

# National Security and the Imperativeness of State Police in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects

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**Abstract** - More recently, there has been an ongoing clamour for the establishment of state police in Nigeria. This, however, is a sharp reaction to the increased spate of crimes and violence in the country, notably the activities of killer herdsmen, BokoHaram insurgents, banditry, kidnapping and other crimes that has been going on unabated. This paper therefore investigates whether the establishment of state police will enhance Nigeria's national security. The study is anchored on strategic theory as its framework of analysis. It also made use of documentary method of data collection as well as content analysis. The study discovered that over-centralization of the Nigerian Police Force has led to an increase in crimes and violence in the country. The study strongly recommends among others, a decentralization of the Nigerian Police Force to the level of state police as this will help contain violence at the grassroots/community level before they escalate to threaten the national security of the country.

**Keywords:** National Security, State Police, Violence, Peace

## I. INTRODUCTION

The reason for the emergence of government is to maintain social order and as well ensure the security of lives and properties of individuals within its jurisdiction. To this very extent, the police force as part of the executive arm of government was created to implement laws in the society so as to maintain order and guarantee the security of individuals within its boundary.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Police Force is an institution responsible for the maintenance of peace and security in the country by enforcing all laws and regulations which they are directly and indirectly charged with. However, the Nigerian Police Force has performed below expectations in carrying out its obligations as hinted above, as life in the country has degenerated into what Thomas Hobbes described in his book "Leviathan" as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. The insecurity in the country has made citizens to live in continual fear and danger of violent death, consequently upon the activities of the BokoHaram insurgents in the Northern part of the country which has threatened the existence of the Nigerian state; the activities of the Niger Delta militants in the Southern part of the country which almost harmed the nation's economic life wire (oil production); the activities of the Killer Herdsmen that has rampaged the entire parts of the country; banditry; kidnappings; ritual killings among others.

The aforementioned security challenges heralded the debate for the creation of state police as a panacea to these

overwhelming security challenges that has bedeviled the country as many blamed it on the over-centralization of the Nigerian Police Force. The call for the establishment of state police as a means of resolving the security challenges in the country was borne out of the desires of the people to live in a peaceful, orderly and secured environment where they can actualize their individual and collective goals, as this would be impossible without proper policing that guarantees the safety of lives and properties of the citizens.

The study therefore sets out to investigate if the establish of state police is a good palliative towards the enormous security challenges facing the country having weighed both the problems and prospects that will accompany the state police if established.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Palm (1979) asserts that the police was established to guarantee a crime free society. Viergiver (1995) adds that the development of the police has been largely influenced by the demands of society for relief from problems that cannot be solved in another way or totally solved. He maintained that if one commits crime, and everyone behaved reasonably, the need for a sophisticated police force would not arise at all. But since the above condition is difficult to attain, there will always be need for the police. Supporting these theses, Bunyard (1978) opines that the basic objectives of the police have not radically changed since their inception. He maintained that what has changed is in the way in which the force has responded to these objectives. Gillan (1988) observes that the duty of the policeman in the contemporary world is no longer restricted to acting as watchman and detectives, but has also expanded to include crime prevention by teaching people how to safeguard their own property, and the rule of law in order to divert them from breaking the law. However, Bunyard (1978) maintained that the resources at the disposal of the police and their implications for result oriented policing cannot be reconciled. This he claimed was as a result of the absence of an acceptance gauge or construct with which to measure crime prevention. Bunyard (1978) thesis supports Tamuno (1970) who maintained that the circumstances and situations in which the police perform their duties make it a rather hard process to evaluate the entire process of law and order maintenance. He opines that a number of persons may be resentful of the police but the society is generally handicapped to actually assess the extent to which the police

perform its duties effectively. That the public expects much from the police which is ill-equipped to actualize its set goals. He believes that a change of attitude of people towards the police would also imply a spontaneous acquisition of wonderful records and scores for the police. That for police to be effective and result oriented, good public relations must be established.

Okere (1994) on the other hand believes that most of the problems faced by police in carrying out their duties arise primarily from the fact that members of the police force are part and parcel of the society they police. This makes effective maintenance of law and order to be very problematic since the factors, which affect the host society do not spare the police force. Ozo-Eson (1994) adds that the aftermath of poverty, mal-distribution, and inequality in access to the good things of life creates a crime prone society. He believes that the unhealthy competition brought about by social aims and aspirations can become so pronounced that those who cannot cope are forced to fall out and develop disrespect for society and its values, which in turn can lead to a kind of alienation, desperation and crime.

Alemika (1993) and Nweze (1997) have argued that the society creates the crime which the individual commits and that the Nigerian society, like every other society where inequality exists is prone to criminal activities. Alemika (1994) views this condition as a contradiction that a society which produces the objective conditions for crime should turn around to expect the police to prevent or reduce the level of crime. Similarly, Mbosowo (1994) maintains that policing a crime-infested society is an enormous task for the Nigerian police and that the social system in Nigeria is fraught with influences which may destabilize and cause disorder. He also maintained that little should be expected from the police under the prevailing limiting situation. This limiting and frustrating situation are evident in the level of force equipment, the involvement of its personnel in criminal activities.

Eme and Ogbochie (2014) stated that beyond theory, regional police in the immediate post-independence period was used to suppress opposition in all the regions in the country. Prevailing intolerance, vindictiveness and absence of maturity of politicians suggest that it could still be used to suppress the opposition. This is the fear among many who, though desirous of the federal principle, would want some pragmatic ways to bring it into effect. Already in practice, but not enshrined in the constitution, is the deployment of a large number of police to their indigenous states and local governments. There is also a notable trend of massive funding of the police by state governments, some of who maintain unofficial security apparatuses. While these extant realities make the case for state police saleable, the inherent authoritarian trappings of the process based on present-day intemperance of political office holders cannot be dismissed simply.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted strategic theory in the analysis of National Security and the Imperativeness of State Police in Nigeria. Strategic theory is strongly associated with the works of Thomas Schelling and Collin Gray.

One of the major contentions of strategic theory is relating ends to means (Smith, 2011). Howard (1983) cited in Smith(2011) hinted that it's the use of available resources to gain a defined objective. Strategic theorists also contend that an actor's interest is often influenced by the wider strategic environment and that actors behave rationally in the pursuit of its objectives i.e. making decisions that are optimal in attaining the desired objective.

Peace is one of the prerequisites for development to thrive in any country of the world as lack of the former will definitely undermine the later (Mbaeze and Nnaji, 2018). Applying the strategic theory, the national security of every country is paramount as it guarantees the survival and existence of any country. This explains why the federal government of Nigeria made provisions for the establishment and funding of the Nigerian police force in the nation's budgetary allocations. This is to enable the security apparatus carry out its objectives of protection of lives and properties, maintenance of law and order in the society.

Again, the theory posits that the actor (state) is rational as it makes decisions that are rational and optimal in the attainment of the desired objective which in this case is the national security. Consequently, in its rationality, the constitution has made the governor of every state the commander in chief security officers at the state level. This is also in consideration of the wider strategic Nigerian environment for effective governance and maintenance of law and order in the society. This is taking into cognizance of the size of the country and its heterogeneous nature.

### IV. A BRIEF HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF THE NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE

Prior to the European conquest of Africa, the various autonomous nations that made up today's Nigeria had their own way of securing lives and properties (Rotimi 2001). The Nigerian Police Force as it is known today first came into existence in 1861. In order to effectively impose its rule, and control the people and their resources, the British created a 30men Consular Guard (Agwanwo 2014).

One of the major reasons why the colonial masters established the police force according to Aleyomi (2013) was because violence and fraud were employed in the conquest of the nationalities and therefore feared resistance. The police force thereby became an instrument of violence and oppression against the indigenous populace.

Aleyemi (2013) captures the fact that after the establishment of Consular Guards both the Northern and Southern protectorates had different patterns of police administration.

However, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1930, the Nigerian police became unified under the command of an inspector general whose office was at the force headquarters in Lagos.

Table 1: History of Police Creation in Nigeria

| S/N | Date                            | Name and Structure   | Jurisdiction  |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1   | April 1861                      | Consular Guard (30 men)  | Lagos   |
| 2   | 1863                            | Name changed to Hausa Guard  | Lagos   |
| 3   | 1879 (Regularized by Ordinance) | Constabulary of the Colony of Lagos, also known as 'Hausa Constabulary'  | Colony of Lagos   |
| 4   | January 1896                    | Lagos Police Force created   | Lagos and South West  |
| 5   | 1891                            | Oil Rivers Protectorate constabulary created   | Oil Rivers Protectorate – present territories of Edo, Delta, Akwalbom, Rivers and Cross River States- Calabar as HQ   |
| 6   | 1893                            | Niger Coast Constabulary   | Nigeria Coast Line (also actively involved in the 1896 British expedition to Benin)                                   |
| 7   | 1888                            | Royal Niger Constabulary by Royal Niger Company – Lokoja as HQ   | Installations along the banks of the River Niger (played a key role in the British campaigns against Bida and Ilorin) |
| 8   | 1900                            | Royal Niger Constabulary was split into the Northern Nigeria Police Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment  | Protectorate of Northern Nigeria  |
| 9   | 1906                            | Southern Nigeria Police Force from Lagos Police Force and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary. Southern Nigeria Regiments from bulk of Niger Coast Constabulary | Protectorate of Southern Nigeria  |
| 10  | April 1930                      | All Police Force were merged to form the Nigeria Police Force – Lagos as HQ  | Nigeria   |

Source: Nigerian Police Force cited in Agwanwo, Destiny Eze 2014

According to Nwanze (2014), Nigeria's Independence constitution gave each region the right to have regional police while the FG retained oversight with NPF. However, it is important to note that this was reversed during the military regime of Gen. AguiyiIronsi who adopted a unitary style of leadership. When Nigeria returned to civilian regime it maintained the status quo as enshrined in the 1979 and 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Thus entrusting the overall leadership of the institution into the hands of the Inspector General of Police. In Nigeria each of the 36 States

has a Police Command including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Each of the State Police Command is headed by the state commissioner of police. Meanwhile, a group of the State Police Commands constitutes a Zone under the leadership of an Assistant Inspector-General. Under the state command, there exists Area Commands with Divisional Police Officer at the helm of affairs. Then followed by local police posts scattered in different locations in each state and the Federal Capital Territory.

Table 2: Administrative structure of the Nigerian Police

| S/N | TITLES                                   | DEPARTMENT                                 | RESPONSIBILITIES                              |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 1   | Department of Finance and Administration | Finance and Administration                 | General Administration                        |
| 2   | Department of Operation                  | Operations                                 | Crime Prevention, public order, public safety |
| 3   | Department of Logistics and Supply       | Logistics and Supply                       | Works and Public Estate Management            |
| 4   | Department of Training and Development   | Training                                   | Human Resources                               |
| 5   | Department of Research and Planning      | Planning, Research and Development         | Statistics and Data                           |
| 6   | Department of Criminal Investigation     | Force Criminal Investigation Dept (FORCID) | Investigation                                 |
| 7   | Department of Information Technology     | Information and Communication Technology   | Communication Management                      |

Source: Onyemwinmina and Aibieyi 2016

The Nigerian Police Force is controlled and supervised by the Police Service Commission, the Nigerian Police Council and the Ministry of Police Affairs.

#### V. CHALLENGES TO POLICE EFFICIENCY IN NIGERIA

##### *Misguided Orientation*

One of the major problems that have marred the performance of the Nigerian Police Force is traceable to the origin of the Force. The colonial masters like we discussed above established a 30 man constable which later metamorphosed into the Nigerian Police Force as we know today to imposing its rule and brutally suppress resistant oppositions in the so called colony. According to Chukwuma (1997) cited in Tobe (2019) the Force was seen as an instrument of coercion. Upon the attainment of Independence, Nigeria inherited the same police institution from the British colonial masters without any major re-orientation. As a result officers of the still see as enemies of the state and subject to coercion. The use of violence and deadly force in crime control bear eloquent testimony of the brutality visited on the Nigerian citizens by the police (Tobe, 2019).

##### *Problem of Over-Centralization*

Many have blamed the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force on its apparent over-centralization. Section 214, sub section (2) of CFRN (1999) stipulates that the Nigerian Police Force shall be under the command of Inspector General of Police. Odeh and Umoh (2015) rightly noted the stipulations of section 215 of the same constitution which posits that before a state police commissioner carries out an order issued by his governor, he may "request that the matter be referred to the president or such minister of the government of the federation as may be authorized in that behalf by the president for his directions". To this, Arase (2018) remarked that the operational control of the Nigerian Police Force is bestowed on the Inspector General of Police who in turn reports to the president. Located within the exclusive list, the Federal Government thus exercises absolute control over the security institution whereas the heads of other political units that make up the federation are helpless in issues pertaining to the routine maintenance of law and order in their constituencies.

This was made even worst with the military intervention in the Nigerian Police which further militarized and gave them the morale to suppress the citizens.

##### *Corruption*

Lack of adequate funding and supervision inherent in the centralized police setting has plunged police force into some corrupt practices notably bribery. The act of collecting fifty (50) naira from motor riders is no longer novel to the Nigerian citizens. The resultant effect of this particular act by some Nigerian police officers is that they extort this money and leave their security duties. It then becomes easier for criminal elements to penetrate knowing fully well that they only need to settle the officer and nothing more.

##### *Poor Funding and Mismanagement*

Analysts have identified insufficient funding as one of the major setbacks to effective policing in the country. They have argued that unavailability of funds to purchase ammunitions and other needed security gadgets has continued to weaken the activities of the force at the federal level. To this extent, Ugwu et al, (2013) maintained that part of the arguments for poor policing system in Nigeria has always been associated with the scenario of inadequate budgetary allocation to the force by the federal government, leading to lack of equipments and motivation for effective national policing. The problem of insufficient funding of the Nigerian police by the Federal Government and mismanagement of fund in the force has greatly undermined the performance of Nigerian police force, giving rise to insecurity in the country.

##### *Problem of Deployment*

The deployment of police officers to new areas where they are not familiar with and transferring them when it seems they are acclimatizing with the new area is a salient issue that poses a serious challenge to police efficiency in the country. When an officer is posted to a particular place he or she has not been before, it requires time to familiarize with the atmosphere. In most cases it is challenging as they have to learn and understand not only the vernacular but also the culture of the host community for effective performance.

##### *Lack of Adequate Manpower*

According to Inter Pol (2012) cited in Ugwu et al (2013) the Nigerian Police Force comprises of about 350,000 (Three Hundred and Fifty) able bodied men and women. From all indications, the total population of Nigeria's national police force is below the United Nations (UN) minimum international rating of 300 police officers per 100,000 citizens for UN member states. Using the UN standard, it is observed that Nigeria's police force national rating is only 205 police officers for 100,000 Nigerians for the year 2012 (Ugwu et al, 2013). The implication is that one (1) policeman polices 487 people against the UN standard of one (1) policeman to 333 people. The issue is further compounded by the indiscriminate deployment of police officers to guard politicians. We have instances where three (3) - four (4) police officers are deployed to guard a single individual. To this effect, Osayande Parry the former Chairman Police Service Commission noted that about 100,000 police officers were assigned for personal protection and guard duties. Shortage of manpower has contributed to the inability of the Nigerian Police to effectively police the whole nation taking into cognizance the size and population of the country. This has also created a gap for criminal activities and security crisis all over the nation.



## VI. ARGUMENTS AGAINST/CHALLENGES OF STATE POLICE

### *Finance*

The Nigerian Police Force is one of the items that fell under the Executive Legislative list in the Second Schedule Part 1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). This therefore implies that the federal government shoulders the responsibility of financing the Force. Thus, the creation of state police will have to take over the responsibility of financing the Force at the state level. However, argued that the issue of financing the state police when created is unrealistic as many states still struggle to pay salaries of workers. Some critics have gone further to say that the inability of the state governments fund the state police will further entrench corruption in the Police Force.

### *Fear of Abuse by State Governors*

There's a general conception that the establishment of state police would bring about tyrant governors. There's a fear that the governors will use the police force at the state level as an instrument to silence oppositions, rig elections and perpetuate other crimes. The opponents to state police such as President Muhamadu Buhari, Goodluck Jonathan and other prominent Nigerians have rather called for a reform in the Nigerian police system.

### *Divisive*

Some scholars have argued that Nigerians have not been able to imbibe that spirit of unity and national consciousness as they are sharply divided along ethnic and religious line. They went ahead to argue that the establishment of state police will further divide the people. The centralization of the Nigerian Police Force for them is thus an instrument of national unity.

They went further to argue that Nigerians don't see themselves first as Nigerians and that some state police in a state for one reason or the other may join forces with other groups to challenge the central government.

## VII. ARGUMENTS FOR/PROSPECTS OF THE PROPOSED STATE POLICE

### *Employment Opportunities*

It is important to note that unemployment is one of the major factors that have a significant link to increased crimes rates in the country. The establishment of state police no doubt will amount to massive employment the citizens scattered across the states. The massive employment of these youths alone will help contain the security crisis across the country as most of the crimes and violence are propelled by the high rate of joblessness in the country.

### *Efficiency*

In developed climes such as U.S, Britain and France decentralization of the Police Force is seen as a veritable strategy to proper policing. However, you need to have people

within the locality to be part of the policing system for proper and effective policing. Lack of state police is what brought about vigilance and cultural security outfits in different nomenclature to fill the gap created by the absence of state police. Agwanwo (2014) quoted Yomi in an interview granted to TELL (2011, August) as saying that the establishment of state police is based on the need to reduce crime to its barest. Crime occurs in every "community" and is perpetrated by those who in most cases, come from that community or locality. Yomi strongly maintained that to deal with crime therefore, there is an urgent need to ensure that "locals are absorbed and posted to their various localities to fish out the criminals.

Proponents of the state police have further argued that when people are brought from different sections of the country to police a place where they not understand the terrain, culture and lifestyle of the people they are policing, they will find it difficult to discharge their duties effectively especially during investigations. The case is different when you have a police officer who is an indigene; he knows virtually all the people in his area and can easily identify the people with questionable character unlike a police officer who is new to the area.

### *The Federalist Perspective*

The centralized police system in a federal setting is a fundamental contradiction. Proponents of state police have argued that it in tune with the principle of true federalism and decentralization of power in the Nigerian Police Force will enable states to effectively maintain law and order especially during emergencies (Eme and Anyadike, 2013).

Lack of decentralization in the force negates the spirit and practice of true federalism. State governors in a federating system should be able to command the monopoly of the use of force at the state level to ensure that peace and order is well maintained, as that is one of their primary duties as heads of government at the state level. Reuben (2008) cited in Agwanwo (2014) noted that the vertical authority structure, despite the delimitation of the force into zonal commands, has been perceived as a perpetration of a unitary system rather than a federalist arrangement and accounts for police inefficiency in Nigeria. Agwanwo (2014) maintained that for the Nigerian Police Force to effectively discharge its constitutional duties in such a way that will endear them to those they are policing, they have to function in a decentralized police system. As this would be a pathway to efficient policing in Nigeria.

Other climes who practice federalism adopt a decentralized police system which allows the establishment of state police at the federating units for the maintenance of law and order. Such countries include as United States, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Mexico etc

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Over-concentration of the Nigerian Police Force has created a lacuna in the nation's security system. Sidelining the state

governors who are supposedly the chief security officers at the state level makes the Nigerian police weak at the grassroots, paving way for the escalation of crises as the state commissioners of police in the 36 states of the federation including the FCT are answerable to the Inspector General of police and the president. The study therefore contends that for the Nigerian Police Force to effectively tackle the security challenges in the country considering the size and heterogeneous nature of the country, there is every need to decentralize the force through state police creation. Anything short of this is tantamount to giving the state governors the responsibility of chief security officers at the state level without powers to act upon it.

## IX. WAY FORWARD

### *Establishment of State Police*

So that state governors should be able to appoint commissioners subject to the approval of State House of Assembly. As argued above, the establishment of the state police is strategic to the national security of the country because of its size and heterogeneous nature. The state police if created will not only decongest the administrative stress at the federal level but will also have a closer chief of security officer in the person of the governor monitoring to addressing security issues before they escalate.

### *Guiding Against Abuse by State Governors*

To ensure that state governors do not abuse the state police system, the principles of checks and balance should be upheld. The appointment and removal of the commissioner of police should be done by the governor and approved by the State House of Assembly.

### *Regulatory Bodies*

Although the police commissioners at the state level should answer to the state governors, the Nigerian Police Council, Police Service Commission and the Ministry of Police Affairs should retain their regulatory powers over the state police. This is to further prevent abuse by state governors as well as maintain standardize and uniform police system all over the states.

### *Re-orientation*

Ideally, the police are supposed to be friends of the people they are policing as the motto of the Nigerian police says. A good relationship with the people the people at all levels will enable them discharge their duties with ease. This will enable them gain the trust of the people who will in turn provide them with vital security information knowing that they are in safe hands. Again is the need to change the institutionalized extortion of motorist. To achieve this attitudinal change orientations should be organized at intervals through workshops and seminars. The creation of state police makes this orientation easier and effective.

### *Man Power Training and Empowerment*

Police officers both at the federal and state level should be properly trained especially on the rules of engagement. They should also be sponsored to study abroad for professional courses and also learn the use of modern gadgets as this will help to improve their capacity to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively.

### *Welfare/Motivation*

Welfare packages such as adequate and regular salary, annual leave, healthy housing scheme, special care for those caught in harm's way, taking care of the families of officers who lost their lives serving the nation, retirement benefits (pension and gratuity) etc as these helps in the improvement of police performance and reduces corruption in the force.

### *Effective Utilization of Budgetary Allocations and Security Votes*

There should be accountability and transparency in the management of police funds. In view of this there should be proper auditing at least at the end of every year. On the part of the governors, the amount allocated for security votes should not be a secret. They should be accounted for and efforts should be made by the State House of Assembly to ensure that they are used for security purposes at the state level.

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