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## **SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: INTERROGATING THE STATE POLICE ARGUMENT**

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**ABSTRACT:** In the last couple of years, Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge in the loss of lives and property due to security challenges occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen and kidnapers. Regrettably, the Nigerian Police force appears to be helpless, particularly against the background of the lack of political will by the federal government in arming the force with the needed equipment. This study interrogates the soundness or sustainability of the argument in favour of state police as a panacea for the security challenges faced by the Nigerian government. The study was anchored on the broken windows theory. The cross sectional design and the quantitative technique which involved the use of semi structured questionnaire was adopted to collect data from 600 respondents in Benin City and this was analyzed with the aid of simple percentage and inferential statistics. The study shows that the call for the state police stems from the failure of the Federal Police force to safeguard lives and property and that a decentralization of the police as done in developed nations is an effective and efficient mechanism to curb the security menace presently being experienced in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Decentralization, Nigerian Police Force, Panacea, Security

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent times there has been upsurge in cases of insecurity in Nigeria which consequently has led many concerned citizens to advance the need to decentralize the Nigeria Police Force in order to ensure that the various States in the federation establish, maintain and control the police formations in their localities. Antecedent to these was the notion of community policing anchored on the idea of a cordial relationship between the police and the society which will help to grapple with criminal activities. There is an underlining presumption based on the neighbouring principle that members of a particular community to a large extent knows each other thus making it quite easy to detect criminals and criminal activities in the community.

In the distant past, Nigeria was one of the relatively peaceful States in the Sub-Sahara Africa but regrettably however, it has slipped into a social milieu where serial bombings, kidnapping for ransom, cold-blooded murders by Fulani herdsmen, mindless killings by Boko Haram and ethno religious conflict linked to militant groups with conflicting political and religious leadings with no hope in sight as to stemming it. In addition to these security challenges, Nigeria's economy has experienced a downward trend, making a vast majority

of the population, about three quarters of the people lives on less than one dollar a day in a nation that has earned oil revenues worth at least USD 280 billion over the past three decades (Eme, 2009).

The insecurity crisis in Nigeria is such that if we are not talking about the rootless killings by the Fulani herdsmen, it will be the activities of “Egbesu boys” of O’odua Peoples’ Congress, Arewa Consultative Forum, Boko Haram’s insurgency, cultism, Niger-Delta military or kidnapers. In trying to stall these activities, security agencies have done crocodile dance, python dance etc as well as the upsurge in military expenditure. In spite of these efforts by government; there still remain the cry of death, mayhem, loss of lives and properties, insecurity in the land. This no doubt portends grave implications for sustainable economic and social development.

Okechukwu and Anyadike (2015) puts the issue more aptly when they observed that in spite of government efforts and increased security expenditure, the security apparatuses appear to have broken down completely as the state no longer has the monopoly of the means of violence. Under the Police Act (2004), the police is licensed to carry arms and use it when necessary in course of carrying out its statutory functions. However, more sophisticated and modern arms and ammunitions have found their way to the hands of different persons and groups who are not licensed by law to possess firearms and they have used them to wreck havoc on the populace with the police appearing helpless as a result of its inability to match force with force. The reality on ground in Nigeria is indeed worrisome. If nothing, there are clear signs that the security challenges presently been faced calls for a reform in the security sector as the sole responsibility of the federal government to protect lives and properties of the citizens has come under intense and severe criticisms. A federal government who has monopoly over security and yet cannot guarantee its citizen’s peace and security needs to give up its monopoly. This has led many to call for the decentralization of the security apparatus of Nigeria. Implied in this call is the desire of many for state police. This then is the basis for this study.

### **Statement of the problem**

That Nigeria is presently facing daunting security challenges, which the police force appears incapable of tackling, is an understatement (Obarisiagbon, 2017). From time immemorial, crime and criminal activities have always existed in all known human societies, Nigeria inclusive. However, societies have in consequence of this fact, put in place machinery to prevent or combat them as the case may be. Statutorily, the Nigeria police force is saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, preventing, detecting crimes as well as securing the lives and property of citizens of the country. It must be stressed here that the constitution of Nigeria (1999) vests the police force in the hands of the federal government. This implies that the constitution at no time contemplated the states in the federation having their own police force.

Recent happenings in the country such as the activities of the Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram, Indigenous People of Biafra, Niger Delta militants to mention but a few, have

exposed the incapability of the federal police force to carry out its responsibility. The spate of killings and criminal activities seem endless and quite a number of Nigerians have started agitating for the creation of state police as a way of stemming the prevalence and incidence of security challenges. This study therefore examined security challenges in Nigeria by interrogating the state police argument as a panacea to the security challenges.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study was primarily designed to examine the security challenges in Nigeria and whether State police is a panacea. The specific objectives are:

- i. to examine whether the present Nigeria police force is capable of preventing and managing insecurity.
- ii. to find out if State police is a panacea to the security challenges facing Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- i. In what ways can the Nigeria police force are capable of preventing and managing insecurity?
- ii. In which ways can State policing provide solution or serve as a panacea to the security challenges in Nigeria?

### **Theoretical Framework**

One of the theories that can best explain State policing is the broken windows theory by Wilson and Kellings (2012) based on this theory, social psychologists, criminologists, sociologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, the rest of the windows will soon be broken. The sign of one broken and unrepaired window would send an indication that nobody cares so another window can also be broken and nothing will happen (Oliver, 2000). According to Pollard, Bratton, William, Ray and John (1998), Kellings and Wilson's (2012) preposition is that the moment an atmosphere is created more serious crimes will be committed. The Nigeria police here represent the broken window which was neglected by previous governments and so they made the police unable to combat crime. Inadequate logistics such as transportation, telecommunication, arms and ammunition poor remuneration and lack of motivation by the force, superior officers and shortage of manpower in turn led to the increase in crime such as arm robbery, disorderly behaviour, drunkenness, vandalism, prostitution, an atmosphere is created in which more crimes will be committed. Till today, any discussion on community policing always go hand in hand with the broken windows theory (Allender, 2004). However, this theory underscores the argument that there's order inherent in society and that this order is consolidated by the fact that different structures in society work together harmoniously for the sustenance of society. The police is necessary to ensure that public peace is guaranteed through the maintenance of law and order and so needs the community support in tackling crime, hence State police.

### **Brief Review of Related Literature**

Sections 2 and 3 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) clearly shows Nigeria as a federation made up of 36 states and a central government. Implied in the statement above is that it has a centralized police force with no provision for state police. The incidence and prevalence of criminal activities and the seemingly helplessness of the police has led to the call for the intervention of State police (Ehinder, 2012). The mantra has gained wide acceptability as it is believed that the closeness of the state police to the society of its operation will make it more proactive in preventing, detecting and uprooting incidences of criminality before it gains ground.

### **What is State Police?**

The concept of “State Police” connotes that each state in a federating unit has its police force with a mandate to secure the lives and property of the citizens within the territorial state. On his part, Aremu (2014) sees State policing as the devolution of powers to maintain law and order in the hands of state government. Put simply, State police means the control other than by the central government the entire operations and logistics of policing by the States. As nations develop, they tend to modify their modus operandi for coping with security challenges and this could result in the sharing of security operations between the Central government, State government and Local government. Implied from the above, is the fact that state police is a police force under state authority rather than under the authority of the country.

It must be observed at this point, that the existence of State police is not alien to Nigeria as it existed during the first Republic as regional and native authority police forces. The officers and men were recruited from their localities and because of their knowledge of the area, they were able to prevent and contain criminal activities with ease. However, State police ceased with the abolition of regional and native authority police. Little wonder that what emerged in the form of the Nigeria Police Force more or less weakened security at the local level, and in some cases did not manage local challenges well as in the case of Boko Haram (Akinkuolie, 2019).

### **Desirability of State Police**

There is no denying the fact that Nigeria as a nation is presently having a rough day with its security arrangement almost torn apart due to insurgency in the North East spreading to other parts of the Northern Nigeria. In the same vein, there have been unending communal clashes in the Middle Belt, kidnapping in the South West, cultist in the South-South and the menace of the Fulani herdsmen all over the country. Akinkuolie (2019) has observed that the present security arrangement appears to be inadequate, inappropriate or simply out of place and so one cannot but seek options. The idea of State comes readily to mind as one of the ways both for the immediate and long term to arrest and or put at bay these security challenges. The Nigerian Public seem to have lost faith in the Central police ability to stem the rising security challenges. In fact, Olowokere and Oluduro. (2011) actually collaborated

this view when he noted that unfortunately, the inefficiency of the police in performing its statutory functions as enshrined in the Police Act (2004) are glaring in many ways. Agwanwo (2014) has argued that state police is the surest means of reducing the disturbing and heart breaking issue of insecurity. In fact, he insists that the only way out of the crime problem plaguing Nigeria is recourse to State policing.

### **The Need to Implement the Principle of True Federalism**

Sections 2 and 5 of the Constitution of Nigeria (1999) encapsulate the concept of federalism. Unfortunately, in relations to policing there has always been centralization of authority. Thus, scholars like Enogholase and Obetta (2012) and Ewepu (2012) have pointed to the need for the police force in Nigeria to be decentralized in the interest and practice of true federalism. It has been argued that the decision to vest in absolute term policing to the Federal government was based on the wrong premise that States would not have the ability to main a law and order as was experienced in the first republic. The truth is that, happenings today shows that the federal police is not immune from the malaise that crippled the local or native police while it lasted. It is needful to decentralize the federal power on the issue of security to avoid it being overburdened, ensure true federalism and meet international best practices in terms of policing.

**Financial Imperative:** To say that the Nigeria police force is underfunded is an understatement especially against the background of inadequate budgetary allocation to it resulting now in low morale and lack of modern and sophisticated equipment and arms. Adefi (2010) has argued that happenings in Nigeria shows that even in the present, centralization of the police affairs, State government still plays a critical role in sustaining the police as its resources are invested in the up keep of the men and officers posted to its territories. Quite often, State government not only donates vehicles and gadgets but also rehabilitates cum build police stations. It is argued here that if the call for State police sees the light of day, States can statutorily appropriate funds for the police force under their territories and the public will feel the impact in terms of sleeping with their eyes closed. Presently, various State governments from time to time build police stations; barracks donate operational vehicles and security gadgets to their State commands in order to boost the morale of the men and officers of the police force

### **Job Creation:**

The creation of State police is believed to automatically lead to job opportunities for many of the unemployed youth who are indigenes of the jurisdiction. In fact, Odeh and Okoye (2014) were emphatic when they noted that politicians usually dangle job creation at the youth during political campaigns but fails to do anything upon winning elections. It is contended here that there is hardly any strong political big wig who does not have his own unconventional security that it pays privately. The point being made is that such persons can be gainfully employed if there is a State police. In addition, many state governments have traffic management outfits- In Lagos it is LASTMA while in Benin, it is EDSTMA. These

traffic outfits have apart from controlling traffic also helped to remove youth from the streets by gainfully engaging them.

### **Intelligence Gathering**

Policing is not only restricted to the maintenance of law and order but goes beyond to include an array of other activities meant to preserve the social order (Muazu, 2012). Some Nigerians are of the belief that Boko-Haram still thrives because majority of the security personnel are non-indigenes who are unfamiliar with the terrain and so cannot effectively gather information without blowing their cover. This view has found support in the work of Egbosiuba (2013) who observed that the police as presently constituted is far removed from the people thus making the relationship between them and the local communities to be virtually non-existent.

### **Security Vote**

Some authors have canvassed the view that presently some governments do not use their security votes for the purpose for which they were given. In fact, they contend very strongly that some governors channel security votes into their private pockets. James (2014) quoted the claims of one of the governors in Nigeria as saying that his predecessor was collecting #6.5 billion annually as security vote yet criminal activities were still on the increase. It is contended here that if the call for State police scales through, State governors would not know that their citizens will no longer blame the federal government for the prevalence of crimes but hold them responsible and as such, security vote is most likely to be used for the purpose for which it was given.

### **Methods and Materials**

This is a cross-sectional study which adopted the descriptive survey design to gather data which helped the subject matter under investigation. To achieve this, a self-constructed semi-structured questionnaire was designed. This was divided into two, A and B; while the A aspect of the questionnaire focused on the socio-economic features of the respondents, the B aspect of the questionnaire essentially, focused on questions relating to the topic under investigation. A test-re-test method which result was .96 was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire used while its validity was determined by face construct validity. The data gathered from the field were analysed with the aid of inferential statistics.

The study which was conducted in Benin City used the stratified sampling method and thus found the existing twelve (12) wards which makes up Benin City very useful for this purpose. The research instrument were administered purposively on six hundred (600) respondents made up of law enforcement agents, heads of self-help security outfits, Odionwere of the various streets/quarters in Benin City and legal practitioners. A total of five hundred and ninety-two (592) questionnaires out of the six hundred (600) questionnaires were retrieved from the field. This was statistically found significant and so used for the study's data analysis. In the course of gathering data, the purpose of the study

was not only explained to the respondents but their consent to participate in it was sought and obtained before the questionnaires were administered on them. All ethical considerations were taken into consideration in the course of the study.

### Findings and discussions

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	450	76
Female	142	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
25-34	230	39
35-44	190	32
45-54	130	22
55 and above	42	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	560	94
Islam	10	2
A.T.R.	22	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational status</b>		
Primary	150	25
Secondary	192	33
Tertiary	250	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	450	76
Single	130	22
Divorced	12	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey, 2019

Table 1 indicates that there were 450 (76%) male respondents while the number of female respondents was 142 (24%). This implies that there were more male respondents than female in the area of study. The table also indicates that respondents within the ages of 25-34 years were 230 (39%), those within the ages of 35-44 years were 190 (32%), those within the ages of 45-54 years were 130 (22%) and those who were 55 years and above were 42 (7%). This shows that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 25-34 years. It further reveals that 560 (94%) of the respondents were Christians, 10 (2%) were Muslims



and 22 (4%) practiced African traditional religion. On educational status, 150 (25%) of the respondents had primary education, 192 (33%) had secondary education and 250 (42%) had tertiary education. This shows that majority of the respondents had tertiary education. For marital status, 450 (76%) of the respondents were married, 130 (22%) were single and 12 (2%) were divorced. This means that majority of the respondents were married.

**Table 2: Effectiveness of the present Nigeria Police Force**

<b>Would you say that Nigeria Police Force as it is today is capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	80	14
No	500	84
Undecided	12	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 shows that 80 (14%) of the surveyed respondents agreed that the police is capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City while 500 (84%) stated no and 12 (2%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the respondents do not believe that the Nigeria Police is capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City. This study's findings have, to a large extent further validated Olowokere et al (2011) and Okechukwu and Anyadike (2015) when they observed that in spite of government's efforts and increased security expenditure, the security agencies appear to have broken down completely as the State no longer has the monopoly of the means of violence. These authors believe that the upsurge in criminal activities particularly, kidnapping, ritual murders, arson, Fulani herdsmen murderous activities, election violence, has dampened the hope of the public on the ability of the police to guarantee people's security. In the same vein, Akinkuolie (2019) has observed that the present security arrangement appears to be inadequate, in appropriate or simply out of place and so one cannot but seek other options. The general feeling seem to be that law enforcement agents cannot prevent nor detect crimes.

**Table 3: Effectiveness of State police**

<b>Would you say that state police is capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	480	81
No	100	17
Undecided	12	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 3 shows that 480 (81%) of the surveyed respondents agreed that State police will be capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City while 100 (17%) stated no and 12 (2%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the respondents believe that State police will be capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City. This study's findings have to a large extent, further validated Ehindero (2012) and Agwanwo's (2014) studies where they argued that State police is the surest means of reducing the disturbing and heart breaking issue of insecurity. In fact, they believe the only way out of the crime problem plaguing Nigeria is recourse to State policing.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has thoroughly examined the security challenges in Nigeria and whether State police is a panacea. The study reveals that insecurity has become the order of the day in Nigeria especially against the backdrop of the inability of the central police to live up to its statutory function due in most part to underfunding, lack of modern gadgets and sophisticated arms and ammunitions and loss of public confidence. The Federal government appears to be burdened with different and competing needs and have to prioritize and security appears not to be on its top list to meet up with its dwindling resources. It is also clear from this study that there has been a sustained agitation for the decentralization of the Nigeria police force so as to reflect true federalism and unburden it for effective policing.

1. It is thus here suggested that as a nation operating a federal system of government, all the basic tenets of federalism should be embraced by creating a State police.
2. It is glaring from this study that the Nigerian public believe that the police as it is today is incapable of protecting lives and property and so there is the need to unbundle it and create state police which with the assumed advantages would serve the people better.

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