



COMMUNITY POLICING AS A PANACEA TO THE SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity in Nigeria today, has risen to dangerous levels and mass apprehension has intensified. One of the worst experiences of humans, is any life threatening situation and crisis of life termination. This paper examines the devastating effect on Nigerian economy by near absence of organised internal security system. The maintenance of internal security as a state duty, appears to be dwindling. A proper investigation of community policing, its comprehensive packaging and deployment to most Nigerian communities, would drastically reduce the attacks in already occupied zones, and totally prevent infiltration of peaceful zones by the heartless armed people and destroyers. Employing local strategies in community policing with the expertise of the profession in Western Europe and North America, Nigerian doyens in indigenous knowledge systems can end or reduce insecurity to the barest minimum. This entails, determined leadership, patriotic community participation and properly understood coded word usage and adequate information. The paper examine the nexus between proper community policing and the termination of security threats across the nation. Of critical consideration is the fact, that most communities are conscious of their traditional security networks and operations. What may be required of government remain, coordination and integration of the other formerly silent stakeholders, capacity building and proper symbiosis of the indigenous knowledge systems and the professional tactics of contemporary community policing, in recognition of international standards of existing practices. The capacity building must include new patriotic principles. The structural defects of state-centric and hierarchy of the Nigerian police, would be improved by the all-inclusive community policing in adaptation of Nigerian indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

Keywords: Community, Policing, Panacea, Security, Challenges.

Introduction

It is no longer news, that Nigeria is a nation in turmoil. After the civil war in 1970, there was a relative peace for a period of time. Cases of violent theft, like armed robbery and car snatching could be reported once in a while, but an experience of widespread insecurity was absent. People came from troubled countries for refuge in Nigeria. Reports from other countries of the world, showing mass killings, human torture and incarcerations were scaring to Nigerians. Such reports came from Afghanistan, Apartheid South Africa, Somalia, Chad, Soweto, Angola, etc. Nigerian government played the big brother role in quelling some of the conflicts that resulted in inter and intra state wars in Africa. Nigeria troops were deployed to Liberia, Cote de Voir, Somalia, Chad, etc, to quell the violent conflicts in those countries.

All those years, though Nigerian population was compelled to appear very peaceful by the military led government, notwithstanding the cries and signals of marginalization, intimidation and injustices observed sporadically across the country. Several experiences of religious uprisings, which resulted in looting and destruction of lives and properties of the Igbos in the North, were each time treated feebly by people in government at the time. The organs or agencies of government never felt that, it was necessary to look inwards and organize a people oriented security structure, that could nip internal security threats from the bud. There was an over-dependence on the unilinear, structure and hierarchical tree of the Nigeria security outfit, which even America had reorganized from the seventies and the eighties.



Community policing is very capable of dealing with community conflicts, threats to security and issues of disturbances in all settlements, neighbourhood, villages and groups throughout Nigeria. Community policing is a new philosophy of law enforcement which stresses more on direct officer involvement with local citizens, organized around less rigid hierarchies and protocols. Community policing becomes apt because of its closeness with the community, its structure and dynamics, which is rooted on effective, free flow of information. Nigeria as a country is primarily composed of communities. If these communities are protected and secured, then Nigeria as a country would have seen that “lives, property and liberty” are secured.

Since the security and welfare of the people is the primary purpose of government is constitutionally rooted. (FRN, 1999:261), the strategic position and role of the police in the life of every Nigerian citizen is unquestionable.

This paper therefore sets out to examine the philosophy of proper composition of community policing, which is differently structured from the central organogram of the traditional Nigerian outfit. Details of how this arrangement, which incorporates and adapts Nigerian indigenous security network, will combat the security challenges in the country will be the thrust of our submissions in the work.

As an important component of this discourse, it is necessary to state that both good leadership / governance and proper economic management are fundamental to the eradication of crime and consequent insecurity threats in all human societies.

John Maxwell (1984) observed that everything rises and falls on leadership. In a similar view, Chinua Achebe (1983:1) noted that the trouble with Nigeria is a failure of leadership. As noted by Njoku (cited in Ezeudu *et al.*, 2011).

Alexander Ogbomudia, Nigeria's former Chief of Defence Staff, in an interview observed that:

Nigeria is not well policed. When

basic infrastructure and basic needs of ordinary and responsible Nigerians are met, then the tendency to go into crime will reduce, and once that is achieved, it will be easier for the police to handle the few criminals and crimes that will be committed (Tell, 2010: 44-45).

Conceptual Clarifications

Security appears elusive in concept clarification. However, there appears to exist a consensus among scholars on the concept. Most writers agreed that, the concept of security is in contention (Peterside, 2014). There is a consensus that it implies freedom from threats to core values (life, property and liberty), some security experts argued.

Though this paper concerns itself on community policing as a remedy to security challenges generally, but bulk of the challenges appear to rest on crisis of internal security. Since internal security will be appearing in our discourse once and again, it is necessary to clarify the concepts.

Internal Security: Walter Lippman observed that 'a nation is secured to the extent that it is not in a position to lose core values, life, property and liberty.' In another view, internal security refers to the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation state through the use of economic, military and political power and exercise of diplomacy, (Omolumen and Audu, 2014).

President Olusegun Obasanjo saw national security as to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development progress and growth and improve the welfare, well-being and quality of life of the citizenry (Obasanjo in Attah, 2006).

It is clearer to the government and people of Nigeria, now more than ever before, that security is very critical to the functions of state. Nigerian people are now very conversant with scaring languages associated with security threats. These languages are mere expressions, but the reality is



that dead bodies are seen daily in their hundreds in many states of the federation. Boko haram, Bandits, Fulani herdsman, Eastern Security Network, etc, are very fearful to Nigerian both those living in the country and in the diaspora.

The intensity of the destruction and humanitarian consequences following the activities of the insurgents are inestimable. Nobody including the security chiefs in Nigeria, can deny the fact, that there is mass apprehension in the country, if not the entire African continent, as the giant of Africa bleeds. Part of why this study is necessary, is to wholistically assess the impact of these life termination experiences of the masses. The view of Mohammad Kuna fortifies this position.

Despite the huge literature emerging on war and conflict in Africa, theoretical formulations on the dynamics and trajectories of conflict, remain beholden to state-centric discourses on security, Kuna (2005). The position above notwithstanding, the heightened insecurity issues in Nigeria calls for a multidimensional approach, to get to the root of the matter. It is obvious that every development has cause and effect relationship. Examination of the enabling environment for conflict eruption and remedies would guide us on the resolutions of the security threats by community policing.

Thus, in this paper, internal security crises as it relates to its causes, types, effects and solutions seems a more sensible starting point in addressing the threat to Nigeria's existence.

Insecurity Situation in Nigeria

Globalization improved information and communication system, but has inevitably and undeniably compelled the world to be a global village. The influence of what is happening in one continent affects the other, and moves in an electrifying proportion, particularly in emulation of negative and destructive undertakings. One wished that the social media would have impacted on Africans adaptation of inventions and breakthroughs from Western Europe and North America. Thank God for the exception of Rwandan leadership example.

It is on the global influence that we would observe that, external pressure impact and contribute in Nigeria's security threats. It is difficult, to separate internal security from external pressures. One of such external pressures is the financial crises which erupted in the United States of America, though Prof. Soludo, the then Governor of Central Bank assured Nigerians, that the global financial earthquake would not affect Nigeria, resulting according to him, from less integration of Nigeria economy to the world economy, Kuna 2005, Nigeria still infected cold from the American sneeze.

The global financial crises reached Nigeria both psychologically and in concrete terms. The more devastating external pressure to insecurity in Nigeria, is the linkage of Boko haram to ISIS and international religious fundamentalists. The sophisticated armaments in use and display by the insurgents make the claims believable. However, other more disturbing internal sources and cause would receive attention instantly.

The practice of Democracy from 1999, has offered Nigerians, the opportunity to air their views.

It has allowed people to vent their pent-up tension and disaffection with the existing political and economic order. This consequently led to the proliferation of militant ethnic and religious movements... or militias, like Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), Arewa Peoples Congress (APC), Bakass Boys, Eghesa Boys of Africa (EGBA), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND).

Internal security challenges derive from the issues of poor leadership, underdeveloped economy, lack of proper economic planning, poor security management, etc.



In greater details, the following need to be assessed:

1. Issues of good governance and accountability
2. Poor nature and scope of economic development
3. Population explosion
4. Poverty and hunger
5. Ignorance and disease
6. Corruption and its attendant ills
7. Absence of coordinated security programmes between the authorities and the people.

National security and the people needs a proper linkage in a democracy, otherwise, who is protecting who? For whom is the security meant?

The common saying that a hungry man is an angry man obtains in a nationwide assessment. We may appear to be emphasizing the obvious, to state that poverty and unemployment are twin brotherly friends to insecurity. The dual calamity of both are usually brought about by ineffective and visionless leadership. Explained in a different form, issues of good government and accountability, that is still a mirage and lacking among leaders, be it at the local government, state government and federal level. The issue is also lacking in the private sector of the economy, (Azee, 2005; Babawale, 2007; Akamabi 2004; Asemota, 2004). Poor nature and scope of economic development, this centres on what has been happening to unemployment and what has been happening to inequality, (Alkali, 1997; Artwood, 1998; Boeninger, 1991; Muo, 2007) (quoted in Kuna, 2014).

In addition to the numerous underlying causes of insecurity crises, threats to national security are linked to other issues which include, lack of proper organization, coordination and non-inclusive nature of national security architecture. It is noted as well that there is no synergy between national security and democracy. From the foregoing, no one is left in doubt, as to whether, a paradigm shift in addressing security challenges in Nigeria is necessary or not. Clearly, the logic of new approaches that, will tackle the naughty

issues of brazen elimination and torture of both suspicious and innocent Nigerians have the support of many. This is because a state-centric perception in democratic rule is an anachronism. Along with growing internal opposition to the hegemonic statistic perspective of national security, (Olukoshi, 1992; Nweke, 1988; Imobighe, 1986 and 1989).

The security challenges are worsening as the days go by. While preparing this paper, 9th August, 2021, we were quarantined in my Enugu residence by a mere declaration of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) that there must be a sit at home over Nnamdi Kanu's detention by DSS (Nigeria's Department of Security Service). Meanwhile, three Whatsapp messages appeared on my phone bearing:

1. Kaduna State Government postpones resumption of schools over insecurity.
2. Borno church demolition: Over 50 pastors, youths, groups converged at site, demand immediate reconstruction.
3. Suspected thieves kill 23 year old commercial motorcyclist in Jigawa.

These headlines came under a platform named People's Voice. The headlines were quoted, not because the news were spectacular, but because of the coincidence of their emergence on my handset, and the analytical arrangement going on in this work, simultaneously. What other proof, would one require to show that Nigerian insecurity was running out of hand? The experiences of the killer-groups emergence and their operational techniques call for all and sundry to be vigilant and participate in killing the killer and eradication of the horror. It is this wholistic approach that looks at community policing as the most viable option.

Warranting the Use of Community Policing for Combating Crimes, Criminality and Insecurity in Nigeria

Community policing is a new philosophy of law enforcement which stresses more direct officer involvement with local citizens organized around less rigid hierarchies and protocols, attempting to address the root causes of neighbourhood crime



with the assistance of the larger community, (Diamond and Weis, 2009).

The United States of America example showed, that as the community policing method started from the local communities, because of its gradual and steady growth and development, and its effectiveness, it became endorsed by the federal government of United States of America with the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2013).

The report showed that community policing kept receiving increased funding from US budget from 1994. A definition of community policing which can be adopted in Nigeria, local circumstances, enabling the country to nib crimes from the bud is subjoined. It is seen as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014).

From the community policing literature, there are three fundamental issues referred to as key components of community policing which can guide the proper adaptation of this effective philosophy to Nigerian circumstances. They are: organizational transformation, community partnership and problem solving. Nigerians can exploit this arrangement, because it reaches all the nooks and crannies, the unknown gunmen would be known, the bandits and boko haram members, crime from communities could be identified, the kidnappers lived in houses and neighbours. The myths of the killers would be unveiled. There had been various anticrime groups in Nigeria. several vigilante groups, neighbourhood watch organizations, the latest ethnic based groups like Amotekun which had been legalized and somehow effective though still controversial in the West, could be exploited and integrated to a formally constituted community policing in the local governments.

In the South East, though Ebubeagu appear to have had a stillbirth, but other organised groups in the neighbourhood, could be harnessed. Enugu State, could perfectly arrange, the neighbourhood watch, the forest guide, the police, the civil defence and of course the partnerships to build a formidable community policing system. The same could go round the whole country each locality adapting the available groups and organizations while insisting on adoption of the general principles of community policing.

Another hallmark of community policing, that is related to but distinct from geographically based assignments is decentralization. In this context, the decentralization of a police department means a reduction in a reliance top-down policy directives from departments leadership devolution in decision making and a reporting structure that is less hierarchical (Maquire and Wells, 2009).

In the Nigerian experiment, an integrative and inclusive approach where both age grades for rural communities, professional associations for urban settlements and the religious groups participate as partners, every indication of crime would be detected at the embryonic stage and terminated. Community policing is a public safety investment.

For adequate community policing, the following stakeholders should be aware and attend the meetings:

1. Local Government Council Chairman
2. Members of the Council
3. DPO and his team
4. Members of the violence prevention and public safety oversight committee
5. Community residents and community based organizations.

In USA, these organizations are mostly NGOs. But in Nigeria where the NGOs exist, they can play the roles, while the following can be mobilized in the arrangement:

1. Vigilante or neighbourhood watch
2. Forest guides
3. Age grade associations
4. Town unions



5. Traditional Ruler-in-Council
6. Christian Men Association (CMO)
7. Christian Women Association (CWO)
8. Clergy and the religious. Some can apply to the moslem group if the doctrines allow it.
9. The hunters association
10. Women organizations. Those who organize the famous August meetings in the South Easts
11. Trade Associations – NURTW, Journalists, Bar Association
12. NMA – the Doctors and
13. The entire labour wherever they apply.

The membership is total. Information is the key. Movements and appearances of strange faces are queried. Big ledger of names of residents are kept, checked, reviewed and updated. They are usually kept in the house of the Traditional Ruler or his nominee, or any person agreed by the stakeholders.

In the United States, the experience is drawn from the review of social science research literature, including the seminar, articles on community policing. It draws from special areas like U.S Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPs), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BOJ), etc. The organizations and association listed in the case of Nigeria is an adaptation and domestication of the principles applied in Oakland, USA. This writer's view is that an inclusive stakeholders arrangement in community policy in Nigeria, will solve the security problem. This is true because anything happening must start from somewhere, and the people in the neighbourhood, must know and eventually report to the authorities.

Amadi (2014) noted that community policing involves a great deal of interaction between the police and the citizens in the community, in a positive way and in a common effort to prevent and control crime.

In a similar view, Sparrow (1988) noted, that under community policing, the community is perceived as an agent and partner in promoting security rather than as a passive audience.

Drawing from these views, the Nigerian community policing experience must be arranged in a manner that all the aforementioned groups and associations must be interaction with the police. The police must be made to wear a new look and orientation to actually be the peoples police and friend, rather than the state-centric status quo.

Police would be fully involved in crime prevention rather than reactive responses in fighting crime only. The three components of community policing had changed the police orientation in USA, to include, partnering with the community in fighting, crime, crime prevention and giving advice and encouragement to city officials on how to prevent crime. By those approaches, the root causes of crimes would be discovered and handled adequately.

The approach work very well in United States. Generally, community policing in the United States has been recognized as a successful policing strategy by political leaders and policy makers, policy researchers and the law enforcement community, Amadi (2014).

Since every country has her own peculiarities, the Nigerian experience would be expected to maximize the potentials from her background.

The synergy of all the groups suggested earlier, could inevitably organize the formation and constitution of three standing committees, as follow below:

1. Finance and Economy
2. Intelligence and
3. Field Operations

Finance and economy committee would be responsible for sourcing funds, through government budgetary provisions, corporate groups, donor agencies and sundry sources. The group would fight unemployment as well by ensuring that jobless members of the community secure either paid or self-employment. Agricultural programmes needed more emphasis for self-employment, since agriculture appeared as the last if not the only hope for African



continent.

The intelligence committee's vigilance and information gathering, surely would identify any group planning evil, crime or disorder and get it erased at infancy. Critical minds should be part of this committee.

The field operations committee's responsibility revolved around fighting and extinguishing any identified crime or security threat. The police, neighbourhood watch, civil defence, forest guards, etc, belong to this field operations team. As the implementation area of the community policing establishment, the field operations committee should be combat-ready forty eight hours, for crime extermination. Though community policing has been introduced in some states in Nigeria, it should go round the entire country and the suggested new techniques applied. There must be regular capacity building.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Community policing is anchored on symbolic relationship between the police and the entire citizenry. Police roles and functions are not simply law enforcement, but also include tackling a huge range of community problems, Okiro (2007:2).

It is suggested that the Nigeria 'Police Excellence Model' which directs the affairs of the community policing, would expand the membership of Boards or think Tank of community policing in all communities in Nigeria. The standing committees earlier suggested could play very important roles in the security and safety of all citizens.

The Community Policing Project (CPP) being a core value Nigeria police development and change programme has an enormous police public acclaim and goodwill despite the antics and tantrums of change resisters both within and outside the police who are benefitting from the putrid status quo, (Destiny, 2008:15).

This paper has demonstrated that community policing is a better policing option for the Nigeria police force (Njoku in Ezeuduet al., 2011).

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