Non-State Actors and Insecurity: The Role of Community Policing in National Development and Security

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Abstract

The level of insecurity in Nigeria has been on a steady upward swing since the turn of the new millennium. This paper focused on the pragmatic analysis of waning capacity of the police and Armed Forces in curtailing the bludgeoning activities of armed non-state actors. Data were largely drawn for secondary sources of security reports. The paper affirmed that the violent activities of armed non-state actors accounts mostly for the deaths of Nigerians who died through killings. The paper also affirmed that the centralized architecture and organization of the Nigerian security system has made the police and the armed forces less effective. The paper concluded that national security will not thrive as long as violent non-state actors have free reign. The paper suggested the adoption and integration of community policing as part of the country's security architecture through constitutional provisions.

Keywords: non-state actors, security architecture, community policing, national development, federalism.

Introduction

Personal security is rapidly deteriorating in Nigeria. There is the Boko Haram insurrection in the northeast, unrest in the southern oil patch, and conflict over water and land in the Middle-Belt of the country. Many of these challenges are long-standing. Adding to the list of security crises is a nationwide crime wave involving kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and home invasions. Such crimes have long existed in one part of the country or another, but what is new is their intensity and reach; even the poor are now victims of kidnapping (Campbell, 2020).

Security in Nigeria is the responsibility of the armed forces and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). The army has long been used to maintain domestic order, and its units are now present in almost every state. Since the colonial period, the police have been a national gendarmerie, with no local or state police service (Campbell, 2020).

Scholars believe that the present centralized structure of the Police is antithetical to the security and welfare of the citizens. As it is, Nigeria has continued to operate a single centralized police force in a federation. This is absurdity taken too far. None of the world's 24 other federal countries toes that path. Nigeria has 36 states, 774 local government areas, over 250 ethnic nationalities and a diverse terrain of 923,768 square kilometers, the 32nd largest area in the World. Latest estimates by the United Nations Population Division put the country's population at 223.8 million, the world's sixth largest. Expecting a single police force to patrol and secure such a country is impracticable (Punch Newspaper, 21st July 2023).

It is obvious that the Federal Police need the complementary assistance of other security outfits to deal with insurmountable insecurity challenges in the various states of the Federation.

Instructively, the establishment and proliferation of para-police outfits in some geo-political zones of the country are indications to the seeming inevitability of State Police, For instance, South-West states have Amotekun, while the South-East Governors have Ebubeagu. Many

states in the north and the Middle Belt have also set up local security outfits to combat crime. The South-West Governors are now urging the Federal Government to allow Amotekun to bear sophisticated arms. It is noteworthy that the security outfits are functioning to ensure peace and order and combating crimes. It is important for stakeholders to amend the Constitution to legalize the operation of these outfits and upgrade them to State Police with appropriate equipment to function effectively.

Campbell (2020) aptly captured this when he opined that:

> In areas of unrest - notably the northeast under assault from Boko Haram and in the oil patch threatened by militants - local vigilante groups have emerged where government has proven inadequate. The presence of vigilante groups is often tacitly sanctioned by government authorities. In Yoruba land, state governors are taking the concept of local security a step further, cooperating to establish what amounts to a regional police force, though, in theory. It is meant to support, but not replace, the national police. Amotekun, known officially as the Western Nigeria Security Network, is funded by the governors and has the blessing of traditional Yoruba leaders. Since the state security architecture in Nigeria has almost completely collapsed (p.46).

Insecurity and fear of criminal attack are high. The police and other security agencies are stretched beyond their capacity and criminals operate largely with dangerous freedom; most criminals are not apprehended or sanctioned. The task of this paper therefore is to examine the place of community policing in assisting the Federal Police in combating insecurity. Thus, the study examines the general philosophy of community policing and how it is operated in Nigeria with the aim of identifying various areas of deficiency in the implementation of the concept. In fulfilling the objectives of this study, we explore conceptual definition of community policing, undertake an overview of Nigeria federalism dissect community policing as alternative security options other than the conventional security architecture of Nigeria, examine the activities of actors in Nigeria and recommend ways through which community policing can meet the nation's security expectations and by extension achieve national development.

Nigeria is at cross road. The unprecedented level of insecurity in the country has made it abundantly clear that the nation is not healthy. Indeed, the Nigerian state is in dire need of surgical operation, without which she may turn to a failed State.

Therefore, the question of concern is: how should Nigerian state address the root causes of her security problems to prevent her imminent collapse? From time immemorial to the present day Nigeria, the police alongside with the army have been saddled with the responsibility of domestic security. Nigerians opt to be optimistic that their lives and properties are saved and secured. On the contrary, the country security network cannot deliver the expected end.

The challenges of life threatening the survival of the country have become complex to the extent that the country now has to run to non-state actors (the Para-police) that are less-armed and poor training for complementary assistance and survival. Therefore, examining the place of these non-state actors in assisting the Federal Police and other national security agencies in combating insecurity in Nigeria prompted this study.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of this study include:
a. To examine the general philosophy of community policing (Para police) and how it is operated in Nigeria with the aim of identifying various areas of deficiency in the implementation of the concept.
b. To undertake an overview of Nigeria federalism with a view to dissect community policing as alternative security options other than the conventional security architecture of Nigeria.

Federalism, National Security and National Development
At this point, we are much interested in determining the impact of the Nigerian type of federal system of government on National security and National development of Nigeria. According to K.C. Where, the "Father of Federalism", Federalism is a constitutional arrangement which divides law making powers and functions of the state between other levels of government which are coordinate in status. Professor B.O. Nwabueze in his book "Federalism in Nigeria under the Presidential Constitution" stated that Federalism is an arrangement whereby powers of government within a country are shared between a national (nationwide) government and a number of regionalized (territorially Localized) governments in such a way that each exists as a government separately and independently from the others, operating directly on persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own and its own apparatus for the conduct of its affairs and with an authority in some matters exclusive of all others. Additionally, James Madison, the Father of U.S. Constitution called Federalism a "Middle Around "One" which may at once support a due supremacy of the national authorities wherever they can be but subordinately useful. Since 1787, Madison's federalist principle has been the guiding constitutional influence in organizing relations between America's three level of government.

Aware of the fact that a discussion on Community policing and national development will be a one sided work without credence to our system of government (Federalism) and national security, the definition of (Elaigwu, 2002: 42) will be of high relevance to this work. According to him, federalism is a compromise solution in a multinational State between two types of self- determination, the determination to maintain a supranational framework of government which guarantees security for all in the nation-state on the one hand and protect self-determination of component group which seeks to retain their individual identities on the other hand.

The success of the federalist principle is depended on how effective it organizes its relations between all the levels of the government and they must have adequate resources to perform its functions without appealing to the other levels. If the component governments in a federation discover that the services given to them are too expensive for them to perform and call on the federal government for assistance, they are no longer coordinate to the federal government but subordinate to it and this is the case of Nigeria federalism.

Federalism: The Nigerian Experience
In theory and in practice there are certain crucial and important reasons or factors that may lead independent countries to the formation of federalism which one of them is fear of attack and invasion from stronger and superior countries. Thus, to achieve collective security, independence and sovereignty, countries decide to form a federal system of government. Also such independent states must have similar ethnic and cultural forces. When these factors are present; the success of federalism will highly depend on how effectively it organizes itself Permit us to state the obvious that none of the above factors was the reasons for the formation of Nigeria federalism. The' regions of the country have different religious background, culture

and even colonial experiences as the system of indirect rule was successful in the North but a failure in the Eastern part of Nigeria. This perhaps was why late Obafemi Awolowo described Nigeria as a mere "Geographical Expression and Political Fragmentation". Meaning that there's nothing in common or homogeneity for Nigeria to form a federation (www.nairalandforum). It was only created by Britain for administrative conveniences. Today it has negatively impacted on the major institutions and structures of the country in many different ways as discussed below.

Federalism and Community Policing n Nigeria
True federalism in country of the World allows the component units to be independent and autonomous while working co-operatively with the central or federal Government. It allows the component units the right of having their own independent security system, otherwise known as "State Police" as well as the right to form other security apparatus aimed at protecting the lives and properties of the citizens, as well as assisting the entire country in achieving national security and national development. The interest of the component units in terms of security and national development is not just for their region or state but for the general interest of the country and the state police is not established to protect or service the interest of a group but for the generality of the people.

In Nigeria, what we are practicing and experiencing is "quasi federalism". This is because police and security matters exists only in the Exclusive list, which makes it an absolute function and duty of the federal government and never a role performed by the states or other component units in the country. There have been many attempts and bills in the different levels of our legislature for the formation of state police in Nigeria but it has not seen the light of the day. The quasi federalism practiced in Nigeria has negatively affected the national security of the country thus causing serious damage on the overall national development of Nigeria. This is because politics and economics cannot thrive in an insecure environment; foreign investors will lack interest in investing in such a country, life and properties of the citizens are not secured. Political apathy is always on the high side in the Country because the citizens and voters are scared of losing their lives in the process of exercising their franchise.

The Federal Character Principle in Nigeria
The federal character principle was first enshrined in the 1979 constitution of Nigeria with the aim of achieving fairness and equity in the distribution of public offices, positions and socioeconomic infrastructures among the various federating units of the federal government on Nigeria.

Here, we are concerned with the Federal character principle as it relates to national security, personnel, institutions and structures. The point is that the failure of the federal character principle to equitably recruit the qualified personnel into the Nigerian security Institutions and structures, has led to the establishment of a sort of Community Police and vigilante groups in the different component units, regions, states as well as local governments of the country. Appointments into the Nigerian Army, Navy, Police, Customs, immigrations, Civil Defence and all the security agencies are highly lopsided, and influenced by the political leadership of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; training, qualification and standard has been highly relegated to the background, ethnicity, political recommendations and favoritism have formed the basis of our National security appointments, in simple terms, the qualified and experienced security personnel are not employed to do the job, rather security appointments are sold in monetary terms and used for political settlement. The result is that the federal government has failed on their responsibility to secure life and properties of her citizens. The above have accounted for the high level of socio-economic and political insecurity Nigeria is

experiencing and this has a contagious effect on the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Country. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the Fulani herdsmen have overwhelmed the military and paramilitary agencies, ethnic militia's in the East called the IPOB and MAS SOB are causing security problems. The creeks of Niger-Delta are not spared, killings occur everywhere, thus the entire security network of the country have failed.

Non-State Actors and Insecurity in Nigeria
In Nigeria today, the landscape is filled with known and faceless armed groups whose activities are adversely affecting the overall security of the country. These groups who are not part of the structure of the states are generally referred to as non state actors. Non -State Actors (NSAs) have been described as organizations and individuals that are not affiliated with, directed by, or funded through the government. They include corporate business entities, nongovernmental organizations, paramilitary bodies and armed resistance groups. Non state actors have economic, political and social power and are able to exert their influence on the state. (Gapham, 2020) described non state actors as including any entity that is not actually a state, often used to refer to armed groups, terrorists, civil society, religious groups or corporation.

For us, Non-State actors are individuals, groups or organizations that employ their economic political, social and religious power to influence or determine significant outcomes in the society, using violence or threat of violence as primary tool. They have been variously described as Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs) and Non-State Armed Actors (NSAAs). In today's Nigeria, these violent or armed non state actors come in form of bandits, gunmen, cultists, militants, agitators and terrorists. These groups and their activities have been collectively conceptualized by Bello et al. (2022) as banditry which they defined as an act of violent crime by armed gangs involving robbery and assault. Banditry is seen in forms of cattle rustling, insurgency, rape, drug abuse, hired assassination, killing of private individual and military personnel, violent agitations, brazen and gruesome murders of entire or some members of a community, displacement etc (Uche & Iwuamadi, 2018).

Since the turn of the new millennium, the insecurity level or situation has been on a steady rise due to the activities of bandits (armed non state actors). Oshienemen et al. (2018) reported that the activities of militants in Niger Delta region featured prominently in the attacks of oil installations, gas pipelines abduction, oil theft and violent protest to register their grievances against environmental degradation and oil spills in South-South states. In the North East, the Boko -Haram sect has continued to showcase high level of violence through abduction, forceful occupation of communities and killings in the region with the aim of establishing a parallel government based on Islamic doctrines (Adesoji & Abdullahi, 2016). The situation in the North East in relation to the activities of the Boko-Haram is captured by Adekoya (2022) as an elongated era of killing, maiming and displacing of people from their communities. This has resulted to a major disruption in the normal economic and social life of the people, closure of schools and abandonment of farms. The situation became worsened with the emergence and activities of the ISWAP fire fighters. As at early 2011, Bello et al. (2022) report that conflicts between herdsmen and farmers, relating to land and grazing resources in the North-Central, especially in Benue, became more intense, developing from impulsive retaliation to well organized assaults including kidnapping, ransacking of villages and communities, of course these resulted to more deaths and displacement of persons, (Othman, 2015).

In the South-West and South Eastern parts of the country, the violent conflicts between the herders and farmers has taking its own count of deaths, assaults, destruction of plants and animals as well as property. The secession agitations in the East being championed by the Independent People of Biafra (1POB) have degenerated into violent assaults and killings of

security and government personnel and buildings. The situation is further exacerbated by the activities of the unknown gunmen whose modus of operandi is the wanton killing of security operatives. This is besides, violence and fear of violence arising from the enforcement of every Monday sit-at-home. The South -South fares no better presently as rampaging cult groups are also busy killing and maiming innocent victims in this region. The widespread activities of these armed non-state actors are making Nigeria a failed state. A country is described as a failed state when it cannot manage its domestic security challenges as a sovereign entity (Bello et al., 2022). The activities of armed non-state actors are revealing the country as a failing state that is already ranked the World's 15th Most Fragile State in the 2023 Fragile States Index.

In its 2022 review, the Cable Index reported that 4545 Nigerians were killed by armed non state actors while 4,611 others were kidnapped. Othman and Oluwafemi (2023) reported that Boko-Haram/ISWAP firefighters, bandits, robbers, kidnappers, cultists and unknown gunnien were the non-state actors that killed Nigerians the most in 2022. The Rights Global reported recently that a total of 555 and 267 Nigerians were killed and kidnapped within five (5) weeks of Tinubu's Presidency.

A UNDP report (2022) showed that the insurgency induced violent conflicts in the North East has resulted in 35,000 direct deaths. It also reported that as at January 2022, about 328, 005 Nigerians had run to Chad, Cameroon and Niger for refuge as a result of the activities of bandits and Boko Haram /ISWAP agents. Precisely, on September, 2023, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2023) released a report that "reveals that as of 2021 the Nigerian economy was 2.5% smaller than it would have been without the violent activities of armed non state actors, equating to a cumulative loss of approximately $ 100 billion over the last ten years. It added that over 2 million people are currently displaced, and around 1 million children have missed school. According to Igbinadolor (2022), the every Monday sit-at-home self imposed curfew in the South-East region has caused economic losses valued at about 4 trillion between 2020 and 2022.

From the foregoing, it is very obviously that armed non-state actors had and continues to constitute a huge clog on the Nigerian State desire and drive towards national development. This brings to question the efforts of the government to control or eliminate them. As the World Economic Forum states that the primary function of government is to protect citizens from chaos, internal, and external aggression, and to create and maintain law, systems and structures that preserve dignity and provide socio -economic stability. A state is a failure if it cannot do this. So why can't the Nigerian state protect her citizens and their socio-economic concerns? Is it due to lack of political will or absence of an effective security network / structure?

Security Architecture and Organization in Nigeria
The 1999 constitution (amended) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides in section 14 (2b) that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". In pursuit of this obligation, the leaderships (both military and civilian) have over times initiated and adopted policies and approaches they consider appropriate for national security. Besides economic, political and social programmes, security outfits were also established. Over time, the structure, functions and direction of these outfits have been reviewed and re-organized in order to make them more effective. However, the level of insecurity in the country has put to question the level of effectiveness of the security architecture and organization in Nigeria.

Thomas and Aghedo (2014) state that the statutory responsibility of national security in Nigeria is vested in the President through all the security agencies set by law. The security sector of Nigeria is made up of:
i.   The armed forces (army, air force and navy)
ii.   The Nigerian police

iii.   The paramilitary bodies (immigration service, state security service, customs and exercise, national intelligence agency, defence intelligence agency)
iv.   Judicial and state service bodies (courts, ministry of justice, correctional service (prisons), state owned vigilante bodies
v.   Private security outfits
vi.   Militia groups - Odua People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, Hizba Corps etc
vii.   Community based vigilante groups (Fayemi & Olonisakin, 2008).

Constitutionally, the armed forces are answerable to the federal government as provided in the Exclusive and Legislative list of the 1999 Constitution. This is also the case with the Nigerian Police. Though the armed forces and the police have commands and units in all parts of the country, the decision making authorities still rests at the national headquarters who are all answerable to the president. The architecture of national security in Nigeria is bifocal: external and internal. While the armed forces have the primary responsibility of securing the country from external threats, the Nigeria Police is vested with duty of ensuring internal security.

However, the reality today is that both the armed forces and the Police are now involved in internal security. This perhaps is in response to the growing and devastating activities of armed non state actors. Interestingly, the involvement of the armed forces in internal security has not impacted significantly on the security of lives and property in the country. Again, Thomas & Aghedo (2014:28) observed that 'contrary to popular and reasonable expectations, the military in Nigeria has been used for largely negative purposes including the oppression, terrorization and repression of the citizens. Indeed, the military has been used to curtail the activities of unions opposition groups and popular demonstrations and movements, making it more an instrument of censorship. Therefore, rather than helping to solve the country's national security challenges, the armed forces have compounded and perpetuated internal insecurity, underdevelopment and disintegration in Nigeria (Heywood, 1997). Indeed, security has become a mirage and insecurity has evolved over the years.

The inability of both the armed forces and the police to contain the continuous upsurge in the activities of armed non state actors has been blamed in the over centralization of the security apparati of Nigeria. Since Nigeria got her political independence from Britain, the country's security architecture remains structurally centralized with damming consequences for management of crime and insecurity at the grassroots (Thomas & Aghedo, 2014). Over the years, there have been unrelenting calls for community and state policing so that locals who understand the environment, language, culture, geography and socio-political dynamics of the areas will be in charge of security, but the federal government seems not interested. Lending its voice to the popular agitations for state (community) policing, the Punch newspapers in an editorial observes" considering the incapacity and limitations of the present police structure or federal police to contend with the high rate of kidnapping, banditries, violent crimes and hired killings ravaging the major cities and rural areas across the country, it is high time state police were created to complement the work of the federal police in combating crimes and protecting lives and property across the country. Instructively, the establishment and proliferation of Para-Police outfits in some states and Geo-Political zones of the country are indications to the seeming inevitability of state police. For instance, Abia State Government has established the Abia State Vigilante Network for maintenance of security within its boundaries. In the South-West, the Governors have set up Amotekun, the South-East states have Ebubeagu. Many states in other parts of the country have set up similar local security outfits to help them combat crime. No doubt, the level of insecurity in the country presently has really exposed the weakness of the national security architecture and organization of security in Nigeria. The present

arrangement which is a colonial heritage has fallen short in delivering national security objectives. Therefore, an urgent review is necessary in order to devolve the power to establish state/community policing outfits to States and local levels of government.

Community Policing

The term community policing has been conceptualized in different ways by different Scholars depending on their viewpoint. According to Wrobleski and Hess (2003), community policing is an organization- wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community government, and police partnership, proactive problem solving and community engagement to address the causes of crime and other community issues. They also noted that: "the essence of community policing is to return to the day when safety and security are participatory in nature and everyone assumes responsibility for the general health of the community- not just a select few, not just the local government administration, not just the safety forces, but absolutely everyone in the community".

To Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2012), community policing entails a community partnership in which people take active parts in ensuring a safe and secure environment. Stipak (1994) views community policing as a management strategy that promotes the joint responsibility of citizens and the police for community safety, through working partnerships and interpersonal contact. Okafor and Aniche (2018) refer to community policing as a shift from a military inspired approach to fighting crimes to one that relies on forming partnership with constituents. The United States Department of Justice has also defined community policing as a philosophy that focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement as well as prevention, problem solving, community engagement and partnership (Docobo, 2005). Whichever way it is defined, community policing can be viewed as collaboration between members of the society and the law enforcement agency. It emphasizes proactive policing rather than reactive policing. It also aims at decentralizing the powers of the police force for effective crime management (Gbenemene & Adishi, 2017).

Community policing is anchored on a symbiotic relationship between the police and the entire citizenry through which helpful information is gotten from members of the community. Community policing creates a platform for the police and the public to work together with the main aim of preventing the occurrence of crime, and helping towards a more efficient reaction to the commission of offences or crime by the police (Madaki & Kurfi, 2013).

Its philosophy emphasizes partnership, proactive policing and decentralization of power. Community policing stresses that by working together the police and the community can accomplish what neither can accomplish alone. Community policing is a philosophy that emphasizes working proactively with citizens in order to prevent crime and to solve crime-related problems. Partnership is a key element of community policing because the police and the public must partner together in order to adequately fight crime. . Community policing is a new philosophy of policing, based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary community problems related to crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder and neighbourhood decay. Community policing will remove public skepticism and cynicism, which characterize traditional policing in Nigeria. It facilitates community involvement and partnership with the police in crime prevention programmes, and infuses community concerns into policing priorities through the organization of regular interactions for a between the police and the communities they serve. Community policing also differs from traditional policing in that members of the community are at the centre point of all efforts at policing them. They are involved in security decisions, giving them a sense of belonging and responsibility.

In Nigeria, the CLEEN Foundation (formerly known as the Centre for Law Enforcement Education) implemented a pilot project on community policing in Nigeria, which was carried out in 14 local governments across the 6 geopolitical zones in the country. It was observed inter a/ia that there was a moderate improvement in public perception of the police and increased collaboration between the police and the community in terms of crime information generation (CLEEN Foundation, 2004). Community policing entails a synergy of efforts between the police and the local vigilante groups as well as other members of society. However, the Nigerian context presents certain challenges to the effective practice of community policing.

Community Policing according to Ndukwe (2018) aims:

- To Assist the Police in Detecting Crime: This can be done by promoting effective communication and the prompt reporting of suspicious and criminal activities in Nigeria.
- To Reduce Undue Fear of Crime: The community policing officers can help to reduce the fear of crime by providing accurate information about risks and by promoting a sense of security and community spirit, particularly among the more valuable members of the community.
- To Improve Community Safety: The community policing officers can also improve the general welfare and safety of the public through their various operations.
- To Prevent Crimes: This can be done by improving security, increase vigilance, creating and maintaining a caring environment and reducing opportunities for crime by increasing crime prevention awareness.

Conclusion

No doubt Nigeria is facing serious security challenges. The frequency of the attacks of violent Non-State Actors has continued to expose the ineffectiveness of the centralized security architecture of the country. The huge human and material losses caused by these criminal elements have continued to affect the development of the country adversely. The country cannot allow these negative forces to continue to cause collateral damage and insecurity to the state. The time to act is now. To this end, the government should:

- As a matter of national emergency, decentralized the security architecture of the country. This will create room for the direct involvement of states, local governments and autonomous communities to be directly involved in the security of their immediate environment
- Give recognition by way of legislation or registration existing regional and local vigilante groups since their activities as community police is helping to check the activities of armed non-state actors.
- Embark on a wholistic training and orientation of police, para-military and security personnel of the country on a regular basis. This is to enhance their understanding of their role, status and functions in the Nigerian society. Besides, improving their operational efficiency, it will also reduce corrupt practices among them.
- Pay greater attention on intelligence gathering as records show that most of the attacks of these criminal actors could have been prevented if the security agencies focused more on information gathering as well as acted on some of the intelligence they received.
- Ensure that the entire citizenry sees national security as both a collective and individual responsibility. Government must give a sense of inclusion to all parts of the country by ensuring equity in the recruitment and appointment security personnel.

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