

The Media, Creation of State Police and National Security: The Way Forward in Nigeria

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Abstract

The creation of state police in Nigeria has been a contentious issue and proponents are of the view that creation of state police will enhance national security. The inefficiency of the Nigeria Police Force is generally considered one of the major limitations of the Nigerian society and a core factor for lack of ethical standards in society. Expressing concerns about national security, using secondary data, the study views the function of media in propagating the move for creation of state police in Nigeria, and the way forward. Adopting the Development Media theory, the study identified poor police remuneration; inadequate equipment such as communication gadgets, vehicles, computers, patrol boats and ammunition that enable the police combat crimes in society; and the fact that police officers are fewer in number compared to a population of over two hundred million people in Nigeria as the major challenges of the Nigerian Police Force. That, media representation of opinions for creation of state police is creating significant impact in shaping public opinions on implementation of the bill and actualization of state police which has lingered beyond expectations. Though, the media has the potential to address security challenges confronting Nigeria, unfortunately it does not have the power to implement. Therefore, the way forward should be provision of adequate fund, equipment, training and re-training of the Nigeria Police Force. Furthermore, the creation of state police will enable each state have the means to secure their domain. There should also be institutional reform, community-based initiatives, technological integration and international cooperation.

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Introduction

The provision of security in any society is the sole responsibility of the government. Without protection, the state is bound to witness constant attacks and threats from within and outside the state. It is an understatement to say that 'Nigerians have witnessed untold terrorism, especially in the north-east which appears to be the easy reach of terrorists and one can easily attribute the constant attacks to a lack of state police. The police force is the only body constitutionally empowered to ensure the security of lives and property in Nigeria. 'The police force derives its existence from Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, with the provision that 'there shall be a Police Force for Nigeria which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force and shall be subject to the provisions of this section, no other force shall be established for the Federation or any part'. Nigeria, a Federal Republic in West Africa, has encountered numerous security challenges in recent years, including terrorism,

kidnapping, and communal violence. In response, there have been agitations for the creation of state police to complement the federal police force.

Nigeria operates a federal system that is anchored on the devolution between the Federal, State and Local Government. Yet the structure of police power is still highly centralized. This vertical authority structure, despite the delimitation of the force into zonal commands is seen as a perpetration of a unitary system rather than a federalist arrangement and results to inefficiency in Nigeria (Abati, 2008). The debate is tied to the inability of the Nigeria Police to handle the myriad of security challenges facing the country. However, this proposal has sparked discussions about federalism, human rights, and the role of the media in shaping public opinions as watchdogs of society.

On the other hand, the Nigerian police have the statutory responsibility to protect lives, and property and maintain law and order in the state. It is common

knowledge that, the Nigerian police force in a bid to discharge their responsibility has knowingly or unknowingly caused lots of problems in the state. There is no disputing that the Nigeria Police Force had a reputation of brutality, extortion, abuse and harassment before the ENDSARS Protest (Okechukwu 2023). Some reactions from the people especially drivers, traders, and civilians have decried the unwholesome practices of the Nigerian police in almost all the states. Police officers have been accused of extorting money from drivers, collecting bribes in their offices, bailing people perceived to be criminals, detaining innocent persons, brutality, mal-treatment, manhandling, and engaging in extra-judicial killings during peaceful protests, or after elections. These gruesome acts of the Nigeria Police Force have attracted public opinion from all quarters.

There have been arguments for and against establishing a state police force recently. Proponents are of the view, that the existence of state police is consistent with the principle of true federalism and decentralization of powers and that the creation of state police will enable the state autonomy and the effective management of laws and order under any circumstances over their environment.

The media plays a crucial role in propagating the state police and national security in Nigeria through various information dissemination; reporting security updates and incidents, sharing government press releases and statements, and broadcasting security alerts and warnings.

The media creates awareness; educates the public on security threats and prevention, highlights national security challenges and solutions, promotes civic engagement and responsibility, promotes national unity and solidarity, and encourages public support for security agencies.

Apart from fostering a sense of shared responsibility, the media also provides timely updates during crises, helps to manage public perception and reaction, and facilitates communication between authorities and citizens.

However, the media have faced censorship and restrictions on reporting, limited access to information, and security agencies' reluctance to share intel. These have resulted in the politicization of security issues, sensationalism and misinformation, ethnic or regional biases, fear of reprisal or intimidation, economic pressures and advertising influence, and cultural and social sensitivities.

The media provide various platforms for public discussion of issues bordering on the society, they set agenda such as: politics, policy orientations of government, and security of lives and property which is paramount to the peaceful existence in a society. The *fourth realm of power* has the power to influence the creation of state police via the urgent demand of Nigerians. The creation of state police in Nigeria has been a contentious issue, with proponents arguing it will enhance national security and opponents citing concerns about federalism and human rights (Adebayo, 2017; Olaniyi, 2020). The media can intervene to move state police beyond the various arguments into an institution. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion on issues bothering on the well-being of society, with some studies suggesting that media representation can influence public perception of security threats (Ojo, 2018).

The Media

The media has the constitutional duty to monitor society, making certain to society (public) the security situation, and the institutions responsible for the security of lives and property. The media practitioners do not enforce the law, nor do they have authority over members or institutions in the society. However, the media can create opinions by bringing such issues to the public for a debate which may eventually lead to implementation. There are no other institutions authorized by the federal powers to secure the public other than the police and other departments of the state. The media always feature the police, the people talk about the police, the government is always referring to them, the Nigerian Police is the most visible security outfit in the country (Umaru, etal. 2014)

The powers of the media and their basis of intervention are derived from section 22 of the 1999 Constitution which states that;

'the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people'.

The rapid growth of crimes in and across the country has generated feelings among the media and public as to whether the police are performing their duty for protecting life and property. Odekunle (1977:7).

Media and the Police Force

The media and the police are two institutions whose goals are to ensure that society lives well based on lawful and orderly conducts in the interest of justice, fairness and development (Umaru et al, 2010). It is the responsibility of the media to report news, educate, and scrutinize the public, promote and strengthen the efforts of the police force. Unfortunately, the police do not seem to have a positive relationship with the media. The media needs the police to provide them with quick, reliable source of crime information, while the police have vested interest in maintaining a positive public image (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987). Media institutions and practitioners are not in a position to exercise direct powers of control over the police because they do not buy ammunitions, nor are they responsible for the management of the police, but a review of Nigerian media content will reveal that the police as an institution and a collection of men, is a recurrent subject in the Nigerian media (Reuben, 2008). The powers of the media, the basis for its intervention is derived from section 22 of the 1999 Constitution which states that "the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people". The police thus fall within the purview of government and the media's responsibility.

The Nigerian media by its history and tradition has always served as the platform for the expression of public grievances, interest and concerns.

The Police

The formation of Nigeria police was as a result of a 30-person consular guard under the authority of the then governor of British West Africa in October 1861. In 1861 governor of Lagos colony, McCoskry, organized and established the nucleus of the first police force constabulary of 30 men (Tamuno, 1970; the Nigeria police, 1981). This formation marked the beginning of the first modern police in the history of Lagos. In 1879 there was the establishment of the constabulary of Lagos colony, with the appointment of the first commissioner of police in 1896.

Then, the Royal Niger Constabulary in 1886 was established by the Royal Niger Company for the northern territories. The British colonialists established the police institution to advance the European colonial commercial and strategic interests against the natives,

especially in the colony and the protectorates (Odikalu, 2004). Allure (1991) argues that the emerging ruling class in colonial Nigeria was a foreign and illegitimate one which sought to dominate and exploit the indigenous people in the interests of its own metropolitan (British) economy. The effort of this foreign ruling class to subdue the Indigenous people and to impose careful surveillance over them to forestall any popular resection created an obsession with the policing of public order.

The Royal Niger Constabulary in 1900, split into two groups, the Northern Nigeria police force for the colony and the police force and regiment for the protectorate. The force of the colony later merged with the Southern Nigeria police force. The 1914 amalgamation had two different police formations for both Northern and Southern Nigeria. In 1930, the colonial government established the Nigeria Police Force headed by an Inspector-General. However, the regionalization of police formations remained (Ochikalu, 2004). Section 4 of the police acts of 1967 provides that "the police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order, the protection of lives and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and shall perform such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other act". Aina (2014) postulates that the duties are stationary and the police owe these duties to the nation and all other persons lawfully living within Nigeria. Therefore, the national security of Nigerians lies in the hands of the police.

Although, pitiable, the population of Nigerians are far more than can be handled by the federal police. This then calls for the creation of state police to enable effective and efficient performance of their duties as it is assumed by majority of Nigerians, that police performance has been below commendation. What do effectiveness and efficiency mean to police work? Effectiveness means proper task performance. Etzioni (1964) explains that efficiency is a concept by which we assess the processing activity of organizations, and how they go about facing problems, while effectiveness is a concept which denotes their goal matching, and their ability to solve substantive problems. Odekunle (2004) asserts that effectiveness is the ability of the force to successfully perform its assigned tasks; and efficiency is the capacity to perform its functions with the least amount of "waste", in terms of time, material, personnel

public goodwill, and lives. Therefore, efficient police achieve a level of input in lower expeditions (Skogan, 1976). There cannot be efficiency when the input is questionably lower than should be. That is to state that the need for state police is long over due as its creation will greatly improve efficient performance of their duties as security agents.

National Security

National security in Nigeria encompasses the protection of a nation's interests, assets and citizens from internal and external threats which includes various dimensions; the military security, cybersecurity, economic security, environmental security and social security. Thomas Hobbes (1962) sees security as the protection of lives and property and entire law and order through political sovereignty and monopoly of violence which state/government provide. Ejogba (2006) assert that explaining security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars. Its perception even within one community varies in time. As defined by the South African White Paper on Defense (1996), security is an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety, and participate fully in the process of governance. Enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the necessities of life, and inhabit an environment which is not detriment to their health and wellbeing.

This definition presents that security cuts across all human existence. Until now, most of the definitions of security literarily tilts towards the arguments of Thomas Hobbes as pointed out above. Okwori (1995) postulates that a state can defend its territorial integrity from threats, actual and imagined, as well as acts of aggression from other potential enemies. This is what states' built and equipped armed forces can achieve. At the domestic level, the belief is that internal law enforcement agencies and other instruments of domestic intelligence are all that are required for a state to be secured (Katsina, 2022). This is where the state police come into play. The internal security is primarily the business of the police. The police are to fulfil the government's primary obligation of catering for the security and welfare of the people. The escalation of social disorder and instability in the country challenges the role of police in combating crimes and criminality.

Insecurity, according to Achuba, Ighomereho and Akpor-robalo (2013), is the antithesis of security and has attracted some common descriptions and want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence,

state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, instability, trouble, lack of protection and being unsafe, and others.

Furthermore, Beland (2005) avers that insecurity is "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. Putting all the above-stated explanations together, the state

of Nigeria's security can be seen clearly as one that is under threat. The nation is undergoing a serious state of insecurity and challenges that have bedeviled the affairs of the state such as terrorism, kidnapping, militancy, and religious upheaval. This paper consider the creation of state police as panacea to challenges of insecurity in Nigeria.

The Challenges of the Police Force in Nigeria

Taking into account the amount of quality protection provided by the Nigerian police for the entire population and the level of confidence and encouragement it enjoys from these people, one cannot but conclude that the Nigerian police performance is far below the expectation many people place on them. Several cumulative problems contribute to the abysmal performance of the Nigerian police. This ranges from material to human and external challenges. Widespread corruption among the members of the Nigerian police is alarming. This has greatly soiled the image of the police. Alemika (1999) postulated that police corruption is a serious issue because they are expected to be moral as law enforcement agencies. The issue of police corruption is an undeniable fact with several evidence of their involvement.

These among many others are; police connivance with some individuals to help offenders out of police custody after obtaining money from suspects, closure of case files, escorting vehicles loaded with contraband goods and stolen items, stealing from suspects and or accident victims, stealing from crime scenes, supply of police arms and ammunition with police uniforms to criminals for monetary gain etc. Olurotimi (2012).

Furthermore, Odekunle (2004) gave some categories of obstacles that hinder the optimum performance of the Nigerian police thus: Poor remuneration for both officers and men of police command is another notable factor that has created abysmal performance of their constitutional duties. The issue of police corruption as discussed above does not only occur between the police and the public but also with the strata of police structure. There have been cases whereby senior police officers have deprived other officers, especially juniors of the

right to an increment in salary for some time. These people have been alleged to have stacked the money in a fixed deposit account to yield some interest for them before releasing the fund for payment of salaries. Odekunle (2004) argue that the Nigerian police has human problems that not only aggravate its material insufficiency but also of tremendous adverse impact on its general performance from day to day and among them is discouraging salaries.

It has been noted that the Nigerian police lack adequate equipment and ammunition that can help in assisting them in combating crimes in society. Abdulkadir (2004) argued that the Nigerian police force lacks adequate communication gadgets, vehicles, computers and patrol boats.

There are also restricted laws and policies, harassment and intimidation of journalists, lack of transparency and accountability; and corruption and bribery. To address these challenges, the media can effectively propagate the idea of state police and national security in Nigeria. This study examines the complex relationships between state police creation, media representation, and national security in Nigeria.

State police and policy

State police refers to policing in a federal system in which the state government employs police officers for the main purpose of policing the state. Aremu (2014:33), sees State policing as “territorial policing”. It is a sub-national form of policing in which devolution of security options in the hands of the federating states of regions. State policing operationally is when policing and all its operations and logistics are controlled by other governments other than the national or federal government, arguing further.

Arguments are that the federal police agency has failed to effectively combat insecurity in Nigeria. This may sound weird because it seems like the more the cry for security the more the insecurity rate in the country, making it obvious that decentralization of the police force is imperative, therefore, the need for state police and the need for police to decentralize with legal backing. Historically, policing started as a voluntary, incorruptible profession saddled with considerable responsibility and distinction (Newburn, 2004). The primary purpose of the police was to advance the security of the socio-economy and political state of Nigeria.

The creation of state police is seen as a step towards actualizing the sustained campaign for community

policing (Eme & Anyadike, 2012). State police are law enforcement agencies that are responsible for enforcing laws and maintaining order within a state or region, and are typically responsible for highway patrol, criminal investigations, and emergency response (Bureau of Justice Statics, 2020). They are the enforcement agents responsible for enforcing law and order as well as providing security within a specific region or state. The question here is; can the creation of state police in any way improve the security level of our society and does the media coverage of insecurity in our society influence the need for state or community police and in what ways can the creation of state police enhance the efficiency of the security of lives and property in Nigeria?

Development media theory

Development media theory was propounded by McQuail in 1987. The theory according to Omego and Nwachukwu (2013) was between developed and developing countries. The underlying fact behind the establishment of the theory was that there cannot be development without communication (information). Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwom-Uwaoma (2017) argue that the media undertook the role of carrying out positive development programs, accepting restrictions and instructions from the state. The media subordinate themselves to political, economic, social and cultural needs, hence, the stress on the development of communication development journalism. The media can do this by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic, and political growth, cultural development and national sovereignty. The theory sees communication (media) as agents of development and social change in any given society.

Thus, the theory postulates that communication be used to complement the government's efforts by carrying out programs that will lead to positive behavioral change. Communication here implies radio programs, television programs etc that foster the desire of the citizen. Social learning theory suggests that media representation of state police creation can influence public opinion and behavior, with the media serving as a tool for socialization and attitude formation (Bandura, 1977). Agenda-setting theory also highlights the media's role in shaping public opinion, with the media influencing what issues are considered important and how they are framed (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Conclusion

Solution and Way Forward

Addressing the problems of state police and national security in Nigeria requires multifaceted solutions. Here are some potential solutions:

- The media should rise to one of its vital roles to promote the creation of state police and national security by: raising awareness: educating the public on the pros and cons of state police, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens.
- Successful community policing initiatives, can enhance state police via the media encouraging collaboration between citizens and law enforcement agencies and monitoring police conducts; exposing the misconducts and promoting accountability and respect for human rights.
- By setting agenda on issues relating to creation of state police in Nigeria through which opinions are harvested, shaped public discourse via balanced reporting, analysis

Improved funding and equipment for police forces, enhanced training programs for police officers by soliciting the assistance from not just the government but also, well-meaning individuals of the nation, community-based policing initiatives; and strengthened intelligence gathering, sharing and collaboration between federal and state agencies. For long-term Solutions: There should be an established state police force with clear mandates, constitutional reforms to address policing structure, improved accountability and oversight mechanisms, national security strategy and social welfare. Community policing forums, neighborhood watch programs, conflict resolution centers, youth empowerment programs, traditional leader engagement, regional security collaboration. International training and capacity building, Intelligence sharing with global partners, counter-terrorism cooperation, border security assistance to combat crime and insecurity, and an effective media and police relationship.

It is no gain say, that when you speak the language a man understands; you touch his head but speak a man's language and you will touch his heart. Creation of state police will enable accountability as every community in every state knows or identifies their persons; this will help fish out evil perpetrators, especially the identification of strangers and strange movements within the state. It therefore stands that state police will

be answerable to the people it serves if and when created.

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