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Alternative Approach to Security Management in Nigeria: The Imperative for Community Policing in Crime Control

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Abstract:

The general objective of this paper was to explore community policing as an alternative approach to security management in Nigeria. The paper identified the core components of community policing and how it can be implemented in Nigeria. Although there have been efforts at implementing community policing in Nigeria, the paper observes that the issue has merely been superficial without any core change in the system. Several recommendations were made towards implementing community policing in Nigeria. These includes rebranding the police and maintaining healthy civil relations as well as engaging community leaders for the purpose of intelligence gathering and sharing.

Keywords: Security management, community policing

1. Introduction

Community policing as the name suggests implies community partnership in crime control. The philosophy of community policing is anchored on the idea that crime control should be a collaborative effort of the relevant security outfit and the local community involved. In essence there should be some level of relationship between the police and the citizens in the vital area of intelligence gathering. This is based on the idea that no one understands the security needs and challenges of the community better than its residents.

Community policing was introduced as part of a broader set of police reforms in 2004. According to Okiro (2007) in Okeshola (2013), 'the transition from traditional policing to community policing is a global phenomenon and the Nigeria police cannot be an exception. Indeed, community policing as a philosophy and practice is a veritable vehicle for police reforms. According to (The Dawn Newspaper, 2011) on 27th April, 2004, community policing was formally launched throughout Nigeria. It was to represent a clear-cut departure from the traditional system of policing, that was reactive and incident based, to a problem – solving oriented policing that is proactive with the community as the cornerstone of policing objectives (Abdulrahman, 2007). What was the cornerstone of these reforms? Training of officers in some strategic areas of conflict Resolution and the Management of Public Order, Management of the Recommended Intelligence Model and Intelligence Analysis, Management of Community Safety etc.

However, despite the above, community policing in Nigeria has not taken off. The Nigerian police has not made a significant effort at earning public trust and even collaborating with them for the purpose of crime control. Several studies have shown this to be the case. Damilola (2017) in a study of public perception of police activities in Nigeria has shown that the Nigerian police force continues to be viewed with suspicion and mistrust. This is as a result of the fact that they are often engaged in sharp practices to extort money from unsuspecting public members, illegal road blocks in the pretense of checking crime, harassment of armless public, extra judicial killing and indiscriminate arrest wanton illegal detention of their victims. Obarisiagbon and Omagie (2018:65) in a study on Public Perception of the Role of the Nigeria Police Force in Curbing the Menace of Kidnapping in Benin Metropolis, Southern Nigeria: A Criminological Study stated that 'there is a very poor public perception of the police'. This poor perception and continued suspicion of police activities goes further to affirm the notion that the Nigerian police force has not mad that significant leap towards being a community centered agency that can effectively with the local communities to combat crime.

Criminality in Nigeria continues to rise both in scale and dimensions. In addition to the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigerian to the ubiquitous armed robbery attacks across the country, Nigerians now have to deal with the problems of constant kidnappings, banditry and herdsman-farmers clashes. Kidnapping has now become a multi-billion-naira industry as hardly a day goes by without reports of people being kidnapping from the highways or from their homes

in Nigeria. Chukwuma (2019) has stated that kidnapping has become Nigeria's latest security problem. Armed banditry in the north-western of Nigeria has also become a significant problem.

The brazen attacks on civilians in their homes and on the streets now necessitate an alternative approach to policing. The police force needs an alternative approach that would make them more effective in dealing with the problems of criminality in Nigeria. Hence the focus of this paper is to revisit the concept of community policing and identify some salient ways of implementing its core philosophy in a bid to make the police more community oriented and responsive.

2. Community Policing: Conceptual clarification

Numerous phraseologies of community policing exist in the literature. Wroblewski and Hess (2003) in Yusuf (2014) defined community policing as "an organization wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community, government and police partnerships; proactive problem solving; and community engagement to address the cause of crime, fear of crime and other community issues". Similarly, the Bureau of Justice Assistance described community policing as "a policing strategy which aims to reduce crime and disorder by carefully examining the characteristics of problems in neighborhoods and then applying appropriate problem-solving remedies". This definition indicated that community policing does not imply that police are no longer in authority or that the primary duty of preserving law and order is subordinated. However, it implies that tapping into the expertise and resources that exist within communities will relieve police of some of their burdens.

Oliver's (1998) definition seems best suited for this paper:

'A systematic approach to policing with the paradigm of instilling and fostering a sense of community, within a geographical neighborhood, to improve the quality of life. It achieves this through the decentralization of the police and the implementation of a synthesis of three key components: (1) ... the redistribution of traditional police resources; (2) ... the interaction of police and all community members to reduce crime and the fear of crime through indigenous proactive programs; and (3) ... a concerted effort to tackle the causes of crime problems rather than to put band-aids on the symptom'

Every definition of community policing identifies some vital features of the system. It indicates: police-community partnerships, a problem-solving approach, and organizational decentralization. On the first feature, community policing underscores the importance of a collaboration between the police force and the host community as the latter are in a better position to identify their interests and provide quality information to the police. Miller and Hess (2002) definition of community policing as 'a belief that working together, the police and the community can accomplish what neither can accomplish alone' suffices in this regard. Community policing reinforces the idea that community members and the police should share responsibility for establishing and maintaining peaceful neighborhoods. The problem-solving approach indicates that the concern of the police in interaction with the community is to prevent and reduce crime. Lastly the essence of organizational decentralization is to achieve more effective interaction, and the interaction itself includes forms of joint problem solving.

On the whole, community policing indicates that safety and security should be participatory and collective in nature as against the traditional approach which leaves security entirely to the police force. Under community policing, security responsibility is shared between the security agency and members of the community.

3. Insecurity in Nigeria: Brief Overview

Insecurity remains one of the most prescient and vexing challenges bedeviling the Nigerian society today. In recent times, the Nigerian state has witnessed an upsurge in criminality ranging from kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, advanced free fraud, cybercrime etc. The spate of criminality in Nigeria continues unabated despite much publicized, yet unsuccessful efforts at tackling them.

Insecurity in Nigeria in this paper will be addressed under some of these sub themes: Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping and armed robbery.

4. Boko Haram Insurgency

Despite the statement of the Nigerian government that Boko Haram has been 'technically defeated', the fundamentalist group still continues to wreak havoc in settlements in the North Eastern part of Nigeria (Punch Newspaper, Feb 6, 2016). The group which became popular in 2009 when they participated in sectarian violence in Northern Nigeria has become a thorn in the flesh to successive governments (Anyadike, 2013). The group has participated in all forms of criminality, ranging from kidnapping, terrorism, robbery etc. They caught the attention of the international community with the kidnap of at least 276 girls from a secondary school in the village of Chibok in Borno state in April 14, 2014. According to Mbah (2019), at least hundreds of the Chibok girls still remain in captivity with the terrorist group despite the efforts of the Nigerian government. The group was also responsible for the kidnap of students from a secondary school in Dapchi, Yobe state. Although, the government acted swiftly to negotiate the release of most of these students, it has not been entirely successful except for Lar Sharibu. The group has also been responsible for gruesome attacks on villages, looting away valuables and killing scores of soldiers till date.

4.1. Kidnapping

Kidnapping in Nigeria is becoming quite alarming and assuming hydra headed dimension. It has become a pervasive issue in almost every region in the country. The kidnap for ransom has become a big industry in Nigeria, as

millions of naira are being paid to criminal groups in a bid to free captured family members and relatives. Although the Nigerian police force has made sustained efforts at tackling the problem, the sophistication of weapons used by these groups and coordination has made their efforts sadly like a drop water in the ocean. Recently, the group has stepped up gear from kidnapping soft civilian targets to children and relatives of top Nigerian elites and politician. The board chairman of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and daughter was recently kidnapped along the Abuja-Kaduna highway (Premium Times, April 29, 2019). Premium Times also reports how the son of the former minister of health Isaac Adewole was kidnapped but rescued shortly (Premium Times, June 19, 2019). The brazen nature of Kidnapping in recent times is really disturbing for all.

4.2. Armed Robbery

Rotberg (2007) describes armed robbery as one of the most prevalent crimes in contemporary Nigeria. Prominent forms of armed robbery experienced in Nigeria include car snatching, high way robbery, house and office robberies etc. Nigeria has become a fertile ground for dare devil robbers who use sophisticated guns to attack their victims.

5. Core Components of Community Policing

The foundations of a successful community policing strategy are the close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members. Community policing according to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (1984) consists of two complementary core components, community partnership and problem solving.

Community partnership involves establishing and maintaining mutual trust with the host community. In ordinary terms, traditional policing always communicates with the host community. However, the point of distinction with regards community policing is that in community policing, the police become an integral part of the community culture, and the community assists in defining future priorities and in allocating resources. The difference is substantial and encompasses basic goals and commitments. Community partnership means adopting a policing perspective that exceeds the standard law enforcement emphasis. These activities could include: helping accident or crime victims, providing emergency medical services, helping resolve domestic and neighborhood conflicts (e.g., family violence, landlord-tenant disputes, or racial harassment), working with residents and local businesses to improve neighborhood conditions, controlling automobile and pedestrian traffic, providing emergency social services and referrals to those at risk (e.g., adolescent runaways, the homeless, the intoxicated, and the mentally ill), protecting the exercise of constitutional rights (e.g., guaranteeing a person's right to speak, protecting lawful assemblies from disruption), and providing a model of citizenship (helpfulness, respect for others, honesty, and fairness)

Problem solving is a broad term that implies more than simply the elimination and prevention of crimes. Problem solving is based on the assumption that crime and disorder can be reduced in small geographic areas by carefully studying the characteristics of problems in the area, and then applying the appropriate resources and on the assumption that "Individuals make choices based on the opportunities presented by the immediate physical and social characteristics of an area. By manipulating these factors, people will be less inclined to act in an offensive manner (Eck and Williams, 1987) In addition to the elements highlighted above, Bohn and Haley (2002), included the element of change management. Forgoing community policing partnership and implementing problem-solving strategies necessitates assigning new responsibilities and adopting a flexible style of management. Yusuf (2014) states that 'traditionally, patrol officers have been accorded lower status in police organization and have been dominated by agency structures. However, under community policing, the patrol function is a vital one. Hence, there should be a 'shifting of initiative, decision making and responsibility downward within the police organization. Patrol officers are the most familiar with the needs and concerns of their communities and are in the best position to forge the close ties with the community that lead to effective solutions to local problems' (Yusuf, 2014)

6. Community Policing in Nigeria

Community policing in Nigeria was formally launched on 27th April, 2004 (The Dawn Newspaper, 2011) as earlier posited. President Olusegun Obasanjo in April 2004, initiated Community policing in collaboration with police authorities under the tutelage of former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun. Hence, six states including Benue, Enugu, Jigawa, Kano, Ondo, and Ogun were selected for the pilot scheme. The involvement of people in the pilot states by the Police covered issues of quality service delivery, partnership, accountability, empowerment and problem solving. By 2007, the number of states where community policing was introduced increased to 18, as 12 more states were added to the previous 6. Those additional states included Lagos, FCT (Abuja), Cross River, Kaduna, Anambra, Edo, Bauchi, Kogi, Oyo, Imo, Katsina and Borno.

In a bid to fully realize community policing philosophy, the Nigerian police facilitated training of their officers in certain key areas. These include Conflict Resolution and the Management of Public Order, Management of the Recommended Intelligence Model and Intelligence Analysis, Management of Community Safety, Management of Policing Standards, Accountability and Anti-corruption, Crime investigation, Management of Serious Crime, Recruit Development, Development of a Police Leadership Framework, Development of leadership and Management Skills (Strategic Management and Middlelevel Management), Management of training function, Financial management and budget preparation, Managing and developing human resources, as well as Management of informal policing training (www.npf.gov.ng/info/community_policing.aspx#).

In addition to the above police authorities facilitated training for a number of Intelligence Officers in some of the Police Divisions on the concepts and methods of Intelligence-led Policing (ILP) who would in turn share with their relevant

colleagues in their various divisions, the transferable skills generated through the training. Despite these, gaps still exist in terms of the Nigerian police as it is currently formed and organized and the philosophy of community policing. The Nigerian police still exists as some foreign oppressive entity that lacks real connection with the Nigerian people. Although some policemen undoubtedly have keen interest in stamping out evil, it is probably much more typical for the Nigeria police to have a detached objective view of their job in that manner.

In the next section, we will examine some of the real obstacles to the implementation of community policing in Nigeria. Issues addressed in the next section will be instrumental in charting an alternative approach to policing in Nigeria.

7. Impediments to Community Policing in Nigeria

Despite some of the structures as highlighted above to ensure that the Nigerian police became more community oriented in discharging their statutory roles, in reality, community policing in Nigeria remains utopia. The Nigerian police force continues to remain a distant, almost entity separate from the ordinary citizen. There exists some level of suspicion which members of local communities approach the Nigerian police. This situation has affected the effectiveness of the Nigerian police force in collaborating with local/hostcommunities in combating crime.

The following are some of the impediments to community policing in Nigeria.

7.1. Corruption

Corruption is a pervasive problem in Nigeria. Almost every sphere of the Nigerian society has been permeated by corrupt practices. Numerous definitions have been given for corruption as providing a simple all-encompassing definition of corruption often proves arduous. However, for the purpose of this paper, Edor's (2016) definition of corruption as 'as the intentional and dishonest misuse of public or private office by deviating from the rules and regulations of a particular transaction to confer undue benefit to oneself or another. Corruption perpetrated by the Nigerian police usually comes in the form of bribery and extortion. The Nigerian police force has been constantly seen to extort money from commuters instead of implementing relevant laws. Also, even when bail bond is statutorily free, the Nigerian police force collect exorbitant charges before releasing suspects. These actions tarnish the image of the police force and breeds resentment and suspicion among the citizens that they are supposed to be collaborating with to provide security.

7.2. Perception of the Police

How the Nigerian police force is perceived is relevant question in this regard. 'What is police officer's perception of the citizens are crucial factors/questions in determine how the core philosophy of community policing is achieved. Okeshola and Mudiare (2013) posts some claimed to be serving? What is the perception of citizens to police officers in Nigeria?'. The brutal response to this is that the perception of the Nigerian police is negative. In a study of Public Perception of Police Activities in Okada, Edo State Nigeria, Micah (2017) stated that Police activities especially in Okada town, are fraught with illegal act and this really affected public rating of the organization.

7.2. Military Orientation

The training and psychological leanings of the average police officer is a major hindrance to effective community policing. The Nigerian police rather than function as a citizen agency perceives themselves as a tough military outfit. Indeed, their treatment of civilians has attracted widespread condemnation. Their abuses on civilians or alleged crime suspects range from ordinary arrest and unlawful detention to threats and acts of violence, including sexual assault, torture, and even extrajudicial killings (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

7.3. Institutional Constraints

Institutional constraints to effective community policing include inadequate manpower (both in strength and expertise), insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment, and poor conditions of service of the average policeman. Mammus (2010) further stressed that the major challenge of policing is the manpower shortage, inadequate funding, inadequate logistic support and infrastructure, lack of serviceable information and technological equipment to cover all the areas of the State are responsible for the current state of the police in Nigeria.

In addition to the above, DFID (2000) traced some of the reasons for the phlegmatic response and non-cooperation of several police personnel to community policing in Nigeria as follow:

- Lack of understanding as to the precise nature of Community Policing;
- Vested interest on the part of those benefiting from the status quo.
- A fatalistic attitude involving a belief that change is not possible whilst the police "rank and file" (i.e. junior personnel, continue to be poorly paid);
- Unwillingness to abandon practices that are familiar in favor of the unknown or uncertain (i.e. feeling threatened by the different operational and managerial competencies required for modern policing);
- Many police officers and other stakeholders tend to view Community Policing as the development of better community relations managed through a departmental function, rather than a policing philosophy that is focused upon providing best quality service and therefore should inform each and every police activity; and
- Community policing being mistakenly considered by some as an import from a former colonial power and therefore irrelevant to policing in Nigeria. (DFID, 2000: 11-12).

8. The Way Forward

From the foregoing discussions, the conventional approach to policing in Nigeria as provided for in section 214 of the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 as well as section 4 of the Police Act has not been able to address the evolving, complicated and emerging dimensions of crime in terms of its dictation, control and prevention as well as pervasive and sophistication in nature and character of criminality in Nigeria. It is also obvious that mere lip service to community policing in Nigeria is unhelpful. What is required is a systematic overhaul of the present security infrastructure in such a way as to make the Nigerian police more responsive, aggressive, proactive, efficient and proactive in crime dictation, prevention and control in line with contemporary realities and global best practices.

This study makes the following recommendations to wit;

- i. The police should put machinery in place to rid itself of bad elements within the system that have soiled the image of the police with extortion, demanding and taking of bribe from the public. The police can adopt technology for this purpose by installing security cameras at traffic points and in their police stations that can easily be referred to for greater transparency.
- ii. The Police should also embark on the laundering of its image by rebranding. The social media can readily be used in this direction, if it genuinely desires a better image and service delivery. In doing this the police should be ready to assess complaints lodged against their officers and must be seen to take prompt actions as well as respect the rights of accused, detainees and informant's.
- iii. The military and colonial orientation of the police should be immediately discarded. The police should undertake programs that can directly affect the lives of the citizens. They must respect the rule of law and human rights as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution, sections 33-46
- iv. Officers of the Nigerian police force should be made to undergo constant training on how to maintain proper civil relations. Also, psychological evaluations should be conducted on all field officers to ensure that they are of the right temperament to implement the laws.
- v. Community leaders should be constantly engaged on assessing their security needs and sharing relevant intelligence. In addition to this, sources of security intelligence should remain anonymous and their intelligence investigated first to ensure its credibility before definitive action is taken.
- vi. It our hope that some of these recommendations should be captured in the ongoing review of section 214 and the Polices Act inparticular.

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