Prospects and Problems of Creation of State Police in Nigeria in the 21st Century

By

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Abstract
This paper examined the calls for creation of State Police in Nigeria in the 21st century. This is because the Federal Government said it cannot realistically provide security for Nigeria from the centre (Abuja), explaining that Nigeria has been unable to meet the United Nations' recommendation of one police-man to 400 persons. This paper also agrees with the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo who gave the explanation called for the creation of State Police in the face of rising security challenges in the country. Thus, State Police and other community policing methods are clearly the right way to go to fight crime in Nigeria in the 21st century.

The paper adopted the descriptive design. It drew upon a variety of sources, namely, primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral information and interviews. In the study, newspapers and magazines reports were used in conjunction with official records in government publications. Secondary sources include relevant books. The researcher made use of participant observation method. All the pieces of information so gathered were subjected to critical scrutiny and evaluation.

Keywords: United Nations recommendation, Community Policing

Introduction
State Police is a system whereby states are allowed by the Federal Government to be fully in charge of the administration of justice and policing in the state. In the Nigerian context, it would mean transiting from
national or centralized policing system to state policing system or provincial policing system. Even though many people will reject state police, Nigeria is ripe for state police in the context of the kind of security threats that the country has witnessed in the recent times, such as, Boko Haram terrorism, herdsmen killings, militancy, kidnapping, ritual killings, etc. State police will give every state opportunity to get their own early warning system that enables them anticipate, manage, and respond to security threats in a timely manner. Nigeria must enthrone modern policing that is swift, active and reliable. This will not only secure lives and property, but also will secure the confidence of investors and the nascent democracies (Ekweremadu, 2018, p.29).

Tracing the evolution of the Nigerian Police, from the 19th century to date, Ekweremadu submitted that until the fall of the First Republic, Nigeria operated a decentralized policing system. It was Gowon regime that first abolished the decentralized policing system in Nigeria; it was first entrenched in the democratic system of government by section 194(1) of the 1979 constitution and sustained by the 1999 Constitution.

In the recent history of Nigeria, Boko Haram, herdsmen killings, Niger Delta militancy, kidnapping and robbery in the South east have exposed the failing of the Federal Police. Sometimes Boko Haram sects kills Federal Police and even attack the headquarter of the Federal Police Force as many of them run away; showing that they are not on top of the situation. When the Federal Police that suppose to be the hunter became the hunted, then there’s obviously fire on the mountain, these are some of the facts that discredit the Federal Police, as many people now prefer the state policing system. Many Nigerians were also happy when Vice President Yemi Osinbanjo calls for the creation of State Police at the opening of a two day summit on national security organized by the National Assembly Ad-Hoc Committee to review the current infrastructure in Nigeria, in Abuja. Those in attendance included law makers from the National Assembly, the
Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, Ministers, Service Chiefs, Inspector General of Police, Royal Fathers, members of civil society, diplomats, and other stakeholders. The Vice President explains that the Federal controlled centralized police cannot realistically provide security for Nigerian from the centre, moreso, Nigeria has been unable to meet the United Nations’ recommendation of one-police-man to 400 persons. The Vice President who gave the explanation called for the creation of state police in face of rising security challenges in the six-geo-political zones in the country. According to the UN required ratio of one policeman to 400 persons, Nigeria will need to nearly triple its current police force; far more funding of the police, far more funding of the military and other security agencies is required. (Taiwo and Itua, 2018, p.6)

Following the criticism that trailed the killings in Benue and some other parts of the country blamed on the killer herdsmen. The slow pace of the centralized police response to the hot spot crisis to rescue the massacres shows openly that the Federal Police cannot realistically police a country like Nigeria centrally from Abuja, State police and other community policing methods are clearly the way to go. The federal police in the recent history of Nigeria have been politicized; they jump from one corner to the other and arrogating crimes to a particular ethnic nationality or religion, rather than come together to support the government with a view to identifying the perpetrators of crime and bringing them to book. But with State Police it will be easier for the relevant security agencies to ascertain the true identities of crime perpetrators and the sources of their sophisticated weapons. State police can easily identify criminals who disguise as herdsmen to carry out nefarious activities and cover up their tracks. State Police can also easily track the activities of terrorist; it would be easier to separate the wheat from the chaff through tracking and monitoring. State police can easily check and tour our porous borders to ascertain areas of shortcomings and loopholes with a view to making recommendations for fighting crimes effectively. There is no way the
Nigerian Police can win the war against terrorism and other crime without blocking the inflow of these weapons. When State Police structure is put in place to replace the federal police in many state of Nigeria, other good things would fall in place and our nation would be a place where peace, love, unity, and happiness would be the other of the day.

State police would ensure that criminal from a ruling ethnic group are not treated as sacred cows while others, who perpetrate lesser offences are made to face the wrath of the law. Double standard would not be allowed to continue under state police. State police would be effective to heed state government and community alerts which can save lives and properties. State police would stop killings of innocent souls and sacking of communities by terrorist. State police would be strengthened by the Nigerian constitution; they would be empowered to fight crime without compromised and bias. State police would be very pertinent to unravel the true identities of those behind dastardly acts in order not to punish innocent suspects. This is because security issues should be handled with utmost care; so that perpetrators do not escape justice State Police would easily unravel the minds of unpatriotic Nigerians that are enemies of peace and unity of the country. State police would encourage police officers to rise up to support the government in the fight against terrorism and other social vices. With state police, ethnicity and religious bigotry would be a thing of the past. Police officers would not allow sentiments to becloud their reasoning and judgment, rather critical and objective analysis would become the work ethics of policemen to proffering workable solutions to fight crime, in order to avoid criticism of security challenges, sentiments, and parochial postulations. (Oghaede, 2018, p.43.)

Looking at State Police closely, the Governor (as the chief security officer of the state) and the heads of security agencies in the state should be most appropriate person to answer questions that border on security of life and property under their purview. It is the responsibility of police,
Commandant of Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps and other security outfits in the state to put machineries in place towards ensuring that the place is safe for everyone. If the security situation of the state is beyond the control of the Governor, he is putting his state in a tight corner that may call for the assistance and support from the federal level, which may result to state of emergency if not properly managed by the Governor. No Governor would like his state to be in chaos with state police under his control.

This tries to point out that with Federal Police many Nigerians are worried that Nigeria is fast becoming a lawless state; on many occasions of crisis the federal police whose main responsibility is to protect the lives and properties of the people have failed to do so. And once a federal police cannot protect the lives and properties of the citizens, then, there is cause to worry. There cannot be development in Nigeria if there is no security of lives and properties. Only state police is the best way to go to ensure peace and unity of Nigeria in the 21st century.

The Need for the Creation of State Police in Nigeria in the 21st Century
Nigeria urgently need State Police to address security challenges in the country. It is when the federal government creates State Police that is when it would be able to tackle the root cause of insecurity in the country. State Police stands a better position to curb escalation of crime in a state than the Federal Police that would begin to adopt fire brigade approach and to ask questions why these things are happening. Crimes start gradually and snowball into a big problem. Unfortunately, Federal Police that operate from Abuja hardly identify these crimes when they start given early warning signals and if they don’t tackle it from the beginning, it would continue to pose serious challenges to the Nigerian State. But with State Police the early warning signals of crimes are easily identified. Hence there is a need for the government to start healing process by going back to those things that agitate the minds of the people; things that make people to
protest. These intelligence reports and data are best provided by State Police and not Federal Police that is not grass rooted. Security requires collaborative efforts by all and this is best provided by the State Police and not Federal Police. State Police is good in articulating the views of ordinary people who help to give relevant information to the police. State Police has the best grasp of intelligence security reports and views of the people in the streets and beer parlours. This point of departure contradicts the traditional paradigm that saw policing from the Federal Police in Abuja. State Police operate from the perspective of the common people. They gather their intelligent reports from the disenfranchised, the oppressed, the poor, and the non-conformist and otherwise forgotten people which the Federal Police would always ignore. State Police stands a better chance to understand the problems of the grass root and bring it to the attention of the government to proffer solutions so that people can live in peace and harmony.

It is important to note that few days after the vice president, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, gave the nod to creation of state police, governors of the 36 States threw their weight behind the move. The chairman of the Nigerian Governors’ Forum (NGF) and Governor of Zamfara state, Abdulaziz Yari, who spoke on behalf of his colleagues, on the sidelines of the National Security Summit organized by the senate, in Abuja, on DailySun, Tuesday, February 13, 2018, said State Police is the only solution to security challenges in the country. The Governor added that only states that are financially buoyant should go for it and suggested that states that are financially disadvantaged can have more federal police deployed to their states. The need for state police is because the first primary responsibility of government, anywhere in the world, is to ensure that lives and properties of citizens is protected. And, there have been so many challenges in Nigeria, for the past 10 years ranging from Boko Haram, cattle rustling, armed banditry; militancy in the Niger Delta, this insecurity situation is a menace to dwindling of the economy and even threatening the unity of the
country. The Federal Police of today Nigeria are inadequate. If we look at the ratio of one policeman to 400 persons, it is far below in international standard, therefore, Nigeria need State Police that can fine-tune the issue of effective state policing.

Many Nigerians are of the view that there is pressing need for the restructuring of Nigeria into a true federal system that would encourage state police. The call for state police needs to be built with strong institutions in order to escape bribery and corruption. State police would make it easier for the Inspector General Police (IGP) to fight crime in Nigeria effectively. With the contribution of security reports from the grass root and other players in the security circle, new security architecture will be developed.

State police would serve as an opportunity to survey the local governments and the nation’s current security situation and to place all issues on the table, in an effort to find short and long term solutions to the nation’s security challenges. State Police would also serve the need and opportunity for important assessment briefings by heads of security and intelligence agencies. State Police would make it easier for policemen to focus on the areas of weakness that should be strengthened to fight crime. It would also make it easier for the federal government to allocate its assets, particularly, ways to strengthen security, through deployment of assets. State Police would also make the citizens to trust and have confidence in the police and to reassure citizens that all arms of government are serious about addressing insecurity and are working in collaboration with the indigenous communities to find solutions with State Police Nigerians of security to protect lives and property.

State Police would enable all Nigerian police to come together from their different states and speak in truth with one voice to fight crime. State Police would provide very good structure that will report the truth to the IGP and the government in power; since they are dealing with the grass root. Unlike
federal police that find it difficult to coordinate security report very well because ethnic and clannish politics that has been the bane of the federal police. For example, during the January 1, 2018 crisis between the herdsmen/crop farmer’s clashes, where 73 Benue people were massacred in cold blood by the Fulani herdsmen, Governor Ortom (2008) blamed the Inspector General of Police of bias in handling the crisis. Ortom passed a vote of no confidence on the Inspector General of Police, Idris, who he accused of taking sides with the herdsmen in the crisis, as no action was taken to avert the attacks despite early warning signal from Governor Ortom to the IGP.

Meanwhile, with the operation of State Police in Nigeria, the IGP and the government would be forced to provide security in each state of the federation with Justice; as grass root investigation would be undertaking by the police without bias. Politically, if State Police is created in Nigeria, the State Police would not be behaving like a parastatal of the ruling party, to rig elections and intimidate opponents as it is commonly done with the Federal Police that is behaving like a parastatal of the ruling party, to rig election and other hidden vices in the society. State Police is a panacea to rescue our nation from this challenge of killings and intimidation in Nigeria. Federal Police has weakened human rights and the voice of truth in Nigeria. State Police is on ground to rescue the indigenous people from oppression so that they can see the dividend of democracy and freedom of expression. It would be difficult for State Police to deceive and misled the people, unlike federal police that is not grass rooted.

Nigeria is ripe and need state police to fight high profile crimes in Nigeria. Under the present federal police system, governors are considered to be chief security officers of their states, but they do not control Commissioner of Police and, therefore, where there is any major security problem, Commissioner of Police takes orders from the Inspector-General of Police in Abuja. In most cases, intervention are based on the perceptions and
feelings of Abuja; but if we have state police, governors will be able to take timely charge of the situation, sing existing security systems within the State in a speedy manner to clean up the mess, so the country is ripe for state police. Many Nigerians need state police that is why they are agitating for it. This is because state police will really take care of the security within the local environment. This also because any state police officer will be known in his or her immediate environment, and that can take care of the security aspect within the local governments and the state. State Police would go a long way in helping security matters within localities in the state. The present structure of the Nigeria Police Force that is so centralized is not effective in addressing the issue of insecurity.

Decentralizing the state police is good because it creates avenue for state police to exist, as such, police would be posted to an area that he or she is familiar with. It makes the job of fighting crime easier. Unlike federal police that is used to random posting; somebody from another geopolitical zone of the country will be posted to an area that he or she is not familiar with the culture and language barrier. It makes the job of security more difficult and ineffective. It is time to create state police in the Nigerian State.

The Police Service Commission (PSC) said on DailySun, Monday, February 12, 2018:10, that more than 150,000 Federal Policemen are attached to Very Important Persons (V.I.Ps) and unauthorized persons in the country. This affects the deployment of the Federal Police to confront security challenges in the country. The chairman of Police Service Commission (PSC) Mike Okiro, (2018) lamented and disclosed that “We cannot afford to have more than half of the population of the police in private hands”. The chairman also disclosed that persons who served as ministers for over 10 years to 15 years still go about with police security. The country cannot be battling with shortage of manpower in the force while majority of these officers would be in the service of few privileged Nigerians. The number of policemen in the country is inadequate for the population. These scenario
shows that Nigeria is ripe for state Police to enhance service delivery. More so, the federal police is underfunded and therefore, states with the resource and fund need to create state police.

The Challenge Facing the Creation of State Police
This paper has come forth with some of the challenges facing the creation of State Police in Nigeria in the 21st century. Some of the factors against decentralized policing system or state police in Nigeria as Ekweremadu (2018:30) aptly pointed out are that the strongest arguments or fear among the opponents of a decentralized police system is the likelihood of abuse by interests, notably the state governors. The problem with this paranoid disposition, however, is that it looks at state police as the property of the elite, especially the governors rather than as institution of the state. As such, it still sees Nigeria from the prisms of the colonial era and early years of independence, thus failing to take cognizance of the transformations that have taken place in terms of awareness and laws over the years. In this direction, challenges facing the creation of State Police in recent time of Nigerian history is the position of opponent groups in the North like the Coalition of Northern Groups (CNGs) that called on President Buhari to vehemently reject calls for the establishment of State Police; arguing it would be a recipe for disaster and an oppressive and manipulative tool at the hands of governors. (Abuh A. and Wantu J., 2018, p.6).

Other security experts like Jackson Ojo (2018:6) lamented that Nigeria is a very complex country with politics of bitterness reigning supreme. The political system and politicians are not mature enough to operate state police or any form of state government controlled security apparatus. Let us take a critical look at the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC), where the governors have control what has been the result? It has been total witch-hunting of the opposition in States and for the ruling political party to win all.
Ojo (2018:6) further explains that police apparatus controlled and funded by the state government would be detrimental to peaceful co-existence in the state. We would witness total oppression by the ruling government. Recruitment would be done in favour of the ruling party, political thugs would automatically turn to policemen, opposition parties on the state would not be allowed to get police protection, rigging of elections would be 100 percent in favour of the ruling party, as they would have the police to protect rigging, thus, Nigerian do not need State Police now as our political awareness is still far than near. Centrally-controlled police is still the best bet now. All we need to do as a country, to make our police more effective and result-oriented is to improve their welfare.

Other challenges facing the creation of State Police in Nigeria was bitterly pointed out by Abubakr Tsav, ex-commission of Police, on DailySun, Monday, August 14, 2017:6, the former police boss also lamented that politicians would use the State Police against political enemies and the Commissioner of Police in the state would not have security of tenure because, even when he does something within the law and it offends the governor, he would be sacked. He would be at the beck and call of the governor and would not have freedom to do things the way they should be done. So, for now, we are not ripe enough and we don’t believe in God enough to have state police.

Furthermore, other scholars and leaders maintained that Nigeria is not yet ripe for State policing because, if the states are allowed to use their policemen, the chief executives will use them for selfish reasons. The corruption that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerians will not allow state police to operate honestly; meanwhile, many Nigerians belief that in the future, when people believe in fair elections and do not use the police against political enemies, we can then have state police.
On the other hand, Ekweremadu (2018:30) further noted that the other pertinent question to ask was whether the solely Federal Police have not also been grossly abused by the high and mighty. He said, “I do not think Nigerians, especially Anambra people will forget in a hurry the attempted coup here in Awka in 2003. A top brass of the police physically supervised the abduction of an incumbent state governor and purported chief security officer of a federating unit from office. This, to me is the height of abuse of the police force. My answer to this would therefore be that if the governors are likely to be abuse by the state police, then make provisions in law that would make it impossible for them to do so, make stringent provisions in law that can mete out sanctions where such abuses occur.

**Conclusion**

Those arguing against state police are saying that governors will misuse it. If we are honest to ourselves, can we, in truth, say that Federal Government, in some cases, doesn’t misuse the federal police? many of us witness regularly how often during elections, the police, in most cases, would work for the government in power in Abuja, most of the time, they use the federal might of the police to oppress, intimidate and victimize opposition party across the country. So, what we are accusing the Governors and State Police of having the capacity to do, the federal government is already doing with the federal police. With the high level of insecurity in Nigeria today, wisdom demand that we should establish state police. Even though governors could make mistakes, ovetimes laws would be enacted to check them. So that the system will correct itself and then we will begin to have normal Policing. But the security threat across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria now requires that we should go to state policing immediately, otherwise Nigeria will turn to a den of criminals. With State Police our police will become more effective and result-oriented. The roles and duties of the state Police would be clearly spelt out in the constitution. That should also include what would happen in the event of a clash between the federal and State Police.
Recommendations
This paper has come forth with the following recommendations to explain that Nigeria is ripe for state Police despite all the odds.

1. Nigeria is ripe enough for State Police because of the weaknesses and lapses of the Federal Police to fight crime in Nigeria in the 21st century. Even though, a lot of people have negative impression that when State police is form, the governors will use it to oppress whoever they feel is against their policies. Before any State police is established, there should be proper framework, checks and balances by those who are to formulate the laws and policies guiding the operation of State Police; so that at the end of the day, it will not be a tool in the hands of the State governors against the opposition. The law will be there to regulate such excesses the law will make it impossible for them to do so. The provision of good laws and policies would allay the fears of the antagonists of a decentralized policing system in Nigeria. Ekweremadu (2018:30).

2. Nigeria is ripe for state policing, that is the reason scholars are agitating for state police, because it will really take care of the security within the local environment. This is also because any State Police officer will be known in his or her immediate environment and that can take care of the security aspect within the local government and the State.

3. Even though Nigeria is ripe for State Police, only States that can afford State Police should opt for it. For example, Lagos state, as rich as it is can have state Police, while Osun and Ogun States can have more of federal police. With State police Nigerians can expect a higher level of security to protect lives and property.
4. The police service Commission (PSC), chairman, Mike Okiro, on *DailySun*, Monday, February 12, 2018:10, lamented that more than 150,000 policemen are attached to Very Important Persons (VIPs) and unauthorized persons in the country. If this revelation is true then Nigeria is ripe for State Police. The masses cannot afford to have more than half of the population of the police in private hands.

5. State police creation would give the Nigerian police the opportunity to quickly understand a state languages and culture; it would be able to differentiate from a peace move and a dangerous move. State police would help the police officer to identify cultural similarities and differences in the locality and this will enable him to fight crime easily than a federal police officer who cannot communicate with indigenous language; then fighting crime would become difficult. A policeman who speaks the language of a culture area allows him to interact with people and understand the perks of the culture. When a policeman overcomes language barrier fighting crimes become more effective. State police would help to build strong public relation between the police and the civil society to fight crime. This will assist in reducing the security challenges in various communities as language will no longer be a barrier to their operations.

6. State Police would offer the Nigeria police the opportunity to checking proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition across our porous borders. The Minister of Interior; Major General, Abdulrahman Dambazau, explained on *DailySun*, Wednesday, January 31, 2018:15, that arms were brought in to the country by former Niger Delta agitators, Boko Haram insurgents and other political sponsored activities, often with the aid of officers manning our porous borders. With state police manning of our porous borders to check traffickers and other crimes would reduce
drastically. Especially, if State Police are well equipped with tracking devices. Tracking criminals via their mobile devices has been adopted by well trained State police in most nations, and has become very much a part of most investigations because virtually every adult now possesses a cell phone.

7. State Governors can use their allocation for security votes running into hundreds of millions every month to run the lack of financial capacity of State police. So many States are already funding various types of State police under various guises. They include vigilantes, which consist of Hisbah in Kano, Bakassi Boys in most States of the South east which were not regulated by law. It is important to note that a state that is too poor to fund the protection of the lives and property of its residents cannot be compelled to be called a state in a true federal system. Any state that spends heavily on funding the Nigerian police through logistical supports like patrol vans, and other security aids can afford to own state police. State police has not only been justified, it has become imperative in Nigeria in the 21st century.

8. Before the state police is establish in Nigeria, some of the laws and policies provision of the Nigerian constitution that need to be amended include: amendment of section 214 and 215 of the constitution that empowers the federal to exclusively control the state police force, removing of police from item 45 of part 1 of the second schedule to allow states to establish state police service under approved guidelines, giving the National Assembly power to provide the framework for the establishment, structure and powers of State Police, the powers of State governors should be limited to making policing policies and should not extend to the operational use and control of the state police – just like the National Judicial Council (NJC), and that the federal police should exercise a level of
oversight over the activities of state police among others. Ekweremadu (2018:30).

References


