The Need for Community Policing In Providing Security and Curbing Rising Crime in Nigeria

By

Sabo, Anche Ugah
Department of History & International Studies,
Faculty of Arts,
Federal University Lafia,
Nasarawa State.
Email: anche.ugah@yahoo.com or, anchson88@gmail.com
08169613558

Davidson, Aminu PhD
National Orientation Agency (NOA),
P.M.B. 27, Garki,
Abuja.
Email: davidsonaminu@yahoo.com
08034726954
&
Bashama, Kaze Akwanga
Department of History,
Faculty of Arts,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
Email: akwangakaze@yahoo.com
08130717309

Abstract

The rise in crime rate today cannot be overemphasis in Nigeria, this calls for a more proactive measure to curb the menace. Kidnapping for ransom, arm robbery, terrorism, arm banditry, rape, trafficking, etc., necessitates the need for more security intel to be able to control it. In the globe today, community policing is now becoming a trend, especially in the 21st century. Though, community policing is never foreign or new to Africa, particularly Nigeria. Before colonialism showed its ugly face in Africa, the traditional African societies had engaged in the different traditional method of policing and securing themselves within a given community. Community policing was substituted with the colonialist police system which alienated the people. The emphasis on the need for community policing has become a solution for policing and crime control globally and Nigeria particularly. Community policing has received a lot of attention and it emphasizes pro-activeness rather than reactive policy. Community policing seek to involve the community in fighting crime as an essential, effective and proactive tool/way of policing/securing the community. This study aims to help us understand the need to decentralize security, to synergies with the people for effective security. The documentary method was adopted in carrying out this research work. It is the

submission of this research work that for effective security of the Nigerian state, there is the need for synergy between the law enforcement agents and the citizens/inhabitants of a given community.
Keywords: community, policing, community policing, Nigeria police, police, security, crime.

Introduction:
Community policing is concerned with building ties and working closely with the members of the community. The primary aim of community policing is for the police to build relationships with the community, this could be done and achieved through local agencies to reduce the crime rate. Community policing as a concept was first introduced in the United States in the 1960s to increase police-community contact and reduce the soaring rise crime. Hence, the need for community policing became a necessity. Scholars traced community policing to Sir Robert Peel in 1829 (Alderson, 1979). Peel's ideas included that the police needed to seek the cooperation of the public and prioritize crime prevention. The term 'community policing' came into use in the late 20th century as a response to a proceeding philosophy of police organization (Stenson, 1993).

According to Jude and Earnest (2018); community policing is fast becoming a global trend, especially in the 21st century. But the key elements or core component of community policing is not foreign or new in Africa, for example, the pre-colonial Igbo society did not distinguish between policing and fighting crime with the overall role of the society. Consequently, the role of policing in the traditional Igbo society was diffused in that there was no specialized institution which specific role or primary purpose was to police or fight crime. It was the role of the entire society, thus, the saying that "elders do not allow the goat to be strangulated by the forest". Yet the age-grade and masquerade society were prominent in the role of policing and the task of policing and fighting crime among other roles or functions, and all adult male citizens belong to both the age-grade and masquerade society meaning that the task of policing is that of the entire society.

Community policing became a dominant policing strategy in the United States during the 1990s with the introduction of 100,000 new community police officers. The deployment presented a change of focus to encourage problem-solving and community engagement as opposed to reactive policing (Innes, 2003).

Community policing is, therefore, anchored on a systematic 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 and crimes. The transition from traditional policing to community policing is a global phenomenon and the Nigeria police cannot be an exception. Indeed, community policing as a philosophy and practice is a veritable vehicle for police reforms. The Nigeria police in 2004 embraced community policing as a pragmatic approach to policy reforms. The stage was indeed set for a clear

departure from traditional policing, that was reactive and incident-based, to a problem – solving oriented policing that is proactive with the community as the cornerstone of policing objectives (Abdulrahaman, 2007).

Community policing as a concept was first introduced in the United States in the 1960s to increase police-community contact and reduce the fear of crime. It became a dominant policing strategy in the United States during the 1990s with the introduction of 100,000 new community police officers. The deployment presented a change of focus to encourage problem-solving and community engagement as opposed to reactive policing.

In general, it is agreed that community policing involves problem-solving and community engagement with an emphasis on police-community partnerships to solve the underlying problems of crime, the fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighbourhood decay, etc.

The rise in crime rate today poses a big challenge to the globe entirely and Nigeria not excluded. The rate of crime is being perpetrated in Nigeria calls for concern and to come up with a way to develop a favourable security intel that will help in curbing the menace. Crime cases such as arm robbery, kidnap, trafficking in persons and drugs, rape, terrorism is on the rise in Nigeria and the need to subdue it is a collective responsibility of both the security personnel and non-security personnel.

Conceptual Clarification

Community: The term community is used in various ways. The community can be referred to the neighbourhood in which people live; or a group of people with a common identity, or refer to people with common profession, interest or needs. In Africa, communities can be formed based on kinship and extended family system. In traditional Africa, the family community is extremely important and the family is the basic component of social structure. Shorter (1977), opines that; many traditional African societies were construed on the principle of lineage segmentation, or experience a precarious unity, focused on the political symbolism of a ruling family.

Community policing: There are various definitions of community policing, but there is a common submission to all. Wrobleski and Hess (2003), defined community policing as "an organization-wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community, government and police partnerships; proactive problem solving; and community engagement to address the cause of crime, fear of crime and other community issues". Community policing is defined by Miller and Hess (2002) as a belief that in working together, the police and the community can accomplish what neither can be accomplished alone. Community policing is a collaborative effort between the police and the community that identifies problems of crime and disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems. It attempts to actively involve the community

with the police in the task of crime control by creating an effective working partnership between the community and the police. Under the community policing ideal, community members and the police are expected to share responsibility for establishing and maintaining peaceful neighbourhoods.

It is generally defined as a law enforcement philosophy that allows officers to continuously operate in the same area to create a stronger bond with the citizens living and working in the area. Community policing creates a partnership between law enforcement and residents. The more the law enforcement is with residents the more the residents can contribute and help law enforcement achieving their goals.

Policing: Policing in the mind of the people in the activity of state police. According to Usman (2014), policing is not just an activity of the state police, in involves all organized activity that seeks to ensure the maintenance of communal order, security and peace through elements of prevention, deterrence, investigation of breaches, and punishment. It is a mechanism of governance. It is the activities carried out by police officers, person or group to preserve law and order.

Crime: A crime is an offence that merits community condemnation and punishment, usually by way of fine and punishment. This is different from a civil wrong, which is an action against an individual that requires compensation or restitution.

Security: The concept of security has evolved considerably since the end of the cold war and it is a contested concept, covering a wide range of activities, though; commonly used about a spectrum of personal and societal activities and development. Security therefore is defined as the freedom from or resilience against any form of harm caused by others. In a nutshell, security is the state of being free from any danger, attack or threat that is capable of causing harm to the individual that has a devastating result on him/her.

Brief History of the Nigeria Police

The Nigerian police force was established in 1820 by the British colonial administration replacing the traditional policing by the citizens in Lagos. In October 1861, the governor of Lagos colony, McCoskry was granted permission from London to create the Consular Guard, which comprised of 30 men. In 1863, the Consular Guard later became known as the "Hausa Guard". The Hausa Guard was regularized in 1879 by an ordinance creating a constabulary for the Colony of Lagos. The Hausa Guard, which consists of Hausa-speaking ex-slaves, was established to undertake semi-military duties of pacifying the indigenous population and ensuring colonial political domination {Igbo, 1999: 120). The Lagos Police Force was created and armed like the Hausa Constabulary in 1896. In 1894, the Niger Coast Constabulary was formed for areas now called Delta, Rivers and Cross-Rivers states, following the proclamation of the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893. By 1888, there was an establishment of the Royal Niger Constabulary in Northern Nigeria with headquarters in

Lokoja which later split into Northern Nigeria Police Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment while part of the Niger Coast Constabulary became Southern Nigeria, Police Force. During the colonial era, most police were associated with the local governments (native authorities),. During the first republic, the regional forces were later nationalized (Stemson, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

Some relevant theories are reviewed to situate the concept of community-policing in very clear perspectives. These are structural conflict theory and the Structural differentiation theory, social contract theory and the securitization theory.

Structural conflict theory and Structural differentiation theory

The major proponent of conflict theory is Karl Marx cited in Weber, (1968). According to him, changes are generated based on "contradictions" of the social system which stem from the social relations of production or the economic base of the society. Marxist theorists, therefore, argue that the main cause of social innovation is class struggle particularly between the working class (proletariats) and the ruling class (bourgeoisie).

Regarding this study, the theory of security and general law and order are mere reflections of the nature of the inherent economic system in society especially the dominant interest that drives that economy. This theory perceives social problems such as "political and economic injustice, inequity, poverty, exploitation, marginalization, etc. as veritable sources of conflict. It argues that conflicts occur largely because of the exploitative and unjust nature of man. To the Marxists, the police are not necessarily created to serve the "society" or the "people" but the dominant economic interest of a powerful minority". This position portrays the police as a repressive force which necessitated using this method of policing to promote ideal Community policing relations. (Institute of labour and Economic crisis, 1982).

The theory of structural differentiation originated by Spencer and Durkheim and further developed by Persons and Peil (1976) holds that institutional changes lead to specialized differentiation and specialization of functions which are vital to the overall effectiveness of different aspects of the society. Thus, regarding this study, policing constitutes part of the measures and actions taken by society to regulate societal relations and conformity to norms and values (Reiner, 2000). In Nigeria, the police force is facing many challenges ranging from negative public image, corruption, low morale, lack of equipment/facilities to rapidly changing social values which tend to encourage an increase in crime rates (Aremu, 2009; Effiong, 2004).

These factors show that the police in Nigeria is working in a very harsh and hostile environment which is inimical to effective security of lives and property, (Guardian, 2009). This trend is equally worsened by the high rate of ignorance many Nigerians exhibits on

basic security issues Akintunde (2009). Thus, it is argued that with the support of community policing citizens will receive some necessary security training and in the process ensure effective community participation in security (Sunday Nation, 2009).

Community policing is critical to effective security and political participation in a democracy. This is evident in the USA, Britain, and South Africa where the promotion of community policing assisted tremendously in creating consciousness and awareness among members of the police force, especially in public relations. Indeed, police-public relations in Nigeria have been very poor and it is envisaged in this study that effective community policing can improve the situation.

The current bad public image of the police as rightly observed by Akintunde (2009) could be attributed to the engagement of some of the officers and men of the force in the extra-judicial killing of innocent and defenceless citizens, corrupt practices, and even connivance with criminals against citizens they are expected to protect. This state of the affair could further be attributed to the colonial origin of the force which made it para-military in nature and repressive in character. It has over the years become an oppressive instrument used by the state to promote certain selfish interests (Imobighe, 2003).

Another issue which probably necessitated the need for policing is the manpower need of the police force. The shortage is largely in terms of number and quality. Thus, given the country's' rapid population, growth, and the slow rate of recruitment into the force, Nigeria, seem to be grossly under policed. This situation is further aggravated by the regular use of the police for other duties other than "combating crime, law enforcement, and maintenance of public order' (Imobigbe, 2005: p84).

Social Contract Theory

According to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the task of providing security to lives and property in most societies is the exclusive function of the conventional police institution. This forms the major tenet of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) social contract theory which noted that security and order could only be achieved by a contract in which all citizens would give up all their powers to the central power, the sovereign in return for the protection of life and property (Marshall, 1998).

However, as society progresses, this ideology has proven uncongenial to modern crime prevention strategy and it has created room for advocacy in support of an alternative strategy. To buttress this fact, Robert K. Merton's structural functionalism theory submits that it is not only the consequences of formalized social institutions that make the society works, but that other functioning cultural institutions can play the same role. Thus, people should be willing to admit that there exist various structural and functional alternatives that can perform the same task in society (Ritzer, 1996).

This reality makes room for the adoption of Rosenbaum (2003) partnership theory of crime prevention which noted that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself; solve the complex problems of crime and disorder in our society, that resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about diverse problems from the inside. To achieve this, the theory advocates for the creation of 'partnerships' — a group of organizations that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems (Rosenbaum, 2003).

Securitization Theory

To the proponents of this theory, it is a step forward in security studies radical transformation of the security ambient, a complete reconfiguration of the system of global relations of power and force at the end of the Cold War and emergence of entirely new security challenges, risks and threats, only added to the intensification of the debate on redefinition of the concept of security.

The central point of the debate was a question on whether and how to broaden and deepen the security concept without bringing its logical coherence into the dispute, how to widen the focus of the research onto the other, non-military sectors, and keep the sole concept meaningful and to analysts a useful tool.

An enormous contribution to the contemporary security studies was made by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, which offered a quite innovative, original perspective on a broad spectrum of security issues, perceiving clearly that security dynamics could no longer be reduced only to the military-political relations of the two superpowers, however important they might be. In that sense, proponents of the Copenhagen School stand firmly on the wideners` side. However, as shown in the text, the moment one leaves the idea to tie the concept of security only to certain referent objects (such as the state) and to certain kind of security threats (such as the military), a question "what quality makes something a security issue arrives at the very centre of controversy", (Buzan and Wilde, 1998: 21).

Security Challenges Confronting the Nigeria State

Broadly speaking, security can be classified into two via; internal and external perspectives. External security has to do with the security of the nation's territorial borders and her protection from any form of external aggression while, internal security provisions implies freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of the nation and the ability to maintain its vital institutions (Nkwede, 2013).

Furthermore, it also includes the capacity of the government to create and maintain agencies and mechanisms and even institutions that would guarantee freedom from

danger. Therefore, a threat to life and property be it from the armed robbers, insurgency attacks, civil disturbances, political thuggery, cattle rustling, roadblocks that endangered the road users and other distractions are symptomatic of lack of internal security provisions. Elaborating further, Aligwara (2009) submit that the security of individual citizens is the most important thing. He argued that security is for the citizens and not citizens for security and without citizens no security is needed for a vacuum.

Nigeria today, is presently faced with severe security challenges. Security outfits in the country need to be re-energized/organized to address the menace. Some of the security challenges are: kidnapping and hostage-taking, hired political assassins, ethnoreligious conflict, smuggling and trans-border crime, political violence, rape, etc.

Kidnapping and Hostage Taking:
This commenced in the South-south region of Nigeria and it had cut across Nigeria at large. Kidnapping and hostage-taking are notorious acts in oil-rich Niger Delta. Agu and Nwajiri (2012; 6) argues that it has been used to address wanton neglect of their communities by successive government. This is why Nwankwo (2012) observed, for the South-East, kidnapping, and hostage-taking are now tools for settling personal and political scores. Youths in the region and now the entire country find this as a lucrative business which is utilized as tools to make a huge amount of money as they call the families of their victims to pay millions of naira for ransom. Politicians equally use this to deal with their opponents and perceived enemies leaving citizens in fear. Many officials of multinational oil companies in the region have been victims thereby portraying Nigeria as a go and unsafe area.

Hired and Political Assassinations:
This is another nefarious security challenge grappling with Nigeria State. It is another dimension to the security crisis that is stretching the country to its limit. A cursory look at Nigeria's democracy since 1999 reveals many unresolved high profile killings. To exemplify, former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige was killed on 23rd December 2002 in his home at Ilesha. (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). Amujiri & Agu (2012) observes that a wave of assassination is sweeping across the country and the perpetrators have not been brought to book. Ahmed Pategi, a former PDP chairman of Kwara State was killed in 2005 while Godwin Agboroko, a former editorial board chairman of This Day Newspaper was also murdered in December, and the most recent is the kidnap/adoption and the murder of the APC state chairman of Nasarawa. From the foregoing, it could be observed that the situation has not been seriously addressed and the Police have not been able to unmask the killers of this personnel. Hence, assassination has posed a serious security challenge to the successive Nigerian government as there are reports of more cases of killings for rituals and money purposes.

Ethno-Religious Violence:
Ethno-religious by this paper refers to a situation where the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group, multi-ethnic or multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Salawu, 2010).

Ethnic and religious connections now determine who gets what in Nigeria. Such crises have occurred in other parts of the country like Shagamu [Ogun State], Lagos, Abia among others. Salawu believes that a major cause of present-day ethnoreligious conflict in Nigeria has to do with accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, dominations, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, and a host of others. In recent times, Nigeria's National security had been threatening by a religious gang that believed that western education and culture were forbidden [Boko Haram]. This group has killed many innocent citizens and even security operatives to the extent that Nigeria Police could not manage the attack and necessitated the involvement of armed forces that have not to be able to subdue their attacks and activities.

Smuggling and Trans-Border Crimes:
Another big security challenge threatening Nigeria is the smuggling and trans-border crimes. Smuggling and circulation of contraband goods like small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, drug trafficking lead to other threats to Nigeria's internal security provisions. Ngoa opines that these hinder the social and economic development of not only Nigeria but the continent of Africa (Ngoa, 2012). Smuggling encourages the proliferation of arms, ammunition, and compounded criminality in Nigeria. The porosity of Nigeria's borders instigates smuggling as Nigeria has over one thousand illegal routes through which aliens from the neighbouring country can trek-in into the country. This equally informs the high rate of crime and public disorder in Nigeria. The influx of non – Nigerians and illegal immigrants mixing up with the teaming unemployed youths in Nigeria calls for Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigeria Customs Service to double their effort in the course of discharging their statutory duties. Some Nigeria borders are demarcated with drums and logs of woods which show the state of our borders. Despite joint patrol and task force at the borders, security personnel is not enough to manage both regular and irregular route of entrance into Nigeria state.

Political Violence:
Political violence in Nigeria has aggravated other aforementioned security challenges in Nigeria. The country has witnessed various degrees of political violence either pre or post-election violence which had led to a lot of wanton destruction of property and loss of lives. Political violence could be attached to over-enthusiasm and desperation by political gladiators to win elections to public office by all means. Since 1999 when Nigeria returns to civil rule, electoral violence appears to have presumed a devilish dimension. This had given birth to political assassinations and other security threats.

Rape:

According to the 2015 UNICEF report, every one in four girls and one in ten boys had experienced sexual violence before the age of eighteen in Nigeria. The centre for environment, human rights and development reported that 1200 girls had been raped in 2012 in Rivers alone which is a coastal state in southeastern Nigeria, less all the states in the federation put together. According to UNICEF, six out of ten children experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse before age eighteen in Nigeria with half experiencing physical violence. a most recent of this crime is the raping and killing of a student (Uwavera Omozuwa) in a church in Benin, Edo state.

Need for Community Policing in Nigeria

As elucidated above, community policing is necessary and pivotal to curbing crime in the Nigeria state. According to Bohn and Haley (2002); they assert that the components of community policing are contained in the community policing philosophy which is identified differently by different scholars. Though different literature exists on the components of community policing, this work is concerned with McEwen (1998:13) submission. He (McEwen) list six elements of community policing with particular reference to the Chicago alternative policing strategy (APS) which are:

i. The entire department and the city were to be involved.
ii. Officers were to have permanent beat assignments.
iii. There was to be a serious commitment to training.
iv. The community was to play a significant role in the program.
v. Police were to be linked to the delivery of city services.
vi. There was to be an emphasis on crime analysis.

He (McEwen) further states that other key elements which present itself often within agencies adopting community policing include decentralizing authority and the structure, with police and citizens sharing power and being empowered to address community problems together.

As stated above, security is very crucial to every community and also constitutes one of the important social services that provide community development. This is achieved through the cooperation of the government and the community. It is pertinent to note that the police nor communities cannot handle security matters alone; it requires the cooperation of the duo to achieve that. Importantly, the police alone cannot ensure the security or tackle crime; it requires partnering with the community.

Community development is enhanced in a well-secured environment because both life and property need to be safeguarded for development to occur. No any form of development in any community can be achieved in the absence of peace, law and order. Security does not only facilitate or brings development in a community, it is one of the major ingredients

of development. Community policing is a major prerequisite for community development in Nigeria.

The rise in crime rate and civil disorder have scared many investors away from Nigeria, this had crippled a lot of economic activities and hindered developmental strides in our communities. In as much as the Nigeria Police Force engages in policing the community rather than partnering with the community (community policing) in matters of security, development and safety in our communities will be eluded.

The below-given points are summarily highlighted as to the need of community policing:

a. The security personnel connected to the communities they serve could easily identify individuals who may have developed extremism as an ideology, radicalization and thus; pose a threat of violence to the community/institutions.
b. Community policing enhances trust between the people and security personnel. It also fosters a good and healthy relationship that is developed and maintained at the community level. This action has proven to be successful in preventing crime and also proven to have incredibly and successfully identified individuals and groups that pose a threat to the community.
c. By developing and maintaining a trusting relationship in the community, it is the foundation of community policing and essential in preventing/curbing crime. It is expected that in a community, security personnel needs to recognize the importance of community relations to be able to identify individuals who pose threat to our national security.
d. Community policing helps law enforcement agencies to identify challenges, issues, and concerns that might emerge/emerges within or outside the community. Once armed with the needed information, security personnel and leaders of the community/state must engage with community members to develop military intel and implement policies and strategies aimed at curbing crime in the state.
e. Community policing brings the police and citizens together, this helps in the prevention of crime and solves neighbourhood problems.
f. Community policing is an effective way to promote public safety and also to enhance the quality of life in a community.

Conclusion

As stated previously, community policing plays a pivotal role in police-community relations and is problem-solving centred. To develop a working policing partnership with the community, the police needs to first form/establish a good relationship with the people (neighbourhood). It is expected that the police should involve the people in their designated various communities in its pursuit to control crime within the community and at large. This is because most communities concerns and solutions are usually identified through problem-solving.

The need to reposition the Nigeria police to conform with what is obtainable in other countries of the world cannot be negotiated. The sensitivity of the security of any nation is so crucial and sensitive that it cannot afford to be toyed with, it is, however, expedient to note that; there is a necessary in-depth and comprehensive reforms to be carried out within the police force to make it effectively and satisfactorily discharge its constitutional duties without alienating the citizens, or making/presenting itself as an enemy of the people (Nigerians).

The objective of community policing to curb or lessen crime and other forms of social vices is by diligently examining issues of concerns in the community(s) and then applying the most suitable problem-solving approach/method as a solution.

Recommendations

To enhance community policing in Nigeria, it is therefore the recommended of this research work that:

a. The police living conditions should be improved. These should include good accommodation, good salary, health insurance, payment of all deserve allowances, etc.
b. The police authorities should come up with motivational ways to appreciate honest, dedicated and hardworking personnel.
c. Deserving officers should be promoted as at when due. If this is not done, the morale of the police personnel will be permeated and pervaded.
d. Retraining of personnel towards attitudinal change and professionalism for effectiveness, efficiency and proficiency among personnel of the force is highly recommended. This will help the police to improve her public relations and see Nigerians as fellow human beings that deserve to be treated with all sense of humane.
e. The police should be equipped with ultra-modern arms and ammunitions as well as security gadgets. This is very necessary now more than ever to enable the police to fights all sort of crime ravaging nation.
f. Nigerians are also expected to assist the police in discharging their duties by providing them (police) with vital information on activities of people of the underworld in the society. Such information could help the police to perform its function credibly and hence; curb/reduce crime in the community.
g. Both the police and community should ensure there is a good working understanding amidst the duo. If this is done and achieved, there will certainly be a working synergy aimed at curbing crime.
h. Security of informants should be of topmost secrecy. This will encourage other members of the community to provide vital and useful information to the police that is tantamount to causing harm in society.

i. The media houses should also play a role in enlightening Nigerians on the need and usefulness of community policing and on the effects of indulging in crime, its effects and penalty.
j. Nigerian government should raise the image of criminal justice and particularly the Nigeria Police Force in the eyes of Nigerians by providing a climate in which they will exercise their powers without fear or favour.

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