

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE POLICING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper traces the history of colonial social control and Policing in Nigeria, and also reviews the literature and examines how colonialism demonized, discredited, and supplanted the traditional system of policing. It establishes that in place of the old (traditional) system, colonialism imposed a new (but alien) militarized policing geared toward the colonial needs of political oppression and economic exploitation without regard to the needs of the colonized. The post-colonial state was thus bequeathed a corrupt police system that fails to cater to the needs of the people. This unfortunate development explains the emergence of “ethnic armies” in the face of corrupt and insensitive national police.

Introduction

In the face of ever increasing acts of lawlessness, social disorder, armed robbery, and senseless vindictive assassinations in Nigeria, it has become necessary to look for causal explanations that go beyond superficial semantics. This research work is therefore intended to add to the body of literature that go to substantiate the claim that colonial policing was not introduced to protect the lives and property of Africans. It was rather introduced to protect colonial interests (traders and missionary agents) financed to serve the economic needs of colonialism which is exploitation.

Additionally, this work will lend credence to the view that the present obstacles in the way of effective policing in Nigeria is an inevitable aftermath of a colonial system designed to conquer, displace, and suppress, for the sole objective of exploiting African indigenous labor and resources. Nigeria needs to shade off neocolonial apron that has stymied progress and embrace innovative approaches geared towards combating the obstacles in the way of a detached professionalized police. Some of the options are suggested in this work.

Study Methodology

The research on obstacles to effective policing in Nigeria is part of data collected over several years. The study methodology is based on ethnographic observation of events as they evolve over the years; from independence through the Nigerian civil war, various military regimes, and (s)elected representative governments. It also includes analysis of Nigerian newspapers and magazines, academic journal articles, books, archival materials, and internet-based documented source materials. Other sources of data include

convenient sample personal (clarification) interviews of selected individuals and officials whom the author felt have something relevant to contribute.

The Colonial and Post-independence Policing Experiment

The origins, development and role of the European type of police forces in Africa are traceable to the nature of European interests in the continent and the reactions of the indigenous people to their activities. With the advent of colonialism came the distortion of the traditional institutions and values, which had from time immemorial sustained harmonious relationship, peace, and security of lives and property in the pre-colonial African communities. Thus, the legacy of Western plantation (and in some cases racist) ideology is the portrayal of African societies and cultures as lawless and disorderly (Onoge, 1993). This negative image had its roots in the long ordeal of the slave trade, and later colonialism, which mediated modern Africa's interaction with the West.

Following conquest, colonial rule was consolidated through a system that subjugated the existing traditional informal law enforcement mechanism with the forceful imposition of the Western idea of policing. Thus, the colonialists introduced new laws, which replaced, or seriously threatened the efficacy of native laws and customs, traditional religions and other sanctions, as well as indigenous tribunals and justice. Achebe (1959) recounted a colonial demonstration of this assertiveness in his legendary Umuofia village:

... the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial... They guarded the prison, which was full of men who had offended the white man's law. Some of these prisoners were men of titles who should be above such mean occupation (p. 160).

Where the Africans were slow in accepting the new ways, the colonial "master" made it a duty to militarily make mincemeat of the community as an example for other communities who may be contemplating resistance. Thus, Achebe (1959) summarized this belligerence in his account of the arrogance exhibited by the colonial District Commissioner in addressing some Umuofia elders reminiscing over their hero's (Okonkwo) suicide. Thus:

... Obierika with five or six others led the way. The Commissioner and his men followed with their firearms held at the ready. He had warned Obierika that if he and his men played any monkey tricks they would be shot (p. 189-190).

Since public safety, maintenance of peace and enforcement of legitimate laws are the chief responsibilities of the civil police force (Adedipe, 1965), it is essential in this paper, to trace the origin of this force in Nigeria. This approach would provide grounding for the inevitable linkage between the nature of colonial policing and the total collapse of the apparatus of law enforcement in Nigeria. For shortness of space, what is known and

would be said about Nigeria is that beginning in 1845, the British were getting themselves much involved in the affairs of Lagos. They were also experiencing some serious law-enforcement problems in their self-imposed task of protecting the lives and property of the indigenous people, the European merchants, other businessmen, and Christian missionaries (Tamuno, 1970).

In 1851 the British accused king Kosoko of trading in slaves and used its navy to bombard Lagos into submission. It sacked King Kosoko, and installed the puppet Akitoye on the throne of Lagos (Ikime, 1977). In 1861, ten years after the attack, Lagos was “formally” annexed and made a British colony. Following annexation, the first major step toward establishing the colonial police was taken by Mr. McCoskry who was appointed Acting Governor of Lagos Colony following the sudden death of Consul Foote in 1861. However, the circumstances surrounding this initiative predate 1861 and details will forever be clouded in peculiar colonial pattern of deceit.

The Need for Nigerian Police

It is obvious that while Akitoye was willing to sign the British treaty in order to become king, he was not willing to cede Lagos to the British. When he died in 1853, he was succeeded by his son Dosunmu (Docemo in some versions), who in turn was pressured into signing a treaty agreeing to British occupation of Lagos. This period between 1852 and 1861 was a period of informal jurisdiction and had an important bearing on the origin, development, and role of the modern Nigerian police that began in Lagos (Tamuno, 1970).

From what is now known and has been written by authors like Ikime (1977), and Ahire (1991), is quite clear that Lagos was not bombarded in 1851 because Kosoko was a notorious slave trader, nor did the British take over full powers in 1861 because Dosunmu, the new Oba, had revived the slave trade. The real issue, therefore, was the British determination to control the trade of Lagos and the Yoruba hinterland. However, it was not long before they realized that the organizational arrangement in the Lagos area during that period failed to provide the necessary security for commercial and other pursuits.

Apart from the succession debacles which later plagued Lagos in the 1940s and 1950s, there were other developments in the region that had important bearings on the security of Lagos. These events were the consequences of the Yoruba wars of the 19th century which threatened the security of areas like Ikorodu and Egbaland, which were Lagos’s next-door neighboring kingdoms. Particularly alarming was the reality of the alliance between the exiled King Kosoko and King Ghezo of Dahomey, which threatened lives and the chances of “legitimate” commerce on Lagos Island (Tamuno, 1970).

Common sense and prudence, therefore, dictated anxiety on the part of the British Consul and European residents to have armed forces at their disposal to protect their commercial interests. In response Consul Foote proposed the establishment of a consular guard of 100 men to be permanently stationed in Lagos, and controlled by consular agents. This

marked the first idea of a police force in colonial Nigeria. Foote's request, however, was turned down because of the reluctance of the Foreign Office to commit British capital to Lagos without assurance of any returns.

Unlike in Britain, Ahire (1991) argues that the emerging ruling class in colonial Nigeria was a foreign and illegitimate one which sought to dominate and exploit the indigenous people in the interest of its own metropolitan (British) economy. The effort of this foreign ruling class to subdue the indigenous people, and to impose a careful surveillance over them in order to forestall any popular rebellion, created an obsession with the policing of public order.

The Early Hausa Police

In 1861 Acting Governor of Lagos Colony, McCoskry, therefore organized and established the nucleus of the first police force—a Hausa constabulary of 30 men (Tamuno, 1970; The Nigerian Police, 1981). This formation marked the beginning of the first modern police in the history of Lagos. It was also the first modern police force in the territories later designated Nigeria by the British (Tamuno, 1970).

One distinctive feature of the Hausa constabulary was that it was mainly military in character, although the men did perform some civil police duties. For this, Ahire (1991) points out that the 19th-century policing in Britain cannot be substituted wholesale for the policing experience of colonial Nigeria, even though its basic logic is generally relevant. For modern historians the paramilitary nature of the new police symbolizes the evidence of imperial authority in Lagos. The police performed essentially beat duties at the trading depots of the British merchants, and were the object of incessant attacks from the public who resented their presence.

In the next year the strength of the constabulary was augmented to 100 men to form the "Armed Police Force." By October 1863 the strength rose to 600 and was called the "Armed Hausa Police Force," because it consisted mainly of Hausa-speaking ex-slaves from Sierra Leone (Ahire, 1991). Earlier, in 1862, a battalion of the West Indian Regiment had been moved from Gambia to Lagos to complement the new police force.

With the police in place, the new governor Mr. Henry S. Freeman who arrived in Lagos on February 22, 1862 to take up responsibility as the first Governor of the Colony of Lagos established four different courts—a police court, a commercial court, a criminal court, and a slave court. The police court, manned exclusively by the police, settled all petty cases. The criminal court, chaired by a stipendiary magistrate assisted by two British (illiterate) merchants as assessors, handled the more serious cases, while the slave court (staffed exactly like the criminal court) heard cases relating to slavery. The commercial court, manned exclusively by British merchants, handled all cases of debts and breach of contract (Ahire, 1991). From the organizational set up it was evident that he intends to use the newly organized government force to "keep order and maintain law" (Tamuno, 1970:37-38).

The relevance of this judicial set-up was fourfold. The first was the prominence given to British commercial interests in the new system of courts. Second was the total absence of Nigerians in a facet of judicial administration that had their interest as a prime target. Third was the inextricable implication of the colonial government in private British commercial concerns. Fourth was the obviously ominous future and inevitable public perception of the colonial police who were employed by all these courts to maintain social control.

I argue that this early employment of police resources to advance the colonial political agenda in fact shaped the future of policing as an agency of oppression in the whole history of Nigeria. Many other historians and criminologists—for example, Alemika (1988), Ahire (1991), Ikime (1977), Crowder (1978a), Tamuno (1970), share the opinion that the preoccupations of the police during the colonial era were tied solely to British ambitions in Nigeria. Their view, according to Alemika (1988), has been that the colonial state ultimately rests on force and violence, and the capacity to realize its ambition in spite of opposition from the colonized peoples. In his words:

The colonial objectives were (to varying degrees during the phases of colonialism in Nigeria) prosecuted through organized governmental violence, vandalism and plunder on the part of the colonizers. . . . The sundry administrative, coercive and surveillance organs (police, prisons, courts, tribunals, “native” authorities, Residents and District Officers) were established to prosecute, promote, and defend British imperialistic interests in Nigeria (p. 164).

Worthy of note is the fact that imperial policing orientations and preoccupations have been maintained and strengthened by postcolonial governments in Nigeria. Alemika (1988) explains that despite formal independence, the political and economic conditions of exploitation, oppression, and gross power and economic injustices that gave rise to colonial policing policies have not been discarded. In other words, the nationalists against whom police terror and violence were used by the colonialists, and to whom power was subsequently transferred at independence, cushioned themselves into employing police brutality and terror against their opponents in post-independence political power struggles.

As stated earlier, no sooner was the police force established and the rudiments of a judicial bureaucracy set in motion than the “Armed Hausa Police” were employed in a series of colonial government atrocities. In April 1865 for example, 118 constables along with 18 marines from *HMS Investigator* and *HMS Handy* attacked the Egba force that besieged Ikorodu, which the British considered a “friendly town.” In August 1865, 62 constables were used to attack Edinmo village for disturbing the peace of the neighborhood (Ahire, 1991; Tamuno, 1970).

From the late 1860s, under Glover’s administration (Freeman’s successor), some communities were allowed to choose one or two constables as “country police” or District Police. Their duties were to patrol the outlying areas. By 1895, and owing to the

completion of the “pacification” of Lagos, Police Ordinance No. 10 of 1895, dated 27 December, was passed establishing a civil police force called “The Lagos Police” as a body distinct from the constabulary. In 1901 the constabulary was absorbed into the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), thereby leaving the Lagos Police (civil police) as the sole police force in Lagos (Ahire, 1991; Tamuno, 1970). The new civil police comprised of a Commissioner, two Assistant Commissioners, one Superintendent, one Assistant Superintendent, one Pay-and Quartermaster, one Sergeant-Major, eight Sergeants, eight Corporals, 50 first-class “privates” and one master tailor (Tamuno, 1970).

It is the view of this writer that we might regard December 1895 as the year for the “civilianization” of the Nigerian Police, as well as a base for the professionalization of the force. Not only was the military constabulary replaced, but Governor Denton also replaced the “Hausa boys” with indigenous Yoruba recruits. In his speech before this radical departure, Denton observed that:

In our Hausa Force we have a body of men dissociated from the countries immediately around Lagos both by birth and religion, and who are as a matter of fact the hereditary enemies of the Yorubas. This is such an enormous advantage in any interior complication that I should be sorry to see it abandoned if it be possible to obtain a supply of recruits in any other way (Tamuno, 1970, p. 28).

In spite of their shortcomings, the new civil police had goals and clearly delineated duties. By a further Police Ordinance (No. 14 of 1897), the Lagos police force was to become “an armed force.” Its general duties included “the prevention and detection of crime, the repression of internal disturbance, and the defense of the Colony and protection against external aggression.” The ordinance further increased the force strength to include an armorer, and replaced the title of “private” with “constable” (Tamuno, 1970). Although this change was mainly bureaucratic, as most Yoruba-speaking members of the constabulary were absorbed into the new “all indigenous” force, its principle was a milestone in the development of the police in Nigeria. It was also obvious that the military complexion of the constabulary was present in the new force.

Qualifications and Training

Alemika (1988) has charged that the traditions of civility, efficiency, and submission to the rule of law that constituted the bedrock of the British police system were not emphasized in the establishment or running of colonial police forces in Nigeria. On the contrary, he argues that law-and-order maintenance and riot suppression functions of the police were emphasized to the exclusion of social services. In the Lagos Police, the qualifications for the officer cadre, like those of the Assistant Commissioner of Police until 1897, were “a sound knowledge of drill” in addition to a “clear practical knowledge of criminal law as well as a sober judgment and great personal energy” (Tamuno, 1970, p. 29). Except for a few officers attached to the force, and who had previous professional police experience in criminal investigation, past service in the military seemed to be the main criterion.

Only a few of the forces developed sufficiently to carry out the primary task of preventing, detecting and prosecuting crime. This is understandable, given the nature of recruitment into the provincial forces, which required no specific educational standard. The only requirement was physical fitness, and recruitment was largely based on the Oba or chiefs' patronage. Before 1959, the only form of training was drilling by the most senior non-commissioned officer in the unit, an illiterate whose instructions were limited to marching orders (Onoge: 179). Occasionally, Assistant District Officer in charge of the police force gave lectures on the duties of a policeman, how to keep station records, make arrests, and handle criminals.

In May 1906, the two police forces of the Colony of Lagos and the Southern Nigeria Protectorate were amalgamated and designated the Southern Nigeria Police Force with Mr. C.E. Johnstone as the Inspector General. It was not until 1930 that the two forces of the amalgamated South and North (1914) were merged under the Inspector General Mr. Claude W. Duncan. This merger, however, marked an important step in the evolution of national police in Nigeria, and thus becomes relevant in the search for nationhood in a developing colonial state (Tamuno, 1989:85). The force, now known as the Nigeria Police Force became a focus of increasing public attention as measures for decolonization hit center-stage during the constitutional conferences.

Deceptive Imperial Design

Generally, the police forces established during this period performed a principal duty namely, the management of colonial disorder (the *raison d'être* for the establishment of modern police in Africa). To make Africans (albeit Nigerians), amenable to colonial exploitation and administration, the old social order, as already noted, was displaced while new social systems were introduced. Policies were formulated to legalize the integration of the continent into the expanding global capitalism. To manage the new "colonial order", the administration adopted authoritarian method of suppression and repression. In Nigeria, series of armed military campaigns were waged between 1860 - 1914 as a result of the implacable political divide between the colonial interests and those of the people. Popular aspiration of the people for freedom from oppression and economic exploitation was brutally suppressed.

Beginning from the original participation in the conquest, the police played a leading role in the consolidation of the colonial state and repression of the colonized (Onage: 177). The central focus of the police establishment was the protection of the political and economic interests of the colonial state rather than the contradictions among the people. In other words, in "keeping the order" and "maintaining the law", which were forcefully imposed and sanctioned by the new imperial authority, the new police force played a principal role in buttressing the new administrations policy under British authority (Tamuno, 1970: 38).

To effectively perform such duties, the colonial police institutions had a distinct semi-military character as they were trained in the use of firearms. For example, the Armed Hausa Police were more like soldiers than police, and apart from their semi-military

duties in the districts adjoining Lagos Colony, they were useful adjunct to the imperial troops needed for active service in the Gold Coast between 1872 and 1874 (Tamuno, 1970). The justification for this policy was fourfold. First, semi-military police helped to reduce the cost of separate establishments in the respective territories by making it possible for one man to do the work of two. Second is the absence of readily available alternative sources of armed assistance to cope with emergencies. The third and most crucial factor lay in the nature of the people's reaction to imperial jurisdiction and rule. Lastly, employing soldiers for civil duties would have exposed the inherent military despotism in British rule.

In Nigeria, British efforts to establish effective control over the claimed protectorates intensified the opposition of several chiefs and their people who fought for their economic, socio-political and religious rights against the demands of the European traders and Christian missionaries. Against this backdrop, there was the need for deployment of troops and police as ready instruments of enforcing government orders when peaceful overtures failed. Hence, by adept political maneuvering, the government established and developed several police forces whose members not only received training in the use of firearms but also carried out the duties normally performed by soldiers.

Roots of Ineptitude

The efficacy of the philosophy and policies of any system of government in any given society will depend on their faithful implementation. In this wise, the role of the police in ensuring social justice, peace and harmony cannot be over-emphasized. In the administration of justice in Nigeria, the police have the sweeping powers of arrest and prosecution of offenders. However, this law enforcement agency has at various times been criticized by both the general public and public officials in the exercise of their powers.

Post-independence law in Nigeria is marked by entrenched colonial socialization. Following freedom from the colonial masters, the political class in Nigeria perpetuated the inherited hegemonic policing policy. While adapting to the Western culture, the traditional values were compromised and this had adverse implication for the institution of law enforcement. The oppression and suppression of the opposition groups in immediate post independence era affected the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies.

Colonialism changed Nigerian traditional laws - its rules, institutions, procedures and meanings (Mann and Roberts, 1991:5). The police officers that were recruited to maintain law and order were mere colonial stooges without traditional values in areas where federalism was adopted. The relationship between the central authority and the regions was something but cordial. The jackboot socialization of early Hausa police (Ahire, 1991; Alemika, 1988; Crowder, 1978a; Ikime, 1977; Tamuno, 1970), unfortunately established the criteria for future relationship between the police and the communities they (dis)serve.

The genesis of the inability of the Nigerian police to effectively carry out their duty is traceable to the introduction of a single police force for the regional tiers of government. The 1943 ordinance for example, made provisions for the organization, discipline, power and duties of the Nigerian Police. Several subsequent Orders-in-Council culminated in the Police Act, Cap.154, Laws of the Federation, 1958, which provided for the establishment of a police force known as the Nigeria Police Force (Asemota: 391). A single police force was thus imposed by the British in spite of protests by many Nigerians like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who, as the Premier of the Western Region considered it "... wrong in principle and in practice for a regional government vested with the power and authority to maintain law and order, to be without the means of discharging its responsibility" (ibid: 392).

On the other hand, the adoption of a separate local police force in the northern part of Nigeria in the Independence Constitution gave the politicians the opportunity to lynch, harass and use violence against their opponents. Nwabueze (1992:120) put things in proper perspective when he stated that "the local police forces in the North...were turned into the local arms of the parties in power". The implication of this statement is that any criminal charges levied against a person who happened to have liaised with the ruling party will be overlooked. The foregoing reality may have justified the reversion to a single police force, which by its checkered origin, was ill-equipped to deal with politics of development.

Obstacles to Effective Policing

Allegations leveled against the institution and its personnel, some of which have proven to be true, include arbitrariness in exercising its power, corruption, perversion of justice, and delays in the administration of justice. The question then is who or what should be held responsible for these lapses? Put differently, what are the obstacles to effective law enforcement in Nigeria?

Various factors have been blamed as constituting a stumbling block to the effective administration of justice and efficient maintenance of law and order in Nigeria. Often cited factors include, "god fatherism", nepotism, ethnicism, corruption (Daily Independent, 2005; The Daily Champion; The News, 2003; This Day, 2005; The Guardian; The Punch, 2005; The Vanguard, 2005), early socialization, and language differences (Tamuno, 1970, p.28). Others factors are institutional constraints such as inadequate manpower (both in strength and expertise), insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment, and poor conditions of service of the average policeman (popularized by military dictatorships). There is also the constitutional problem, as manifested in the Second Republic Nigeria which put the whole country's police under the presidency. Another important factor that has been neglected for many years, and which was rightly pointed out by Alemika (1988); and Okereke (1995), is the perception of the Police Force itself by the police officers and the community they serve.

In Nigeria, ethnicity or tribal influence, and clannish allegiance have been the major bane to social engineering. Ethnicity is defined as that which pertains to a people, especially

those groups sharing a common language and distinctive cultural patterns, and who retain a consciousness based on such factors as language, legends, customs, and religion (Kalusi 2000:112). As stated, it is at the root of break down in law and order in many African countries today as in Nigeria: from the Putu and the Krio in Liberia; through the Hutu and Tutsie in Rwanda; to the Shona and Ndebele in Mozambique.

In addition, there are problems of religious and/or inter-communal conflicts. Examples include the intermittent Ife - Modakeke communal conflicts; the Umuleri - Aguleri communal clashes; the Urhobo - Itsekiri political rivalry of ancient origin (Ikime, 1968); the Kano - Sagamu tribal cum religious-related riots; the Tiv - Jukun internecine skirmishes; and numerous others. On several occasions, the police took sides in the ethnic or communal rivalry thereby exacerbating conflicts and diminishing police reputation.

The Nigerian police brazenly participated in flushing out southeasterners from hiding during the military pogrom and the 1966 massacre of Easterners in the north. It was an event that led to Biafran secession and subsequent Nigerian civil war. The scars of the genocidal war are yet to heal.

It is true that ethnic nationalism could be competitive and co-operative rather than antagonistic and destructive in a true federation, but the deep seated animosity often exhibited in inter-communal violence in Nigeria, and the attendant destruction is disturbing. More alarming is the easy access to, and use of sophisticated weaponry by any community that needs it. Even the police personnel, who may have privileged access to records on remote causes and means of preventing these localized battles, may not be willing to act either, because such battles are veritable training ground for arms dealing for some of them (Daily Times, 2001).

“God-fatherism”, is the funding and abetting of vices and shielding “connected” criminals from justice by government agents and highly placed officials entrusted with the power and authority to investigate and prosecute such vices. It has become a dominant issue in African polity and impedes the course of justice in virtually all the countries in Africa. Many highly placed public officers in Nigeria are known to pervert the course of justice by the virtue of their closeness to the seat of power. Often, the police get sucked in, and this accounts for their complicity in several unsolved crimes across the country. A case in point is the brutal murder of the former governor of old East Central State, Anthony Ochefu, at Oturkpo (Benue State) in 1999 (The Guardian, June 20, 2000). The police have been accused of releasing the seven suspected killers, alongside with the traditional ruler fingered as the master-mind and the supplier of the weapons used in killing the former governor. The former Inspector General of Police (IG), Musiliu Smith still carries the burden of complicity in the murder for his inability to bring the criminals to justice.

Later in 2002, the Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige was murdered in his home by hired assassins, albeit supposedly under the protection of five armed police officers none of whom were present at their duty post to protect the chief law

enforcement officer. Till his recent dismissal, no obvious effort was made by Tafa Balogun, the (now) ex-Inspector General of corruption fame, to solve the murder and bring the perpetrators to justice. Other similar incidents, and the failure of the police to apprehend and prosecute the culprits, have led many Nigerians to pointing suspiciously towards the presidency for unusual taciturnity in ordering the Inspector General of police to deliver.

Other unsolved assassinations of political figures include the likes of Harry Marshal, an All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) chief, and Aminosari Dikibo, the vice national chairman (South-south zone) of People's Democratic Party (PDP) (This Day, 2005). There was also the double murder of barrister Igwe, the President of Anambra State Bar Association, and his wife (The News, 2005) in which it is alleged that the police aided and abated the crime, and let the perpetrators escape the country before commencing investigation. These, and other similar actions, rightly fuel the suspicion of police duplicity and belief that they are nothing but a bunch of hired guns in the secret service of select criminal political godfathers.

Police corruption is another gangrene, which has eaten deep into the fabrics of law enforcement apparatus in Nigeria as in other parts of the continent. Allegations of police corruption erupt on daily basis. These come in various forms: extortion from motorists at illegally mounted road blocks, collection of monetary gratification (bribery) in order to alter justice in favor of the highest bidder. This cankerworm had deeply affected the social image of the Nigeria Police perceived as a corrupt law enforcement agency. The public opinion regarding the integrity of the police officer is that of "dirty Harry".

The recent dismissal of the IG on January 17, 2005 on corruption-laden charges which has brought out many of his bloody deals to the open leaves much to be desired in terms of police image. It is alleged (The Punch, 2005) that the former IG opened fictitious bank accounts into which bribe money and police service money were laundered. According to The Punch, the account names and numbers into which the various sums were traced are: Olatrade Nigeria Limited, account number: 02201191; Renovations Construction Limited: 02201473; Caledonia Telecoms: 02201472; Yeboa Investment Limited: 02201475; Yeboa Nigeria Limited: 02201474; Aworo Nigeria Limited:02201278; Inspector General's Imprest Account: 02201436. A huge chunk of the N1.4 billion, which the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) paid to the police for security during the 2003 general elections, somehow found its way into the account of Olatrade from the IG's Imprest Account. On the whole, the top cop ran twelve different accounts in Fountain Trust Bank in Lagos (This Day, 2005).

The former IG who an assistant Inspector General (AIG) described as an "an epitome of corruption" (Daily Independent, 2005), is said to have \$150 million in Swiss bank accounts, \$200 million in London, and N500 million in various denominations in Nigeria. The same source quotes the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as confirming that about N1.9 billion has so far been recovered from him resulting in the government impounding his travel passport as well as that of his wife, and planted 24 hour surveillance around the ex-IG. With a civil service salary, only the ongoing EFCC

investigation will explain how he came to such wealth in the three years of becoming the IG.

Additionally, the ex-IG is fingered in several criminal payoffs by especially Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) state governors during the 2003 election, and by arrested criminals to buy immediate release. The different payoff amounts range from N15 million to N350 million. He is also implicated in the payoff leading to the botched kidnap attempt of the controversial Anambra State governor, Dr. Chris Ngige on March 10, 2003 (The News, 2003). The late AIG, Rapheal Ige who spearheaded the Anambra coup was said to have demanded and received his own N15 million cut from the IG before embarking on the risky project. With a month away from retiring, the IG assured Ige that the maximum penalty if caught, will be immediate retirement, without any criminal prosecution.

With the head of the police involved in this type of multi fraud scheme, one can see why the Nigeria police cannot be effective in law enforcement. When the head is rotten, the rot infects all rank and file of the police. To re-invent a new image for the police, the new acting IG, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, has on his first press conference on assuming office on January 18, 2005, unfolded a six-point program for the development of the Nigeria police force and indicated that:

the era where neophytes would be assigned to investigate criminal offences is gone....we are not going to put a tailor to go and investigate, we must have the census of all those people with professional knowledge, accountants ... we will make use of them and nobody will be routinely posted to CID unless he has something to offer (This Day, 2005).

He continues:

we have to look at our image...special attention must be focused on illegal check points. Some border and Mile 2 have more than 10 checkpoints. What image are we giving to the international community? Of course you know what they do at those checkpoints; we are more than ever prepared to bring sanity to that sector of this country.

This paper also avers that language differences constitute another major barrier to effective policing in Nigeria. In a plural and semi-illiterate society, people take recourse to their 'mother tongue' in their day-to-day socialization. In such a society it is difficult for a 'foreigner' or an 'outsider' (non native speaker of the given language) to effectively communicate with the indigenes. This situation is true in Nigeria where as an example, a Hausa speaking police officer in the multi linguistic Nigeria Police would find it difficult to perform his duty of preventing social disorder in non Hausa-speaking Yorubaland or Igboland. In recognizing this problem, the colonial police belatedly tried to rectify their error when it emphasized essential, practical, but not academic knowledge of a language to enhance the functions of the police officer in the civil society. The problem of (mis)communication persists.

Another obstacle to effective policing in Nigeria is the constitutional problem as manifested in the Second Republic. Conflicts developed between 1979-83 around whether a unified or decentralized force in a federal structure would better fulfill its role of law and order maintenance in the society (Report of the Political Bureau, 1987; 104). From all indications, the current practice of over-centralizing police control in the hands of uncouth executive president who has used the police in silencing all opposition voices, has proven to be a costly mistake for Nigeria. Oftentimes, the police have colluded with groups and taken sides depending on what benefits who.

Closely connected to this, is the participation of the Police in state political governance during the military regimes of 1966-75 and 1984-99 respectively (Asemota: 397). Some police officers were appointed state governors by military juntas, thereby getting them involved in political governance. This greatly reduced their neutrality as their allegiance shifted from maintenance of peace in a civil society, to compromising the integrity of the department in the effort to retain juicy political appointment.

In his analysis of problems of the police, the former Minister of Police Affairs, David Jemibewon, attributed the phenomenon of “Nigerian factor” as the reason why the Nigeria Police does not perform creditably. This phenomenon among others encompasses the factors mentioned above. In his analogy, he stated that:

Here in Nigeria, police arrests a man (and) before you know it, one Alhaji, one Reverend or one Chief will be phoning. The offender himself will prostrate on the road, or the affluent one will bribe his way... (The Guardian, June 20, 2000)

Nepotism and ethnicism is favoritism shown to relatives or friends in preferential appointments and promotions. In Nigeria, it is common knowledge that the higher echelon of the military and the police, is dominated by particular sections of the country, and promotions often follow the same pattern. Within the police, protégés are appointed to head the departments they are not qualified to hold, while career-minded officers are posted to police “Siberia” for not “playing ball”. The dismissed IG, Tafa Balogun, is said to have promoted his driver (whom he uses as front in his extortion of money from state commissioners of police) to Chief Security Officer (CSO), while some state commissioners were redeployed for not bringing in enough kickbacks (The News, 2003). In addition to condoning ineptitude, this practice promotes mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy. It is important to note that either by omission or commission, the practice represents the vestiges of colonialism.

Aftermath of Police Ineffectiveness in Law Enforcement

The effective sustenance of the society is hinged on an efficient law enforcement process (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1992:27). It is not so with Nigeria where crime and violence is moving on a fast lane. Given the spate of violence, and the level of degeneration in the body polity, one may be right to conclude that the Nigeria Police have exhibited glaring

inadequacies, and demonstrated incapacity to effectively enforce the law and maintain order in the society. It is no longer safe to walk alone even during the day. Robberies, assassination, arson, looting of public treasury, and child-theft amongst other vices, have become the rule rather than the exception.

The several years of military misrule traumatized the average Nigerian to a point where life has become meaningless. By a calculated design, the military junta so much politicized and ethnicized the police to a point where esprit de corps is utterly nonexistent. In the hope of perpetuating self-succession, and destroying police cohesiveness, the police were owed several arrears of salary as a way of subjecting them to mental anguish and inactivity. By the time the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, what was left of the initial not-too-efficient law (non)enforcement agency, was an unarmed, demoralized, rag-tag semi-zombies. Most of them survive by naked extortion from commercial drivers at various illegal checkpoints set up for that purpose.

It is against this background that one can begin to comprehend the reason for the total collapse of police ineffectiveness in law enforcement. It also explains why some police themselves join and become members of armed robbery gangs. Some others rent out or sell their rifles to armed robbers for an agreed fee. No wonder the widespread public loss of confidence in the police, as well as the rising wave of armed robberies by criminals emboldened by their close connection to the police. It could therefore be argued that by helping to arm the criminals, the police are constituent part of police ineffectiveness.

The attendant uncertainty of life dating back to the military era led to the emergence of ethnic militia groups all over the country, whose activities constitute a threat to security of lives and property. In the face of repressive military rule which peaked during infamous Abacha dictatorial years, a number of ethnic militant groups emerged to take their fate into their own hands. Vanguard of this new form of resistance to constituted authority were the Ogoni and the Andoni peoples of Rivers State (led by the late environmentalist, Ken Saro Wiwa) who are demanding for autonomy after years of official environmental degradation and social deprivation of their communities. Their Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) triggered the ill wind of change and 'the fever caught on'.

Many other groups have since emerged under different aegis demanding their ethnic rights. In the Southwest, there is the O'dua Peoples Congress (OPC) founded by Dr. Frederick Fasehun (in August 1994) as a non-violent pan-Yoruba organization seeking to protect the interest of the Yoruba race (National Concord, 1999). Holding sway in the North is the Arewa Peoples Congress, acting as an antithesis against the activities of the OPC. The Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Bakassi Boys, and the Igbo Peoples Congress; some couched under the umbrella of Ohaneze, are in the Southeast agitating for Igbo nationality cause. In a seeming effort not to be outdone in this rat race for ethnic identity, are the Ijaw Youth Movement, and the Egbesu among others, defending the minority rights in the oil rich South-South.

One feature common to all these groups, notwithstanding the furor generated by their activities, is that they all have base appeal. Even the most ardent critics of the groups will testify to this appeal manifested in the tacit support given to them by the government at the state level. While the State Governors have not come out openly to ban these groups, some state Houses of Assembly, have duly recognized them in their states of operations. In Anambra State for example, the state legislative body “has provided guidelines for their [Bakassi Boys] operations” (National Interest, 2001:3), while former Governor Mbadinuju co-opted them as the state vigilante group on public payroll.

One major problem with these militia groups is the threat they pose to the Federal Government which does not recognize them, and actually outlawed them. Explaining the rationale for declaring the groups’ activities illegal, the then Minister for Police Affairs, Major-General Jemibewon (rtd.), cited arbitrariness of the outfits’ (especially OPC) activities as the major reason (The Comet, 2000). His tirade however has no meaning for the states which count on the militant groups for the protection of lives and property in the face of police inertia.

Another discomfort surrounding these groups and which constitute an obstacle to effective law enforcement is their modus operandi, which threatens the nascent democracy in Nigeria. The militia groups have usurped the role of the regular police in contravention of 1999 constitutional provisions (The Constitution, 1999: Section 220). Related to this outrage is the ‘jungle justice’ approach which, aside from usurping judicial role, has led to the loss of many innocent lives and property in flagrant disregard for the fundamental human rights, including rights to fair hearing.

In spite of these problems, we should not lose sight of the benefits inherent in the militant activities of the ethnic ‘armies’. Their violent struggle based on the principle of justice, equity and fair play, attempts to inject sanity through the eradication of official-sanctioned fraud, crime, corruption and other vices. It is obvious that there is no love lost between them and the criminal kingpins and armed robbers in the society. Commenting in one of the national dailies, (Punch, March 2001), an Islamic scholar, Adewunmi, indicated that “it is incontestable that they have raised awareness in certain quarters and generated controversies in public discourse” (p.5).

More importantly, the groups (through their activities, which are largely out of police control) serve as pointer to the inefficiency of the nation’s security apparatus. Thus, some organized and recognized groups such as the pan-Yoruba organization (*Afenifere*), and its Igbo counterpart (*Ohaneze Ndigbo*), regard them as the only hope for the security of the common man in a society where people have lost confidence in the government and its policing apparatus.

Overview

Apart from MASSOB which is a political organization seeking self determination for the Igbo race, and the Area Boys made up of miscreants (with no identifiable ideology) looking for a means of survival, all the other groups namely, the OPC, the

Bakassi Boys and the Egbesu Boys have base appeal. A case study is the Onitsha town residents who, in their reaction to the Police clampdown on ethnic militias, and in supporting the Bakassi Boys, appealed to Governor Mbadinuju not to disband the outfit in the interest of peace and security in Anambra State. This base appeal is manifest in the tacit support given to them by the government at the State level where the legislative organ has duly recognized them. In Anambra State, for example, the legislative body provided guidelines for the operations of the Bakassi Boys, while the governor has co-opted them as the state vigilante groups.

Moreover, many prominent individuals have at one time or the other expressed their support for the localized vigilante groups within limited and controlled areas of operation. Examples include Sunday Mbang, the prelate of the Methodist Church worldwide, who expressed his unflinching support for OPC's activities if limited to getting rid of hoodlums in the society (Tell, August 7, 2000: 33). In the light of such support, Chief Abraham Adesanya, leader of the pan-Yoruba organization has declared that "no amount of falsehood, propaganda and blackmail against the OPC would succeed or suppress the group in its bid to rid Yorubaland of criminals. OPC will live forever" (Ibid).

The ethnic, sectional or clan warlords obviously evince an intention to challenge not only the legitimacy, but also the efficacy of the government and its state security machinery to protect its citizens. This phenomenon stems from the seeming nonchalance of the corrupt Federal Government in decisively confronting certain explosive situations that threaten the very fabric of the nation-state. The myriad of problems include armed robbery menace, official corruption, rampant political assassinations, police inertia, hunger, rising unemployment, galloping inflation, and general insecurity of lives and property.

The Way Out

A critical appraisal of breakdown of law and order and the subsequent resort of the people to armed struggle points to the disenchantment of the people with the leadership and governance of the country. Armed struggle by the people is a direct response to the sadism and cynicism that characterized over two decades of failed leadership. Citizens who grew up in an environment of state-sponsored violence, in which government deployed covert and overt state violence as a ready tool for political discourse and crises management, would naturally operate under a logic which justifies raw power and violence as the panacea to all problems.

Secondly, people's recourse to violence is symptomatic indication of lack of trust in government, and loss of confidence in the regular police to provide adequate security for lives and property in the society. The decline in the quality and effectiveness of the Nigerian Police has degenerated into the failure of the government apparatus to maintain law and order and sustain the right environment for justice in the society.

In the light of this situation, I make some suggestions which would hopefully go a long way toward fostering enduring peace and harmony in the polity and guarantee cordial

relationship between the government and the governed, as well as ensure peaceful co-existence among the people.

In the first place, the Government should understand that underlying the activities of these local vigilante groups is a genuine agitation for a change in the system that has for long sustained oppression and perpetual domination by some sections of the country. The clampdown or operation flush-out order issued by the presidency on the various militia groups spread across the country is ill-advised and should be rescinded. The Federal Government should therefore embrace dialogue and set out clear operational guidelines regulating the conduct of such groups to legally permissible limits in apprehending criminals.

Moreover, the indigenous ways employed by these groups in identifying criminals in the society should be explored by the government for possible infusion into the failed policing and crime control system. This can be beneficial and helpful as it would assist the police in getting a grip on combating crime and other vices. A little compromise here and there should not portend weakness on the side of government.

Following an armed robbery attack on the former Chief Justice of the federation (Justice Fatai Williams), Bola Tinubu, the Governor of Lagos State contemplated mobilizing the vilified O'dua Peoples' Congress to combat the activities of criminals which has recently been on the increase in Lagos State (The Post Express, June 14, 2000). This strong consideration for the use of the OPC in Lagos State was inspired by the seeming success recorded by the dreaded Bakassi Boys in Abia and Anambra States during the same period. Moreover, Tinubu's administration is also turning the 'Area boys' (the social miscreants on Lagos streets) to 'good boys' through skill acquisition options so that they will no longer prey on unsuspecting innocent citizens of Lagos for daily survival (The Guardian, August 31, 2000). However, Lagos residents and motorists would tell you that Tinubu merely converted the miscreants from social dynamites to licensed ticking time bombs. The Federal government should take a cue and improve on Tinubu's stop-gap measure to truly uplift the long suffering masses.

The Punch (2005) alleges that the former IG, Tafa Balogun, colluded with governors and the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to rig the 2003 general elections. The same IG is fingered in the botched abduction of Governor Chris Ngige on July 10, 2003 which was facilitated by a detachment of police, led by the late Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Raphael Ige. The reason why Ige was only retired without immediate formal criminal prosecution has become clear following revelations that the IG paid him N15 million to do his dirty job. Furthermore, the November 10, 2004, mayhem where the federal police provided protection for the criminals who torched Anambra state buildings and properties, is disgusting to say the least. The new IG must immediately divest the police from engaging in future acts of hooliganism if the law enforcement standard must be restored.

It is only in Nigeria that a faltering presidency will employ the police to destabilize and intimidate opponents. Recent self admission of ballot tampering (albeit in connivance with the PDP government) by the "Tsunami" of Anambra state politics (Chris Ubah),

who was the architect of the treasonable botched kidnap of a state governor, is an opportunity for Ehindero to withdraw all police protection, and prosecute him like the criminal he is. The withdrawal of police protection from a “democratically elected” governor by the president immediately following the failed kidnap attempt manifests the federal government duplicity in the act. The fact that the president is a common inlaw to the mastermind of the perfidy did not help matters in any way.

Ehindero should act to correct the havoc wrecked by the police in Anambra state under the watchful eyes of his corrupt predecessor. He should ask the president to take a stand in Anambra crises, or admit complicity since the federal police were used in the destabilizing acts including the burning of government offices in the state. The Aso Rock (presidential palace) executives can no longer feign ignorance.

The present police administration looks willing to execute series of fundamental restructuring and reorganization in the force, which hopefully would launch the Nigerian Police Force on the positive side of history. To re-invent a new image for the police, the new acting IG Mr. Sunday Ehindero has on his first press conference on assuming office on January 18, 2005, unfolded a six-point program for the development of the Nigeria police force. He needs to emphasize merit as his cardinal objective in order to encourage productivity thereby confronting the misnomers that have constituted obstacles to effective policing.

Additionally, much still needs to be done towards changing the public perception of the nation’s law enforcement agency. Mere window dressing will not suffice at this point where the police image and morale is at its lowest ebb. Concerted efforts at drastic reformation of the Nigerian Police will help it earn a more positive image in the society.

Corruption gave the Nigeria Police Force a poor image in the Nigerian society. Some argue that every society gets what it deserves, and the Nigeria police corruption is a reflection of the social malaise that bestrides the Nigerian society. The new top cop needs to match his words with action and declare total war against police graft as a starting point in the professionalization of the force. Since controlling police corruption will make it much easier to deal with the hydra-headed monster (crime) engulfing the society as a whole, the new police Czar should make corruption reduction a major cardinal point of his tenure.

Combining order maintenance with prosecutorial responsibility amounts to over burdening the police. To make the police more effective, it should hands-off criminal prosecution and defer to another government agency like the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Fear of prosecution by an independent agency will also reinforce discipline and make it easier to control police corruption and excesses.

Furthermore, an immediate revision of the Nigerian police pay scale is needed as a first step toward discipline. In all developed societies, the salary of a police officer is above that of ordinary citizen with equivalent education. A decent pay is a worthwhile investment that will encourage restraint to acceptance of bribes to augment the meager

income they recently receive. Regular and timely payment of the salary is also more important than the increase; Balogun's regime did a good job in this area. If other Federal public servants have paydays, the police payday should be a given, and not a matter for negotiation.

The Police should be shielded from political appointments. The role of law enforcement in any civilized society is to serve and protect the citizens. Political appointments corrupt the officers, destroy spirit de corps, skew their sense of neutrality and impartiality, and infuse a sense of allegiance to appointing authority. It is a major obstacle to police effectiveness and must be discouraged at all cost if improved police performance must be achieved.

Efforts should be made to fully professionalize the Police in order to enable it discharge its civic duties to the society. Full professionalism would be achieved through further training and re-education such as targeted special college equivalent classes in social sciences, and criminal law and procedure. This would improve the police officer's human relations capacity. The police personnel should refocus their perception of the force on being responsible only to the government. This shift in perception would go a long way toward fostering peaceful relationship between the Nigeria Police and the civic society.

With professionalism goes meritorious recruitment and depoliticization. Police officers should be recruited based on established minimum criteria and educational standard. People who do not qualify should not have a place in the national police. Meritorious recruitment will therefore enhance meritorious promotion since officers will aspire to get to the top, and not await promotion as a birthright. This will also eliminate politics of intrigue from the process. Local criteria should be set by local agencies as they deem fit to serve the needs of individual local communities.

Finally, I argue for decentralization of the Nigerian police fully aware that the misuse of local police force by regional governments contributed immensely to the collapse of the First Republic. It is a fact of recent memory that while the "*dogarai*" were used to intimidate non Muslims in the northern region, the Western regional government under the political Action Group used the regional police (*Olopa*) to maim and burn the opposition in the operation "wetine" (dousing opposition candidates or supporters with gasoline and setting them ablaze) of repugnant memory. I however share the views of Onwudiwe (2000) that organizations such as the customary and sharia courts (judiciary) are local in nature and localized police networks will serve the communities better. While decentralization might not be a panacea to a perfect police force, it will however improve their effectiveness in the communities they serve. The British colonialist's recognition of the need for local police prompted the replacement of earlier Hausa police in Lagos with indigenous Yoruba recruits in 1895.

I recommend a three-tier police structure; the federal police, the state police and local government police. While the federal and state police departments deal with federal and state law enforcement matters, the local government police will be organized along the model of a vigilante force in touch with the community they serve, and solely deployed to

deal with law enforcement and order maintenance functions in the local communities. This will not only bring people closer to their police, but will also prevent the hijacking of the police command by corrupt and tainted absentee politicians in Abuja. Local (not detached federal and military style) policing is the key to community policing. The common practice of using police intimidation in poll rigging and (s)electing the president's praise singers as Congresspersons, will become a thing of the past, and the opposition will have a voice as in other democracies.

It is hoped that the recent ten-point program announced by the new Inspector General would fulfill most of the suggested measures. So far the newly adopted police slogan is "to serve and protect with integrity", with an endeavor to reconcile the maintenance of law and order with the protection of freedom. Details of the new program which seem to cover most areas of improvement suggested in this article include:

- Effective crime prevention and control through intelligence-led policing;
- Combat of violent and economic crimes;
- Conflict prevention and resolution;
- Community policing and police-public partnership;
- Zero-tolerance for police corruption and indiscipline;
- Improved career development, salary and welfare packages to motivate police officers and thereby promote better service delivery and discipline;
- Reorganisation of the investigation outfit of the Force to ensure prompt and timely investigation of cases;
- Contribute positively to improving the quality of justice delivery in Nigeria;
- Empower field officers operationally by devolution of powers to improve the standards, reliability, consistency, and responsiveness of the service;
- Re-orientate the Force PRO to focus on improving public perception and image of the Force (The Punch, January 26, 2005).

Since the taste of the pudding is in the eating, only future will judge police seriousness on the program implementation.

Limitations of Study

This study only relies on ethnographic knowledge and reviews of Nigerian newspapers and magazines, academic journal articles, books, archival materials, and internet-based documented source materials. The only interview sources are based on convenience samples. The work may therefore be guilty of inherent prejudices that may exist in the sources of information utilized.

I strongly recommend conducting further in-depth questionnaire study to control for validity and reliability of information. The police agency representative(s) also need to be interviewed in order to verify some of the documented information utilized in this work. This effort will not only buttress many of the ideas and questions posed by this study, but may also gear the lackluster Nigeria police into much anticipated effectiveness.

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