

Innovations

National Security and Sustainable Economic Development: The Role of Vigilantees (Community Policing) Schemes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is facing many domestic security upheavals which gave rise to internal and external desires to confront the seemingly insurmountable situation. The menace of Boko-Haram crisis in northeast, violent farmer-herder crisis in southwest and north-central states, banditry and kidnapping in Southeast and south-south regions have great effect on socio-economic life of Nigerians. To arrest this situation, in different location gave rise to desire for complementary security arrangement (in some cases with backing from federal or state governments). While some opinion molders and policy formulators have in these circumstances advocated for a comprehensive overhaul of some or all these governmental agencies. This paper thoroughly appraises the role of complementing outfits such as community policing and local vigilante outfits like Ebube Agu of Southeast, Amotekun of Southwest and Niger Delta Volunteer Force of South-South in sustainable economic development through augmentation of national security. This study confirms the positive activities of the vigilantes, request that various tiers of government to develop synergistic efforts of these vigilantes' and other state security services for the betterment of the Nigeria security apparatus.

Keywords: National Security, Vigilante groups, community policing, Economic Development.

1.0 Introduction

For economic growth and development to occur in any given society/nation, matters relating to security remains great concern to administration of any nation. This is because mutual relationship exists between economic development and national security. National security entails amongst other things safeguard of lives and properties of inhabitants. Personal security, one of the seven dimensions of national security is considered as most important aspect, as security threat destabilizes the individual (person or organization/firm) being threatened and instill fear in the area resulting in capital flight. Also, reduced foreign direct investment, brain drain, destruction of some existing infrastructure and loss of lives negatively affect economic growth/development.

The current military action against illegal armed groups with theatre mainly against Boko-Haram menace in north east, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security

Network (ESN) secessionist agitators of Southeast, Oduduwa Freedom Fighters of Southwest, crisis in Niger Delta and other security challenges in other zones are no doubt great challenge to Nigeria. Consequently, many people strongly opine that these agitations which have given rise to violence related and crime induced activities in Nigeria constitute a serious danger to Nationhood. In their bid to actualize their primary objectives, violent and counter violent activities follow suite thereby creating a security atmosphere not favourable to national development. This is because the attendant militias backing each group to succeed mastermind majority of the security breaches. Peculiar challenge of mention is that Nigerian military is faced by an asymmetric warfare which soldiers find it very difficult to distinguish law abiding citizens from renegades (Aina & Odiji, 2019). The rebels have permeated the whole system such that president had acknowledged that they not only live in and among the people, but have penetrated into his administration, the military and police organizations.

The research therefore, revisits the roles of vigilantes, Community policing and other security arrangements geared towards national security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

The research becomes significant following divergent views within public domain either in support or against various security formations and their activities. The work is important in policy formulation to guide the handling of similar outfits involved in fighting crimes and intelligence gathering in Nigeria.

Others sections in this work are: the conceptual clarification, theoretical review, empirical review, methodology, findings and discussions, conclusion, and recommendation.

2.0 Review of Related Works

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Community Policing is an organization-wide philosophy and management approach that enhances community, government and police partnership; proactive problem resolving and the people participation in addressing crime and other neighborhood issues (Wroblecki & Hess 2003). They added that this modern approach is directed towards achieving the olden days when security issued and general health are participatory with every one assuming responsibility of what happens in his environment. It is not just a select few or just the local government administration, but it is all inclusive such that everyone is actively involved. In essence, sensitivity of everyone to what is happening in one's environment in matters relating to security is highly expected.

Community Based Police (CBP) is closely associated with democratic governance and a police service respectful of laws, not Government. Thus, human rights promotion and protection are fundamental to CBP and should form integral aspect of police training (UNDP, 2006)

2.1.1 Origin of Community Policing

The maxim ‘the police are the public and the public are the police’ by sir Robert Peel in 1829 fully captured the aim of community policing which focuses on involvement of the communities and close association between the police and the inhabitants. However, the social gap between the police and the public as noticed in the United States increased tremendously following the replacement of traditional foot patrol by patrol cars. Traditionally, police departments are organizations limited to respond to calls for service from their offices. In late 1970s and early 1980s, the insular specialized approach started changing. During that era in America, there was a paradigm shift from the traditional, professional model of policing to a more community partnership and proactive model of policing (Wroblewski and Hess, 2003). Thus, Community policing started in the United States.

Three foundations: preventive patrol, quick response time, and follow-up investigation were adopted as operational professional model over decades by U.S police. Not being satisfied in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of operations, using the professional model, criminal justice research to review current procedures and evaluate alternative programme started. First known of these studies was the Kansas City, Missouri, Preventive Patrol Experiment (1974) which is suggestive that precautionary patrol does not essentially avert crime or reassure citizens. Arising from the study, many police departments assigned police units to proactive patrol. Secondly, Wilson and Kelling (1982) introduced the theory of “broken windows” which postulates that in event a locality allows physical manifestations of disorder, like broken windows and graffiti, go unrepaired, it will begin to experience social disorder, increased crime rates, and decreased safety. The theory presumes that early detection and taking care of minor crimes would make the community free from major crimes. Therefore, to get rid of minor and major threats and crime activities in a locality, police must maintain close, regular contact with citizens. This implies that police and citizens should strive cooperatively to build a powerful sense of commitment and shared responsibility in the neighborhood, thus, uplifting the whole quality of life in the community (Bohm & Haley, 2005).

2.1.2 Role of Vigilantes

This section shall focus on:

- a. Amotekun
- b. Ebube Agu
- c. Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)

2.1.2.1 Amotekun

Amotekun (“Leopard” in ‘Yoruba’ language), or the Western Nigeria Security Network (WSN), was established due to increase in violence and attacks on farmers and travelers in the region in 2019. The governors of the region expressed reservation on the ability of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) securing the residence of the region. Amotekun establishment aims at complementing national security forces’ operations. An Act establishing Amotekun came into being in March, 2020, empowering state governments to fund and administer the organisation. Some features which distinguishes it from other similar security outfit includes:

First, as distinct from CJTF, which performs as a body, Amotekun is planned to function as a paramilitary force which comprise coming together of existing CBAGs, such as: the hunters association, Agbekoya farmers association, Oodua People’s Congress (OPC); socio-political groups such as the Pan-Yoruba socio-political group “Afenifere,” and units of recently recruited corps members.

Given this distinction, for the purposes of this policy note, Amotekun will be referred to as a **state-backed supra-CBAG (SBSC)**. Defining Amotekun as SBSC underlines its exceptional feature as part of coming together of cross-regional CBAGs and Community-Based Associations (CBAs) in charge of security of communities in Southwest Nigeria (Kumolu, 2020 and Moritz , 2019).

. These groups, initially formed as a response to political contestation, subsequently extended their mandate into security operations. The Agbekoya Farmers Group successfully embarked on aggressive protest against new tax regime on peasant farmers from 1968 to 1969 against military rule in Western region. In a like manner, Yoruba Council of Leaders formed Afenifere, in 1999; the custodians of the socio-cultural and political agenda of the Yoruba ethnic group are ascribe to the leaders of Afenifere,

The OPC is another socio-cultural group in Yoruba has a militia corps devoted to protect and advance the political interest of Yoruba ethnic group. Notwithstanding that OPC has familiar principles with Afenifere, there is no overlap in their leadership or membership. The

involvement of these socio-cultural groups in Amotekun cast fear as to what their political aspirations or objectives may be or metamorphosize into, if not checked.

Secondly, Amotekun has no difference to the CJTF's fundamental mission against Boko Haram insurgent. Success of CJTF as shown in the accuracy of discharge of its assignment and target opposition earn it community acceptance. Amotekun, terms of office are imprecisely described as supportive of internal security forces. Its vague mandate casts doubt of possibility of operational overstretch and accompanied abuses, principally targeting other ethnic groups.

Thirdly, Amotekun is the first regional SBSC in the country in contrast to other CBAGs and paramilitary corps that are established before it. Furthermore, it is supported by state governors, not Federal Government or the NPF. However, no framework defines the operational boundary and administrative jurisdictions between Amotekun, and NPF.

Relevance to Policy and Practice

Inspector General of the NPF expressed concern about the institutional features of Amotekun. The federal Attorney General issued a letter citing the illegality of Amotekun a few days after its inauguration. Office of the President of Nigeria issued a statement on August 25, 2020 asserting that NPF will decide the operational structure of Amotekun. However, Governor of Ondo state (one of the governors supporting Amotekun operatives) debunked the claims that Amotekun would be institutionalized as the state police infrastructure in a television interview on August 27, 2020. The fear being expressed is based on the fact that command structure of Amotekun rest with state governments as contained in the Edicts establishing them

Pro-Amotekun legal practitioners justified its constitutionality by comparing it to the Hisbah Corps (*hisbah*) established by Edict from Kano State (Northwestern Nigeria), "Kaduna State Neighborhood service" and Ebonyi State "Neighborhood Watch Group" in Northwestern and Southeastern Nigeria, respectively. *Hisbah* though established as religious outfit in 2003, evolved to include policing activities, directly reporting to the state police in Kano. The debates over the jurisdiction and governance of Amotekun is hinged on boundaries of administrative powers between the federal and state governments and amplification of intergroup rivalry and fear of further aggravate pre-existing ethnic and religious tensions.

The creation of the outfit also aggravated quest by other ethnic socio-political groups for establishment of their own security forces, like Myetti-Allah (in the north) and Pan Niger Delta Forum expressing fear of abuses by the state government under which they operate.

2.1.2.2 Ebube Agu

Sequel to fast-worsening security condition Governors of Southeast zone comprising; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, inaugurated a new security outfit codenamed 'EbubeAgu'. This inauguration attracted heads of security agencies who pledged to maintain joint security outfit.

The Nation (2021: April 13) reports the southeast zone has witnessed a couple of turmoil, comprising arson (police stations etc), brutal attacks on correctional centres resulting in illegal freeing of inmates and killings including security personnel, natives/farmers and herdsmen.

Just like Southwest security outfit '*Amotekun*', this newly unveiled outfit is saddled with the responsibility of coordinating activities of vigilantes in the Southeast. The outfit will have a command and coordination centre in Enugu and saddled with the following:

1. Security awareness.
2. Intelligence gathering.
3. Channel for security alarm.
4. All the states taking responsibility for their respective security affairs.
5. Exchanging intelligence in a seamless manner.
6. Checkmating crimes in the zone.
7. To mitigate attacks on communities and prevent loss of lives and property (The Nation, 2021: April 13)

2.1.2.3 Civilian JTF

In line with the provisions of law, the federal and various state governments at the onset of Boko Haram deadly attacks in 2009 exhibited a rare political will toward restoring order and safeguard lives and properties. President Umar Yar' Adua specifically ordered Chief of Defence Staff and Inspector General of Police to institute measures required to re-establish order in areas affected. As a result, soldiers and policemen were drafted in what is called *Operation Flush Out II*. The security personnel invaded the sects' strongholds throughout the country (Okereke, 2011). Notwithstanding the initial astonishing counter-terrorism hard work, and State of emergency declared by the then President Jonathan which lasted for over three years, Nigeria is not yet on top of the 'war' condition as government always claim wherever the terrorists strike on the target, consisting mostly defenseless civilians. In an effort to end the menace of the group, Borno State youths, formed local vigilante organizations,

called ‘Yan Gora’ also known as Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF) – by their admirers following their initial excellent performance which forced the terrorist sect fleeing to some rural areas and forests in the state. This War-time civil-military partnership which is mentioned in the National Defence Policy (2006), where in section 14 of Chapter 7 states that:

“The Nigerian populace shall be mobilized to provide necessary support and co-operation to the Armed Forces to enable them collectively defend the nation in times of war. Procedures shall be put in place to enable the military receive prompt assistance in the use of civilian communication, transport and other facilities that it may require for the prosecution of war. There shall be legislative procedure for the mobilization of youths for military service...”

The above presents the excellent bases for the formation of the CJTF but failed to clearly define whether they would be involved in combat or non-combat (intelligence gathering) operations or both and their mode of recruitment and remuneration. This cast fear on the manner those youths might pursue selfish ends when not adequately motivated (Olaniyi, 2001).

2.1.3 Dimensions of National Security



- **Economic Security:** In this, individuals are assured of basic income through provision of productive employment opportunities and sufficient payment. Economic security is hampered by Unemployment, chronic poverty and economic hopelessness.
- **Food Security:** This requires individuals in the neighborhood, always, have access to fundamental food and nutrition which engenders stable wellbeing and safeguard against hunger, starvation and malnutrition. This is hampered by poor farm yields; unexpected pest attack on crops and animals, and endemic famine/drought.
- **Health Security:** This requires guarantee of least amount protection from all kinds of diseases and injurious lifestyles that cut short, people lives. Threats to health can include unavailability of clean water, filthy surroundings and poor hygiene/health education.
- **Environmental Security:** It entails an organized safeguard of people from short and long-term devastation of nature, spill-over negative consequence of environmental degradation and abuse of the ecosystem/natural environment. This includes: desertification, gas flaring/discharges, pollution of fresh water, careless use of industrial chemicals et cetera.
- **Personal Security:** This is particular about safeguard of people's lives and their properties from attack fashioned from within and outside the state, aggressive individuals and sub-state actors.
- **Community Security:** It assures peoples' protection from loss of their customary homeland, customs and values consequent upon sectarian and ethnic-related conflicts.
- **Political Security:** This is directed towards safeguard of fundamental human rights of electorates plus liberty from organized torment, maltreatment and coercion.

2.2 Theoretical Review

Functionalist Perspective

This originates from William James of late 19th century. Functionalist believes that all aspects of the society like institution, roles, norms and so on has a purpose and vital to the survival of the society They also assumes that certain degree of order and stability is pivotal for continued existence of a social system. Also believed is that once norms and values are maintained, the society would attain conflict free thus downplaying conflict between classes

within society. Emile Durkheim is the most influential of early functionalists who is viewed as the originator of functionalism. The theory was developed by Talcott Parsons in twentieth century. Durkheim's concept perceives the society as interrelated parts which collectively form a whole. It takes society as a structured arrangement composed of interrelated segments (Harlampos & Holborn, 2007). To survive, the social system has some basic needs (called functional prerequisites) that must be met. This implies that each part, will in certain area, affect other parts and the system in general. It also follows that the survival of the system depends on the compatibility of the various parts. Ineffectiveness and poor service delivery of NPF has implication on the overall security of the society as Nigerian policy is an integral part of Nigeria social system.

Empirical Review

Orlu et al (2021) examined the influence of community policing on state security in River state, Nigeria using descriptive survey research design. Structured questionnaires used for data collection were analysed using mean and standard deviation. It revealed reduction in criminal activities in the state following community policing.

Similarly, Aminu (2016) verified police/community relationship for crime control in Nigeria adopting interpretative framework to access the meaning attached to community policing from stakeholders themselves. Focus group discussion used to elicit information from the police and the community in Kogi state were suggestive that community policing has not positively felt, signaling a relationship gap between police and the community.

Furthermore, Arisukwu et. al (2020) explored the present benefits using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to evaluate the informal crime prevention and control in rural localities in Nigeria using social capital theory to expose the gains of community participation. High theft cases as predominant crime and youths being mostly involved and unemployment and poverty being the precipitating factors were revealed.

In the same vein, Ikenga (2023) verified vigilantes Delta State Nigeria with focus on Abraka Kingdom. Data collected using survey research design (questionnaire) and analyzed using simple percentage suggests that NPF alone cannot secure lives and properties of inhabitants of delta state without complementary effort of the community.

In his own contribution, Adesoji (2021), investigated the effect of the Lagos Neighbourhood Safety Agency on security and how to improve the measures currently adopted. Using

purposive sampling technique, 20 participants both from Lagos mainland and Lagos Island, result revealed that the agency has not been sufficiently equipped to combat insecurity owing to improper recruitment process, insufficient personnel training, mislaid priority of personnel of the agency, and scarcity of up to date security apparatus.

In another study, Isa et. al (2021), studied challenges and prospect of community policing and national security in Nigeria. Qualitative descriptive analysis on secondary data revealed that the 1999 Constitution frameworks and Nigeria's Defense Policy will be the major challenges to the implementation of community policing in Nigeria.

In a similar study, Gubak and Bulus (2018), critically analyzed national security challenges and sustainable development in Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study evidenced a long historical antecedence and the crises and conflicts in the region are the aftermat of many years of exploitation, overlook and intentional desertion of the zone which is the economic hub of the nation, by successive governments and multinational oil companies.

Shukri (2022) verified the impact of vigilante groups on national security with Kibera informal settlement Nairobi County Kenya adopting descriptive survey. Analysis of data collected through interview method established that inadequacy of the state in providing vital services to the inhabitants of informal settlement is the origin of vigilante groups which are effective in the discharge of their duties.

Chikwendu et. al, (2016) explored the roles of vigilantes in crime control for sustainable development in Anambra State, south east Nigeria using 600 adult respondents. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis which revealed socio-cultural factors like the inability of the formal police to adequately and effectively control crime necessitated the establishment of the informal policing structure.

Gap in Literature

From the works reviewed, most of the work in Nigeria were dealing with community policing issues of one state as in the cases of Orlu et al (2021) (River state), Aminu, 2016 (Kogi state), Chikwendu et. al, (2016) (Anambra state), Adesoji (2021), (Lagos State) Ikenga (2023) (Delta State). Shukri (2022) dealt with Nairobi County Kenya. Furthermore, Arisukwu et. al (2020) explored the present benefits of informal policing in Nigeria and Aminu (2016) verified the police/community relationship for crime control

However, this study is a wholistic approach exploring what has been happening in terms of vigilantes and community policing in Nigeria by studying activities in SouthWest-(Amoteku) SouthEast (Ebube Agu) and North East (The JTF). This has both regional outlook, and state

government supports and active community involvement thus giving a true reflection of what community policing/ vigilante activities in Nigeria. This is the first, to the best of the knowledge of the researchers to have such a nation-wide study of community policing in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopts descriptive research design. Information for this paper were gathered from different sources which are largely primary. Literature review was intensive and extensive, reviewing works in different journals, reference books, organizational structures, documentations and interactions with some high-level police officers and leaders of various security outfits on security analysis community policing, we were able to arrive at our impressions. After studying all data that were collected and collated, the qualitative analytical method was used to draw inferences which formed the basis for the final policy recommendations of this paper.

Findings and Discussion

Due to seemly un-abating security problems, operation Amotekun and other aforementioned vigilante organizations present Nigerian state an opportunity to lay the foundation to change community safety provision and the associations between civilians and security actors, for better or for worse. Thus, a close look at local politics that shape the group should be given attention.

CJTF has contributed positively to the ongoing war against terrorism being fought by Nigeria. This is highly noticeable in the early success recorded by Nigeria security forces in the counter insurgency operations against Boko Haram terrorists. CJTF activities are ascribed the reasons major cities likes Maiduguri and Biu are not yet under Boko Harams' control.

Notwithstanding the positive contribution of CJTF some negative and unacceptable attitude of the group are bound. The extra-judicial killings by burning alive, beheading or punishment of captured terrorists which negates the 1949 provisions of Geneva Convention (guarantees the security and safety of prisoners of war) is condemnable. One of such acts (the case of Mohammed Yusuf killed while in police custody) heightened Boko Haram attacks against Nigeria.

The vigilantes' activities in crime control are mostly in assisting constituted security agents are in provision of intelligent information on crime and threats to the military and police,

apprehension of criminals where law enforcement agencies are absent and handing them over to appropriate security agencies. However, government should be reminded of the need for proximate security system in which every community should be dispossessed of visible state protection. Where such is lacking, the vigilantes may carry out such unwholesome acts all in an attempt to tame criminals, if left untamed might over power them.

It is important to state that the war against Boko Haram is indeed a very good scenario for Nigerian to put to test the contents of the Nigerian National Defence Policy (2006), signed into being by president Obasanjo to guide the country when faced with certain security challenges. The contents of the policy particularly reflects the letters and spirit of section 217, sub-section 2 of the 1999 constitution which spells out the constitutional role of the Armed Forces (Okereke, 2011:445). Their roles:

- Defending Nigeria from external aggression;
- Maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on land, sea and air;
- Suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president, but subject to such conditions, as may be prescribed by an act of the national Assembly; and
- Performing such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.

The overall objective of the National Defence Policy 2006 therefore is to protect the country's interests within the ambits of the constitution. The specific objectives are as follows:

- Protection of Nigeria's sovereignty, citizens, values, culture, interests, resources and territory against external threats.
- Provision of defence as well as strategic advice and information to the government.
- Promotion of security consciousness among Nigerians
- Response to request for aid to civil authority
- Participation in disaster management and humanitarian relief operations both at home and abroad.
- Assistance to government agencies and levels of government in achieving goals
- Protection of Nigerians wherever they reside
- Ensuring security and stability in the West African sub-region through collective security

- Participation in bilateral and multilateral operations, and
- Contributing to international peace and security.

The negative potentials of Amotekun has sparked concerns bearing the historical linkage of the group to some violence against civilians, extortions and crimes. Amotekun seems more as an armed social movement supported by state governments than a hyper- locally generated and backed CBAG. Opponents consider it a social movement because of clustering of recruits from preexisting CBAGs and CBAs. The power of Amotekun stems from close cultural ties among the south western states and shared threats (attacks and killings from Fulani herdsmen. The strength of collective identity underpinning Amotekun could be a force for good or destruction. thus the strength can also be its weakness. To address these issues, it is important to enforce appropriate organizing and administrative frameworks and to input from lessons learnt from the operations and transformations of other state-backed CBAGs, including CJTF and OPC (the latter is included within Amotekun) in the ongoing implementation of Amotekun (Moritz , 2019).

Conclusion

Community policing, by whatever name they may be known, has complementary role to the NPF and has contributed towards improvement in national security. In any case, the full effect of their action is yet to be enjoyed by the citizens.

Recommendations

- The establishment of vigilantes came from absence of proximate security system; therefore, government should ensure that all communities are well secured by having police and military persons in adequate number and equipped for the discharge of their duties. Noteworthy is that absence of this exposes the vigilantes and other citizens to the risk of possible reprisal attacks as in many remote towns in North Eastern Nigeria.
- States and local governments should be mandated and empowered constitutionally to operate and remunerate vigilante organizations in all states of the federation. This will help immensely in addressing security problems before they get escalated. The policy will also serve to provide employment to the local youths whom themselves constitute security threat when not employed.
- There should be an organization of constant periodic interactions between the regular

security forces in every particular area with the local vigilantes for intelligence gathering, training, and definition of duties and boundaries and cooperation.

- The Vigilantes roles and remuneration should be well captured in the national defense policy to motivate them. Thus; a call for review of the section as it help in enhancing national security

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