships represent a more institutionalised form of collaboration, exemplified by the Community Policing Advisory Committees (CPACs) established by the Nigeria Police Force as part of its community policing policy. In Taraba State, CPACs have been established in several local government areas, with traditional rulers and community leaders serving as members alongside police officers (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2023). Evaluations of the CPAC model in Taraba and comparable states have yielded mixed results: while the committees have improved police-community communication in some areas, they have struggled with inconsistent funding, interference from political actors, and the persistence of deep-seated mistrust between communities and security agencies rooted in historical experiences of police brutality.

The literature identifies several factors that condition the effectiveness of collaboration between traditional authorities and formal security agencies. These include the personal relationships between individual traditional rulers and security commanders, the degree of ethnic and religious heterogeneity in the relevant community, the history of past conflicts and

their resolution, and the availability of external resources and facilitation from international NGOs and development partners (Obi, 2022; Mercy Corps, 2021). The contingent and personalised character of much collaboration underscores the fragility of existing arrangements and the need for more institutionalised frameworks.

4.5 Gaps in Existing Literature

Notwithstanding the growing body of literature on traditional rulers and citizens' responses to border security challenges in Taraba State and comparable contexts, several significant gaps remain. Identifying these gaps is essential both for situating the contribution of this review and for directing future empirical research. First, the existing literature is predominantly qualitative and largely based on interviews with traditional rulers, security officials, and community leaders. Quantitative assessments of the impact of traditional security interventions and community policing measures on security outcomes, such as conflict incidence rates, displacement figures, and crime statistics, are largely absent. This methodological gap makes it difficult to assess the actual effectiveness of traditional and citizen-based security responses, as opposed to the perceptions of those involved.

Second, the gendered dimensions of both border insecurity and security responses remain inadequately theorised. While emerging work has begun to document women's roles in community security (Ibrahim & Garba, 2022; Musa & Adamu, 2023), the mainstream literature continues to treat border security as a predominantly male domain. The specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in border conflict zones, including exposure to sexual violence, trafficking, and the disruption of livelihoods, are documented in humanitarian reports but rarely integrated into security governance analyses.

Third, the literature largely focuses on overt, organised forms of traditional and citizen security responses, while neglecting the more quotidian, every day practices through which border communities negotiate security. The informal diplomacy of market traders, the customary norms that regulate cross-border movement, and the micro-level conflict resolution practices embedded in daily community life represent important dimensions of security governance that are poorly captured in interview-based research focusing on formal actors.

Fourth, the accountability and human rights dimensions of non-state security actors in Taraba State remain inadequately examined. While several studies note the risks associated with vigilante formations, there are few systematic assessments of the human rights records of these groups or the mechanisms, if any, through which they are held accountable. This gap is particularly significant given documented cases of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, and ethnic profiling by vigilante units in comparable Nigerian contexts.

Fifth, the literature has not adequately addressed the impact of digital technologies on border security governance and community responses. Mobile phone-based early warning systems, social media-mediated conflict escalation and de-escalation, and the use of digital platforms by traditional rulers to coordinate security responses represent emerging phenomena that have received virtually no scholarly attention in the Taraba State context.

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

This seminar paper has reviewed the extant literature on traditional rulers and citizens' responses to border security challenges in Taraba State, Nigeria. The review has been organised around three core questions: the nature of border security challenges, the governance roles of traditional rulers, and the modalities and implications of citizens' security responses. The review confirms that Taraba State faces a complex and evolving array of cross-border security threats, including herder-farmer conflicts with significant Cameroonian dimensions, cattle rustling networks, small arms proliferation, banditry, and spillover from jihadist insurgency. These threats interact with structural vulnerabilities arising from the state's ethnic diversity, geographic position, environmental pressures, and the persistent inadequacy of formal security provision in border communities.

Traditional rulers in Taraba State perform a multifaceted security governance portfolio that encompasses conflict prevention and mediation, intelligence gathering and sharing, community vigilante mobilisation, and liaison with formal security agencies. The evidence reviewed suggests that these contributions are neither marginal nor merely supplementary to formal security provision; in many border communities, traditional governance is the primary available security resource. The legitimacy, community embeddedness, and cultural authority of traditional rulers give them governance capacities that formal security agencies simply do not possess. At the same time, traditional security governance is not without limitations: it is characterised by significant internal variation in quality and effectiveness, it can replicate gender exclusions and ethnic biases present in the broader community, and it operates largely outside formal accountability frameworks.

Citizens in Taraba State have responded to border insecurity through a diverse repertoire of collective actions, including the formation and participation in vigilante groups, the organisation of early warning networks, participation in peace dialogue forums, and political advocacy for improved state security provision. These citizen responses reflect a pragmatic security agency born of necessity, as communities confront security threats without adequate formal protection. The review finds that citizen responses are most effective when they operate in structured partnership with both traditional authorities and formal security agencies, and when they are grounded in accountable, inclusive, and transparent governance arrangements.

The theoretical frameworks deployed in this review, including hybrid governance theory, community policing theory, and the human security framework, together provide a robust analytical foundation for understanding border security governance in Taraba State. Hybrid governance theory is particularly valuable in illuminating the interaction between formal and informal security orders, while community policing theory specifies the conditions for effective citizen-police-traditional authority partnerships. The human security framework ensures that analysis remains grounded in the lived security experiences of affected communities, including the most vulnerable.

The review has identified five significant gaps in the existing literature: the absence of quantitative impact assessments; the inadequate theorisation of gender dimensions; the neglect of everyday security practices; the limited examination of accountability and human rights; and the absence of attention to digital technologies. Future research should address

these gaps through methodologically diverse, gender-sensitive, and human-rights-informed empirical investigations.

In terms of policy implications, the review supports the institutionalisation of traditional rulers within formal border security governance frameworks, including through their incorporation into community policing advisory structures, early warning systems, and cross-border conflict management mechanisms. The formalisation of citizens' security roles should be pursued through legally grounded community policing frameworks that provide clear operational protocols, accountability mechanisms, and human rights safeguards. Inter-agency coordination between the NIS, NCS, Nigeria Police Force, and the military should be enhanced through joint operations planning that systematically integrates traditional authority knowledge and community intelligence.

In conclusion, the evidence reviewed in this paper makes a compelling case for the recognition of traditional rulers and engaged citizens as indispensable actors in border security governance in Taraba State. Sustainable border security in this complex frontier zone cannot be achieved by formal state institutions acting alone; it requires the institutionalised integration of traditional governance authority and citizen agency within a coherent, accountable, and inclusive security governance architecture.

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