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State Policing and the Political Restructuring Debate in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's internal security could be perceived as the freedom from or absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its indispensable contribution regarding spreading of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspiration of Nigerians. The nature and intensity of security threats together with the performance of the Nigeria's Security apparatus has hitherto provoked the inclusion of state policing as a substantive element of the political restructuring debate in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the current study intends to highlight constraints and possibilities of community policing in maintaining internal security within the context of the political restructuring debate in Nigeria. The study will have far reaching impacts on the country's internal security system, its procedures, rulings, and practices. The study is also of high significance; as it examines the functions of state policing in attaining a well-organized internal security system. This study utilizes both secondary and documentary analysis to reveal its findings. The study recommends key institutional reform like the political restructuring prognosis must be implemented in terms of structural changes to make policing more effective.

Keywords; State policing, national security, political restructuring, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nigerians' now live in fear, we are afraid of everything. We are afraid of flying, afraid of certain people, afraid of bearded and turbaned terrorist men, afraid of some airline passengers; of letter and parcels, of white powder and suicide bombers. Here, we harbor terrorists, our people, innocent or otherwise, are afraid too. We are afraid of being killed and maimed by bombs and missiles from hundreds of miles away by unseen forces. We are afraid because we are constantly being coming collaterals to be killed because we were cut in the way of the destruction by ambush, kidnapping, plane hijacking, Arson and constant harassment of our countries of our people. The above expression underscores our experiences and the security condition of not only our people, but also Nigeria's terrain at large. According to Agbu (2004), present speculations for national security and policies of Nigeria is the visibility of unsecured situation in a more deadly and impersonal fashion and an incompetent state and armed men who will have find it very difficult to combat. In a rather cynical way, Agbese (2008) noted, that the level of security in the country is measured almost entirely by the activities of its criminals; the fewer their activities, the greater the chance for everyone to feel safe. The more violent their activities, the greater the induced sense of insecurity. Even the level of foreign investments in the country, is based on investor's reading of the criminal barometer there (Agbese, 2008). All societies are victims of the criminals among them because they pose serious security challenges.

The nature and intensity of security threats together with the poor performance of the Nigeria Police Force has hitherto provoked the inclusion of state policing as a substantive element of the political restructuring debate in Nigeria. Researchers highlighted that strange movements, suspicious characters and micro crimes can be easily incorporated into state policing as a global practice. Imobighe (2006) informs us that without security, individuals within a state may encounter some hitches in engaging in productive activities. Similarly, without security, the state is bound to experience great difficulty in harnessing its human and material resources towards meaningful development and the promotion of the general well-being of the people. In the current state of insecurity, the country is going through an individual may be cajoled to be a part of this.

The negative impact of this ugly situation needs not be over stressed here as the citizens are being overwhelmed by fear of impending but unknown violent attacks by either armed robbers, kidnappers, assassins, and recently bombers, whether hit-and-run or suicide bombers. Obviously, visiting densely populated public areas or critical infrastructures is now a nightmare. The much-needed private investors, whether local or foreign are so scarred of committing their hard earned or borrowed funds into our economy for the fear of losing them within a minute. Even areas that have tourist potentialities are being avoided like a plague by tourists, especially, the foreign ones, for fear of being attacked or trapped in the area.

The term security is a delicate and important issue to other developing and developed nations. The word security conveys a different meaning to scholars, policy analysts, organisations etc. Nwankwo (2012) sees it as the state of being safe or protected against danger or risk. Aluko (1989) views it as a property of value promised to a lender in case repayment is not made or agreed conditions are not met. This is mortgage in banking or other lending organization. In the words of Alahara (2011), it is a protection against law breaking, violence and enemy acts, escape from prison, etc. one could say for security reasons (i.e. reasons of security) for example, tight security was in force during the president's visit. Against this backdrop, this paper intends to examine the challenges and prospects of community policing in maintaining internal security within the context of political restructuring debate in Nigeria. The study will have far reaching positive impacts on the entire world internal security system, its procedures, rulings, and practices. The study is also of high importance, as it examines the functions of state policing in attaining a well-organized internal security system.

2. Literature Review

There have been several studies on the Nigerian Police such as Tekena Tamuno (1970, 1985, and 1993), Obiekezie (1986), and Nwolise (2004). There were also works on crime, vigilantism, police and safety as engineered by Abrahams (1998), Ajayi and Aderinto (2008), Human Rights Watch and CLEEN Foundation (2002), as well as Wilson and Kelling (1982). Of course, there is McNamara (1968), Imobigbe (1998), Hubert (2001), Nwolise (2012) and Lemanski (2012). However, all the earlier works mentioned above had investigative focal points, away from the subject of indiscriminate uses of firearms and the rule of engagement in the Nigerian Police Force.

A study on the traditional way of policing and security (Okunola & Dada 2013), confirmed that the introduction of the modern system of government, and its law enforcement mechanism has been found to be deficient in many aspects. "the Nigerian police has been highly criticized by various human rights agencies, community-based organizations, the press and the academia for its inability to stem the rising tide of crimes in Nigeria" (Okunola and Ikuomola, 2012). As a result, other alternatives such as the use of vigilante, Oodua People Congress, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys and Arewa Youth Vanguard, developed and are still being agitated for to serve as means of preventing and controlling crime. To buttress the above, a female resident (IDI/ Female Resident 18/1012) gave a statement that: "I prefer Zangbeto to Nigeria Police. Modern Police in Nigeria are not trustworthy. You cannot trust them at all. But people in the group (Zangbeto) are people of good conduct within the community. We know them and appreciate them" (Okunola, R.A. & Ojo, 2013). According to Mersim (2012), State policing has been defined as a police force under State authority rather than under the authority of a city or county in the state. It has also been defined as the police organized and maintained by a state as distinguished from those of a lower sub-division (as a city or county) of the state government. However, in the Nigerian context, state police are a kind of sub-national police force, to be organized, maintained and under the jurisdiction of a particular state government.

In Nigeria today, there has been a recent clamor for the establishment of State police force as opposed to what was laid down in Section 214 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution. This is as a result of the deteriorating situation of the security system in Nigeria. Some other reasons for this clamour are that: the geographical area of Nigeria is too large for a Central police command (Bulus, 2012); Policing citizens should be the responsibility of the respective states and not that of the Federal government; It is easier to operate close systems, shorter processes because of less loops, error percentage and you know your target (Mr. Ekene Nwogbo quoted in Kehinde, 2013) etc. While those against its establishment are of the view that Nigeria is not yet mature for State Police Forces.

However, Political restructuring is a term which has gained wide currency in the nation's political discourse including state and community policing in Nigeria. The debate revolving around the demand for restructuring of the Nigerian federation and the elaboration of governmental structures in the country had recently dominated global political tabloid. The pattern of restructuring advocated has tended to follow closely the way the national question is framed

Like all popular concepts, it has not been defined clearly by its proponent. Restructuring has come to represent, in reality an omnibus word for all forms of adjustments, alterations and cosmetic manipulations aimed at changing the formula on the basis of which economic resources and political power are shared or distributed among the Nigerian elite (Sanusi, 2015). The word "restructuring" has acquired widespread usage, with sonorous reverberations, particularly in Nigeria's public space. It is usually the case in any politically discourse that there is no settled point as to its meaning. The debate that has so far taken place on restructuring of the Nigerian political and governance landscapes has lived up to this billing without exclusion the major focus/ element of this paper. Since it's staked to be of high importance, as it propels the effective and efficient discharge of the primary functions of the Nigeria state. The study pledged to also inquire on the panaceas, which would make this inquiry essential for policy makers, the security agencies, academicians and students' Nigerian populace at large as it will proffer how community policing can help in tackling the challenges facing internal security in the country. The study will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge, for the reason that if completed, would constitute good and researchable literature on the research problem or any other research topic similar or related to it for future or prospective researchers and general readers.

3. Policing in Nigeria: Theoretical Lenses

3.1. Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory served the theoretical purpose of this work. This theory defines the accord which is hypothetical or actual in nature between state and society. This accord helps to take moral decisions as well as stances. It

highlighted to follow rules provided by the Governments which lead to more secure and comfortable life. It is based on several philosophers, like Locke, Hume, Hobbes, and Rousseau, to answer the debate that whether it is right to explain our moral obligations through social contracts or not.

The demand for state Police in contemporary Nigeria stems from the burst in general insecurity as manifested by armed robbery, kidnapping, massacres, ritual murder, assassinations, ethno-religious conflicts, urban terrorism, and others. The security situation in Nigeria in recent times has seriously deteriorated. The mindless killings of innocent villagers in Jos, the uncontrolled kidnappings and the bombs that rocked the city of Warri and even the recent Nyanya bomb blast in Abuja that left about 86 persons dead and the more than 200 abducted girls of Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State by Boko Haram insurgents are indications of how bad the security of the country has become.

These incidences of insecurity have generated untold anxiety, and fear, and led to the destruction of lives and property. In the short, brutish and nasty life Nigerian citizens were bring back by them. When men and women entered into social contract and established the political state, they can be free from these states (Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau). In the process, they gave up their rights of protecting themselves to the state which undertook to guarantee their safety. Thus, when the people suffer vagaries of insecurity, it means the state has failed in keeping its own aspects of the social contract, and the people reserve the right to either change the state (government), or seek alternative effective strategies to ensure their safety within the state pending when the state is able to correct itself. If this move of the people is frustrated, aggression may result in the form of revolution. Therefore, the social contract theory enables us understand the state Police discourse in contemporary Nigeria.

An analysis of policing in Nigeria can also be done by a careful delineation of the two concepts: Police and Policing. Police refers to a socio-political and quasi-legal institution charged with the responsibility of enforcing criminal law and the maintenance of law and order. Then policing is the measures and actions taken by a variety of institutions and groups (both formal and non-formal) in the society to regulate social relations and practice in order to secure the safety of members of community as well as conformity to the norms and values of society. It is therefore a sub-set of control processes which involves the creation of system of surveillance coupled with the threat of sanction for discovered deviance (Reiner 2000).

3.2. *Fragile State Theory*

Usually a theoretical framework is chosen because the scholar accepts the potency of the theory in generating understanding of the issues under investigation. The debate on State/ Community Policing within the context of political restructuring debate will be viewed in this research with the theoretical lens of fragile and deficient federation arrangement. My choice of this theory is anchored on the desire to understand how the inability of State apparatus to maintain/ extinguish internal security threat and ensure safety of the civilian populace. This has triggered several demands from different segments of the country to address the deficient security arrangement thereby improving the security architecture of the country through Nigerian decentralization policies. Sara in the year of 2008 first conceptualized the idea of fragile state theory. Countries facing with poor governance, political instability, unemployment, poverty as well as institutional capacity used this term.

This theory describes how weak human and social development related with poor governance, internal conflicts and low institutional capacity. Weakness in all of the above-mentioned areas leads to lacking in delivering infrastructural security to inhabitants. Fundamentally brutal disputes, penury, deprived of natural resources are some of the main outcomes of this state. According to Slater (2012), this state leads to severe crisis in one or more sub-systems, which causes internal damages with a lot of internal squabbles.

Both economic and social crisis happens in this state. In case of economic it is less growth rate, inequality of wealth, unequal access to land and other resources etc. For social it is lacking access for education and health related services. In this type of state, Institutional policies in terms of security, development, or welfare can be easily challenged by competitors. The impotence of present political system to fulfill long-term demands is resulting due to severe restructuring in political disclosures. Now penury, loafing, lack of access to basic facilities and amenities are becoming the current scenario of Nigeria. To resolve these issues or to get rid of these vicious revolts, scopes for job, access to basic services need to be implemented.

3.3. *Anatomy of Policing in Nigeria*

According to state police decentralization just like most of the developed countries, is the only key which can save nation from krantz. This will increase the chance of creating skilled professional teams in the central squad to resolve problems in need in different places. It is becoming an unavoidable topic of engrossing and enthralling in Nigeria about the importance of State Police. Without any doubt Nigerian Police is presently changing in an appropriate manner compared to the initial state.

3.4. *Colonial Era*

Colonial creation in Nigeria has been observed as a part of organized policies. According to Rotimi (2001), many communities are practicing it in order to secure their societies. As per Alemika (2010), lives and properties are needed to secure by the Nigerian colonial masters with the arrogation of Lagos as a British colony in April 1861. For British it was very important to setup police. Hence, they demanded for setup of consular guard in Lagos. Although for economic reason it was first denied but ultimately the acting governor of Lagos colony understood the importance organized police in the

acquired regions (Onyeozili, 2005; Adedeji, 2012). There are mainly three reasons behind development of police force and relations between police-public in Nigeria (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2012).

- As per Tamuno (1970), disconnection between Nigerian nationalities over a long period of time (1861-1903). Due to the fact of acquiring of many Nigeria's constituent nationalities, British colonial had been established for the territory.
- Various police forces were established which were practicing violence and cruel treatments against the native population. Violence and fraud were seen to be practicing in almost everywhere.
- To dominate police force were the main instrument. These forces were to the colonizers but never to the colonized. As per Onyeozili (2005), there was an increment in the constabulary from 100, in 1862 to were 600 men on the formal role of the constabulary in the next year.

Colonial Nigeria had also seen establishment of police forces in many administrative policies especially in the area on maintenance of law and order.

Emphasis was place for suppressing riots along with prevention, detection and prosecution of crime. As per Onoge (1993), due to this reason while recruiting police force only priority had been assigned on physical fitness rather on educational standard.

Compared to South-Eastern parts of Nigeria, in Western and Northern Nigeria more relevancy had been observed regarding police powers to native authorities after merger in the year of 1914. Under the laws of 1916 and 1924, as Native Authorities, the Chiefs expanded and combined the police powers. Maintaining order in their respective areas was placed on the Native Authorities as per The Native Authority Ordinance. For this they could prevent crime and seize lawbreakers by themselves or even by employing 'any person' who assist them in their police duties. Protectorate Laws had increased the police powers.

According to Alemika (2010), under these law 'palace messengers'- the Yoruba kings, had been recognized and reformed as "olopas" from previously known as "akodas". In the Emirates of the North, yan/dandoka name had been given to dogarai. For Ahire (1993), for above mentioned cases these police were the main body of local police forces.

Yoruba had been greatly influenced by the contact with colonial police while arranging local security men. Adedeji (2012), mentioned that Egba united government had set up an Egba police on the 27th of July 1905. "Ode" – the native hunters had mainly influenced the membership of the police. Their main task was to battle the increased perils of armed robber.

Alemika (1993), mentioned that from Egbas, Ibadan and many other Yoruba had learned and started implementing. The merger of southern and northern protectorate while forming Nigeria did not follow the previously mentioned pattern. Nigerian police seemed to act in an integrated manner long after 1st April, 1930, under the command of inspector general of force headquarters in Lagos. Alemika (2010), highlighted that up to 1st October, 1960 similar pattern had been exercised.

3.5. Post-Colonial Era

After getting Independence on 1st October 1960, up to 18th of January 1966, politicians of 1st republic continued with the policing arrangement. For example, on 1963 after forming a Nigeria police force like police force, regional legislatures for the maintenance of native police were permitted. Up to 1966, in Nigeria there was NPF, a combined force of Northern and Western Nigeria along with federal police force. It seems that Independent Nigeria, its politicians can't handle multiple police forces. With the recommendation of JIU Aguiyi Ironsi a panel had been set up in 1966 by disabling all the local forces. Head of the Panel, Gobir was being requested to take in to account for both Local and National i.e. unified police and prisons service. Based on the report, submitted by this panel General Gowon suggested the elimination of local police forces and prison services.

Study of Ohonbamu (1972) highlighted the punishments of poorly trained, corrupted local police used for mere political purpose in Northern Nigeria along with both the political parties and governments of Northern and Western Regions. Administrators combined with politicians to run native police forces. Native police seemed problematic when general Ironsi took over the leadership position of Nigeria. Positive effects of NPF under military rule had been noticed from 1966 -1979 and dark side had been noticed from 1983-1999 (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2012). The most promising time period was under General Gowon. Police force took part in to governance portion from 1966 to 1979 and received respect as military force.

Alemika (2010), mentioned that the attractiveness and importance of policed had abolished during the period of 1983 to 1999. At this point of time they were being treated as the junior partner of state governors and were neglected in terms of monetary funding and facilities. Military force suffered from a threat from police force. Hence military governments never provide the police force services and scopes to secure internal security (Alemika, 2010).

Subordinate role was given to the police whose impact till now can be felt 13 years later (1999 – 2012).

No cases of leadership crisis, misuse of power and deceit were noticed from Nigeria police. It was very common practice to obtain money from drivers of vehicles i.e. commercial, motorcycle etc. NPF as its very first step stopped the entire checkpoint which was foible point.

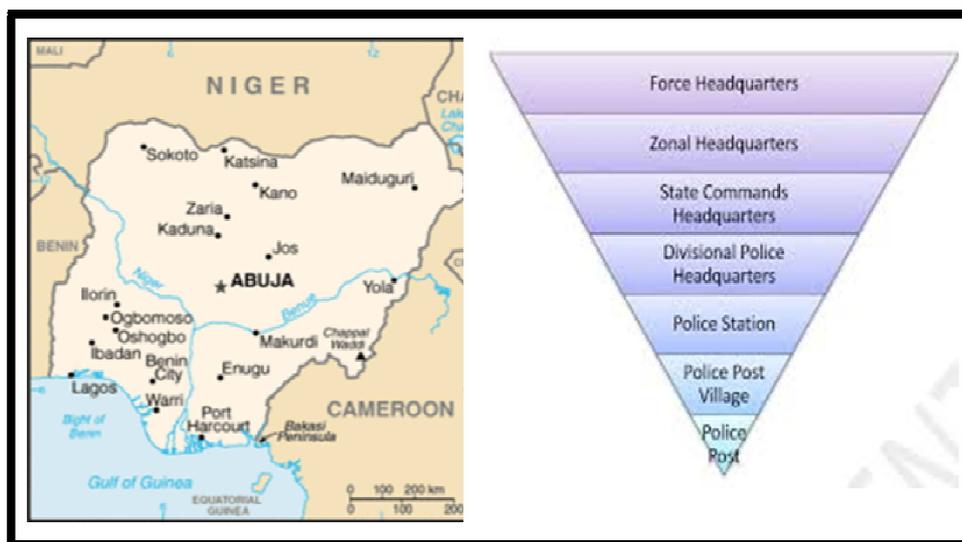


Figure1

Source; Wikipedia, 2019

4. A Case for State and Community Policing in Nigeria

On the 25th of December 2016, Goska, a community in Southern Kaduna was attacked by suspected Fulani Herdsmen, houses were destroyed and people were killed. For several hours, that this operation went on, there was no response from the Nigerian Police Force (APC MOU on Political Restructuring, 2017). Other hitherto vulnerable areas that domiciled attacks of this nature include Ekiti, Ondo, Oke – Ogun, Ogbosora, Lanlate and parts of Lagelu local government in Oyo State. The affected communities could not defend themselves, likewise the state government. This is not the first-time invaders have successfully invaded Nigerian communities, committed atrocities and escape uncaught. From the East to the South, Middle Belt and the North, communities have remained vulnerable to attacks.

There is a reason why such attacks have been successful across Nigerian communities. There is a reason why communities cannot react to attacks. It is the same reason why communities will continue to remain vulnerable in the face of invaders. The reason is quite simple. Communities have no control over their own security and the federal controlled Police is too inefficient to be trusted in managing local security. Moreover, most (if not all) officers of the Nigerian Police share no cultural and historical ties with the community they police over, there is therefore no sense of duty. In essence, there is no local police system in Nigeria!

Nigeria has a highly centralized police system that is controlled by the Presidency. The state governments and communities have little control over their own security. There are hundreds of Nigerian communities without the presence of this federal police, yet the law has made it impossible for such communities to establish their own police force, secure their people, property and territory. What kind of system fails to provide you security and yet denies you the legal right to provide security for yourself.

Analysts have argued that if Nigeria had a state and community Police system, communities like Goska in Southern Kaduna would have simply responded to the invaders by defending themselves with their local police force and possibly attacking the invaders. State police would be on standby if they (the Goska Police) become overwhelmed by superior fire from the invaders. None of this is in existence right now; neither community nor state police exist in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

In spite of restructuring of policies, training and expert bodies to review it not a huge success has been observed. Citizens of Nigeria also expect a quick change. Many have expressed doubt regarding the willingness and capability of federal government to provide money for policies as well as integrate effective and accountable community. Daily media cover ages of police abuse, paying bribes to police, collaboration between criminals and citizens' have puzzled citizens more. Automatically citizens look other places for better protection. Situation is becoming more problematic as people are open for attack in Nigeria very easily. They need much more security compared to what they have presently. Ultimately it is easily visible that current protection is totally insufficient for citizens of Nigeria especially in northern states. All of these above-mentioned practices like police neglect, corruption from long time back are becoming a persistent a part of policing practices.

Security should not be managed in such a highly centralized manner as it currently is in Nigeria. Security should be managed by both the state and communities and not solely by the federal government. Over-centralization of security through the Nigerian Police has turned out to be a less effective way of managing security crisis. The Nigerian Police Force presently comprises of about 500,000 officers, yet it is still considered as grossly inadequate. There are hundreds of Nigerian villages and thousands of neighborhoods without any Nigerian Police presence. This is in fact a threat to local and national security.

Just like every other federal institution, the federal police are not only inefficient but also poorly funded. By devolving security duties of the Police to state and communities, the federal government will be killing two birds with one stone through devolvement of the present Nigerian Police Force into state and community control, the federal recurrent expenditure will be drastically reduced and the blame on the federal government for certain crimes (i.e. herdsmen attack) will be pushed to the states and community governments. There will be no job loss as states will simply absorb its resident officers from the existing federal police force and establish its own state and community police system.

Nigeria cannot continue to control everything in Nigeria and receive all the blames. This "unitary-federal like system" of government is old fashion and redundant. It is time to push certain responsibilities from the federal government to the state and community governments and the issue of security is obviously one of such. The vigilante system in most states and communities has proven to be far more effective than the federal police system. What we must now do is to legalize such vigilante system, empower the local people and put them in charge of their own security. Nobody protects a community better than the local residents of the community.

Until we restructure Nigeria, and entrench true federalism, our communities will remain vulnerable and the Presidency will continue to take the blames for the security crisis. Thus, State and community police system are imperative to embellish internal security system in Nigeria.

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