OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF POLICING, PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

The book titled "Overcoming the Challenges of Policing, Public Safety and Security in Nigeria" by Zanna M. Ibrahim, published July 2023, is an interesting and timely piece of literature aiming at addressing current policing problems bordering on public safety and security in Nigeria. The author was motivated by high crime rates, increased criminality and vulnerability of citizens without remedial efforts from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), which is the lead agency in detecting, preventing and protecting the lives and property of citizens. Central to the author's intention are issues bordering around policing strategy, decentralised policing, and addressing underlying social issues that breed crimes for guaranteed public safety and security.

The Police Force remains one of the most visible and crucial agencies in any modern or democratic government. Its role in guaranteeing security and public safety is sensitive and vital. Policing itself is as old as human civilization, with communities seeking ways to ensure their safety and well-being (Aremu, 2014). In primitive societies, the absence of a formal law enforcement body led individuals, families, and groups to take on protective and retaliatory roles against offenders (Aremu, 2014). Public safety relies more on collective efforts than a specialized entity, unlike modern policing systems that prioritize policing as the primary role of the police (Aremu, 2014). Countries with low crime rates and high public safety often boast of highly trained and professional police systems. Japan, Iceland, and Switzerland exemplify this connection. Their success is attributed to factors like professionalism and a community-oriented policing approach.

Conversely, dysfunctional and disorganised police systems are more likely to experience high crime rates, jeopardizing public safety. Schwartz (2015) highlights the description of African police forces as struggling with rising criminality and public dissatisfaction due to perceived dysfunction. Additionally, police forces in many developing countries face accusations of poor service delivery and an inability to address public safety concerns effectively.

Following Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the author noted that, the nation has grappled with a multitude of security challenges. These include the Boko Haram insurgency which has caused immense devastation in the North-East, the ongoing Niger Delta militancy and piracy in the South-South, ethnoreligious conflicts – fueled by religious and resource-based tensions across the country, herders and farmers clashes where the North Central region experiences frequent bloodshed, trans-border criminal activities, and election induced violence (Dambazzau, 2014; Folarin & Oviasogie, 2014; Nwagboso, 2018).

The pervasiveness of these threats underscores the significant security challenges facing Nigeria. Travelling within the country by air, road, or train has become a safety concern. Kidnapping for ransom has become distressingly common. While Boko Haram's insurgency has been a major concern for over two decades, banditry has emerged as a leading source of suffering, inflicting pain on families and communities. News reports like those from TVC News (2023) highlight the alarming number of school children abducted since 2020. Despite efforts to address these issues, Boko Haram continues its attacks, resulting in civilian casualties and human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2019).

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is mandated by the Police Act (1979 No. 23) to be the leading agency for crime prevention, detection, law enforcement, and public safety. However, the *perceived ineffectiveness* of the NPF in addressing these security challenges has led to the formation of regional security outfits (Bassey, 2019). Operation Amotekun, established in southwest Nigeria in 2020, exemplifies this trend. Similar outfits have been established in states like Plateau, Kaduna, Kano, Gombe, Bauchi, and Borno (Zanna, 2023). The proliferation of these state-funded security outfits underscores the public's view that the existing national policing system is inadequate. It raises questions about the effectiveness of Nigeria's current security architecture. Gambo (2012) argues that previously neglected aspects of national security have become threats, necessitating a security review. Garba (2018) as cited in Ekweremadu (2018) further emphasises the need for reform, highlighting the number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria as an indictment of the country's security structure.

In response to these concerns, Nigeria's Presidency acknowledged the limitations of centralised policing and advocated for exploring State police and community policing methods (Ekweremadu, 2018). Proponents of decentralised or state policing argue that the challenges stem from the colonial legacy of a centralised system and the 1999 Constitution's enshrinement of this model, which they believe contradicts the principles of federalism. They argue that a centralised system keeps police personnel too far from the communities they serve, hindering proactive measures and swift responses (Okemuyiwa, 2012). Akosile (2018) emphasises that improved security and public safety require devolving or decentralising security measures. As the NPF's efforts are perceived as insufficient, communities increasingly rely on local security arrangements, also known as non-state actors, to improve their safety (Schwartz, 2015).

This book seeks to identify solutions for overcoming the challenges of policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria. It explores practical steps toward achieving a more secure nation, including potential reforms for the NPF and the ongoing debate regarding a decentralized policing system.

Research Questions
The following research questions guide the study
  i.   What are the challenges of policing, public safety and security in Nigeria?
 ii.   How have the challenges impacted the policing, public safety and security in Nigeria?
iii.   How can the challenges of policing, public safety and security in Nigeria be overcome?

Objectives of the Study
The primary and urgent objective of the study is to identify immediate and effective solutions for overcoming the challenges of policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria. The specific objectives include
  i.   To examine the challenges of policing, public safety and security in Nigeria.
 ii.   To assess how challenges impacted the policing, public safety and security in Nigeria.
iii.   To identify solutions for overcoming the challenges of policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant and relevant to the following beneficiaries: **Academic Significance:** This book will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on policing reforms in developing countries, particularly focusing on Nigeria's context. By analysing the limitations of the current security system and exploring potential solutions, the study adds valuable knowledge to the academic understanding of policing reforms and their impact on public safety in developing countries. **Policy Significance:** This work's insights will provide data-driven evidence on the potential benefits of decentralised policing or community policing initiatives; the study can support the development of more effective and evidence-based security policies in Nigeria. **Practice Significance:** The study's findings can be used to develop training programs and best practices for police officers in Nigeria, particularly regarding community engagement and responsiveness in a decentralised or reformed policing system.

Literature Review
Concept of Policing

The concept of policing, Zanna noted, has existed throughout human history, with communities taking responsibility for their safety (Aremu, 2014). In pre-colonial societies, families, clans, and communities organised themselves for protection and retaliation against threats (Aremu, 2014; Tamonu, 1993). Arase (2013) highlights that pre-industrial Europe similarly relied on local and community-based security structures. The rise of the modern state system led to a shift towards centralised policing, with formal law enforcement agencies and the police being the lead. The NPF is the leading agency for civil security in Nigeria (Alemika, 2012). Established under the Police Act of 1979, it is tasked with preventing and controlling crime, apprehending offenders, and maintaining public safety and security (Schwartz, 2015, cited in Nix, 2020).

Despite its mandate, the NPF faces significant challenges. Zanna , argues that these issues point towards a failing security architecture in Nigeria. Accusations of police brutality, corruption, and untrustworthiness plague the force. Furthermore, a lack of public trust and a strained relationship between the police and the citizenry have been identified as critical problems (Aremu, 2014; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000, cited in Aremu, 2013). Building trust between the police and the public remains a challenge, though common to Nigeria. (Randal, 2011). The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) emphasises the importance of police legitimacy and adherence to the rule of law (OSCE). Studies by Aremu (2014) and Alemika & Chukwuma (2000) cited in Aremu (2013) highlight the strained relationship between the NPF and Nigerian citizens. The historical roots of the NPF and the structure enshrined in the 1999 Constitution, which promotes a centralised policing system, are viewed by some as contributing factors to the current challenges (Proshareng, 2010). It has fueled a debate on the potential benefits of a decentralised or state policing system, the author posited .

Debate for and Against State Policing

The issue of state policing in Nigeria is a highly contentious one; with strong arguments on both sides due to the security deficit. The proponents argue that a state police system would

place security closer to the people. Local police forces would have a better understanding of community dynamics and be more responsive to specific threats (Frank, 2019). State police forces would be directly accountable to state governors and local communities, potentially leading to increased responsiveness and reduced instances of human rights abuses (Egbujo, 2018). States could tailor police strategies to address their unique security challenges. For instance, a state facing cattle rustling could develop a specialized unit, while another struggling with kidnapping could focus on prevention measures (Egba, 2018 cited in Ekweremadu, 2018).

On the other hand, opponents fear that State governors might misuse State police forces for political purposes, targeting opponents and suppressing dissent (Frank, 2019). Again, concerns exist that state police could exacerbate existing ethnic tensions, particularly in areas with a history of inter-communal violence. Furthermore, some argue that not all states have the financial resources or infrastructure to establish and maintain effective police forces (Egunjobi, 2016). Recently, Nigeria's Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, in a one-day National Dialogue on State Policing organised by the House of Representatives in Abuja, stated that Nigeria is not mature enough for State Police that going by it would open the room for abuse from the State governors (Ekiye, 2024). Ekweremadu (2018) argues that it is not a question of maturity but a question of the federal system that Nigerians opted for and adapting to a workable system. The debate about whether States should have their own Police Forces or departments will continue to generate controversy until the policymakers come to terms with the reality of security challenges in Nigeria.

Challenges of Policing, Public Safety and Security in Nigeria

Public safety and security are fundamental concepts for any well-functioning society. While often used interchangeably, there are subtle distinctions between the two. Security is a contested concept with different meanings for different people (Momodu, 2019). There are two contending security perspectives in international relations. At the same time, realist scholars view security as protecting the State and its territorial integrity from external aggression, while idealists broaden the scope of security to encompass humanity, giving rise to human security (Buzan, 2009). It implies that security is a multi-dimensional concept geared toward protecting people from harm or security threats and securing the State space. Security, according to Jatau (2017), is protection from physical harm, especially assassination, or protection against attack or robbery. Additionally, security connotes protection from the possibility of future financial difficulty and also entails freedom from vulnerability to political or military takeover of the government (Jatau, 2017).

Public security or public safety is the prevention of and protection from events that could endanger the safety and security of the public from significant danger, injury, or property damage. It is often conducted by a State or government to ensure the protection of citizens, persons in their territory, organizations, and institutions against threats to their well-being, survival, and prosperity (Wayback Machine, 2016). Ensuring that citizens feel safe and secure is one of the principal tasks of democratic government. Without a basic level of order and safety people are unable to go about their lives in liberty (Barber, 2020). As adopted at the National City Summit, "public safety" means not only putting an end to the levels of crime and violence that impact the everyday lives of our residents, but just as importantly, delivering life-saving rescue services, preventing fires, and preparing for and responding effectively to foreign and domestic terrorism, natural and manmade disasters, and pandemic events (National League of Cities, 2019).

While public safety and security are interrelated concepts, they are not synonymous. However, they are conceptually similar as both of them describe a state of being free from harm or protected against any threats and dangers. Public safety and security are the fundamental needs of citizens at all times. The government or State is the sole provider of public safety and security through its agency, the police force, especially in a centralised policing system. Providing for the public's safety is ultimately the responsibility of municipal government and one of its highest priorities (National League of Cities, 2019). The State, through its police force and other security agencies, has a fundamental obligation to ensure public safety and security (National League of Cities, 2019). Effective policing is crucial for maintaining order, deterring crime, and fostering a sense of security among citizens. Despite its importance, Nigeria faces significant challenges in achieving public safety and security.

The book raised a discourse that, the challenges to public safety and security in Nigeria are not just diverse, but also severe, stemming from:

A. **Centralised policing system:** Nigeria's current centralised policing system, where the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) operates under the sole authority of the federal government, has come under scrutiny for its effectiveness in addressing public safety and security challenges. Here is an analysis of how this system affects public safety and security, drawing insights from Arase (2018) and Bassey (2019).

   i. **Limited Understanding of Local Needs:** The centralised system's struggle to address the diverse security needs of different regions in Nigeria is not just a challenge, but a significant hurdle. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach may not be effective in countering cattle rustling in the North-West or addressing kidnapping in the South-East.

   ii. **Remote and Inaccessible Police:** The remoteness of police stations in rural areas under a centralised system makes it difficult for citizens to report crimes or access assistance promptly, hindering proactive policing and response times.

   iii. **Lack of Community Engagement:** A centralised structure can create a disconnect between the police and the communities they serve. This hinders trust-building and collaboration, which are essential for effective crime prevention (Egbujo, 2018).

These limitations of the centralised system can negatively impact public safety and security, leading to ineffective crime prevention**, s**low response times**,** inaccessible police stations and, above all, increased crime rates. Other challenges include

B. **Police Brutality and Misconduct:** Accusations of excessive force, extra-judicial killings, and corruption erode public trust and make citizens less willing to cooperate with law enforcement Zanna, posited. It hinders crime prevention and investigation efforts.

C. **Resource Constraints:** Under-resourcing of the police force in terms of personnel, training, and equipment limits their ability to patrol, respond to emergencies, and investigate crimes effectively (Zhao et al., 2018). It creates vulnerabilities and emboldens criminals.

D. **Weak Investigative Capacity:** Inadequate investigative skills and resources can lead to unsolved crimes, fostering a sense of impunity and emboldening criminals (Egbujo, 2018). It discourages citizens from reporting crimes, further hindering law enforcement efforts.

E. **Organised Crime and Insurgency:** The presence of Boko Haram and other militant groups, as well as transnational organised crime networks, destabilizes entire regions and poses a serious threat to public safety (UNODC, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

While the author did not explicitly outline the theoretical frameworks in the original text, the reviewer deems it crucial to incorporate these frameworks to fortify the analysis of the variable under study. This not only deepens the understanding of the review and its implications but also serves as a pivotal component of empirical research. The absence of a theoretical framework is a gap identified by the reviewer, which this review aims to fill. The review specifically adopts the Social Disorganisation Theory and Community Policing theory, both of which are highly relevant and effective in explaining how the challenges of policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria can be overcome. These challenges include a centralised policing system which leads to the thin presence of the NPF and hinders prompt and rapid response to crime, others include extra-judicial killings, corruption, resource constraints, and weak investigative capacity, which are prevalent in many parts of Nigeria and require innovative approaches like the ones proposed by the chosen theories.

Social Disorganisation Theory

Social Disorganisation Theory (SDT) was developed by scholars like Robert Merton and Clifford Shaw in the 20th century and proposes a link between weak social structures and high crime rates (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942). The theory posits that communities characterised by poverty, lack of opportunity, and weak social bonds are more susceptible to crime. This theory provides a valuable lens for analysing the challenges of policing in Nigeria. The reality in Nigeria today, many communities struggle with high levels of poverty and unemployment and limited economic opportunities, which in itself can breed frustration and desperation, thereby creating fertile ground for criminal activity. SDT encourages looking beyond individual criminal acts and examining the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to crime. This approach necessitates a multi-pronged strategy that goes beyond traditional policing methods. More than simply increasing police presence with the same policing style (centralised) may be required to address the root causes of crime. Instead, a focus on social programmes aimed at strengthening communities is crucial. For instance, investments in education, job training, and poverty reduction initiatives can create opportunities for individuals and discourage them from turning to crime. Additionally, strengthening social institutions like family structures and community centres can provide support and guidance, reducing the appeal of criminal activity. These strategies have been successfully implemented in other countries, such as Germany, Japan, Singapore, and Norway, which invested heavily in social programmes. These investments have led to a significant reduction in crime rates and improved public safety.

Community Policing Theory

Community policing, a distinct theory of law enforcement, emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to growing public dissatisfaction with traditional policing methods, which in the Nigerian context include lack of prompt action of the security operatives and distrust between the police and the public. While the historical development of community policing theory involved many figures and movements, Sir Robert Peel's (19th Century) principles of police legitimacy and public trust laid a foundation for the theory's emphasis on collaboration. Community policing theory (CPT) offers a valuable framework for overcoming the challenges of

policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria. CPT underscores collaboration, trust-building, and a proactive approach to crime prevention. By addressing the underlying social issues that contribute to crime and fostering a more cooperative relationship between police and citizens, community policing can pave the way for safer and more secure communities throughout Nigeria. However, successful implementation requires addressing resource constraints, tackling corruption, and ensuring a cultural shift within the police force. By overcoming these challenges, Nigeria can unlock the potential of community policing and build a more secure future for its citizens.

Methodology

Another gap identified in the review is the methodological gap that needs to be present in the original text, which this review seeks to fill. The methodology provides insight into how and why a study is carried out in a specific manner. The review relied on secondary sources of data, particularly from the original text and other relevant literature and texts, and content analysis was adopted for data analysis.

Empirical Review

In this book, 'Overcoming the Challenges of Policing, Public Safety and Security in Nigeria', the author provides a comprehensive analysis of the Nigerian policing system. He focuses on how public safety and security can be guaranteed through the right policing approach, which is public-friendly and connected to the tenets and principles of community policing, also known as a decentralised policing system. The author finds out that politicisation, lack of resources, uneducated personnel and corruption are the major challenges bedevilling policing in Nigeria. While these challenges are real, not identifying the policing system operational in the country as one of the main problems affects the results of the text. For example, the UN standard of a police ratio to a country's population is one police officer to 450 citizens, but with Nigeria's population, it is one police to 550 citizens. This calculation means the number of police in Nigeria is grossly inadequate to police the country. Since that is the case, available police officers can be politicised, enticed and fall for corrupt practices. If the Nigerian government decentralised police, their number would increase grossly; they would likely experience prompt action, and the challenges would be reduced to the base. The author recommended, among others, the need for a framework that would enable the police force to function effectively, calling for more training of the officers and recruitment.

In another study by Heyman (2014) titled 'Policing and Security', he focuses on the overview of the relationship of policing and security activities to power relations, regarding urban form and processes. It includes basic orientations to the study of police, Marxist, intersectional, Foucauldian, and symbolic. It addresses the complexity of feelings about the subject and takes note of functional and critical perspectives on policing. It reviews the history of urban policing in the West about the histories of cities and capitalism. Then it adds a post-colonial case study to show comparisons from that perspective. It reviews the rhetoric and reality of new technologies and practices of policing. It surveys urban privatization and policing, and likewise security, borders, and migration. It asks what is largely missing in common conceptions of crime, policing, and security, which is elite crime. It concludes by affirming the roles of policing with the important addition that policing as such is part of the wider pattern of equality and inequality, justice and injustice in society. One striking feature of this study is reviewing new technologies and practices of policing, which the original text did not factor in. Today, nearly all crimes, such as cybercrime, kidnapping, insurgency, armed robbery, fraud and other transitional crimes, are formulated and

manifested with the help of technology. Therefore, the review adopts and recommends to policymakers.

To x-ray the challenge "The Nigeria Police and the Challenges of Security in Nigeria", Adegoke (2014) reiterates that the security of life and property is the primary purpose of government, attested by the 1999 Constitution. The paper examines the Nigerian police and the challenges of security in Nigeria. He adopted a survey method in which 200 respondents were randomly selected from two local government areas in Rivers State. Frequency and simple percentages were used to analyse the data. The findings reveal that poverty, unemployment, leadership and religion are the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the effort of the Nigerian police alone cannot curb the rate of insecurity in the nation. This study's findings corroborate our social disorganisation theory, a theoretical framework that encourages looking beyond individual criminal acts and examining the underlying social and economic factors (such as poverty and unemployment) that contribute to crime. However, the recommendation states that the NPF alone cannot curb the rate of insecurity in the nation without clearly mentioning who could tag alongside the NPF.

In their study, Agbefe, Ikenga and Atare (2023), titled "The Impact and Challenges of the Nigeria Police Force in the Maintenance of Internal Security in Nigeria", focused on the security operatives (NPF) finding it difficult to maintain peace, detect and prevent all forms of crimes in Nigeria. It is on the premise that the study examined the impact and challenges of the Nigerian police force in the maintenance of internal security in the country. The study adopted a historical research design and relied extensively on secondary sources of data such as books, journal articles, newspaper articles, periodicals, and internet materials, among others. Social contract theory was used to explain the evolution of society. The Study indicated that the police have been playing a vital role in the fight against crimes and other forms of security challenges. However, its efforts have not yielded the much-needed peace and security because of the weak cooperation that exists between the force and the public. The study suggested, amongst others, an intensive collaboration between the officers of the Nigeria Police Force and the general public in the fight against crimes and other forms of security challenges in the country. The recommendation of the study is akin to the focus of our review, which is community policing that emphasises collaboration and cooperation between the NPF and the public.

Main Findings

i. Weak social structures, characterised by poverty, lack of opportunity, and weak social bonds, contribute significantly to high crime rates in Nigeria. These factors make communities more susceptible to criminal activity and create challenges for traditional policing methods.

ii. Limited focus on addressing the root causes of crime, the potential disconnect between police and communities, and resource constraints all hinder the effectiveness of traditional policing methods in Nigeria. This can lead to a cycle of crime, fear, and a lack of trust in the police, further compromising public safety and security.

iii. A multi-faceted approach that combines social programs aimed at strengthening communities (education, job training, poverty reduction) alongside community policing initiatives (building trust, proactive crime prevention) offers a promising

path towards overcoming the challenges of policing, public safety, and security in Nigeria. This approach can create a more secure environment by addressing the underlying causes of crime and fostering cooperation between police and citizens.

Conclusion

Nigeria is faced with a complex challenge in ensuring public safety and security. High crime rates are often rooted in social disorganisation, characterised by poverty and weak social structures. The traditional policing (centralised policing system) methods alone may not address these underlying issues. However, a multi-dimensional approach informed by Social Disorganisation Theory and Community Policing Theory offers a path forward. By investing in social programmes that strengthen communities and implementing trust-building community policing initiatives, Nigeria can create a safer and more secure future for all its citizens.

Recommendations: This book has open the door for further academic and professional engagements in three key areas namely:

1. **Invest in Social Programs with a Focus on Community Needs**
   - Conduct research to identify the specific social and economic factors contributing to crime in different Nigerian communities.
   - Allocate resources for targeted social programmes, such as education and job training initiatives, poverty reduction measures, and strengthening family support systems.
   - Ensure these programmes are culturally appropriate and involve community participation in design and implementation.
2. **Implement Community Policing Strategies with Trust-Building Measures**
   - Provide training for police officers on community policing principles, emphasising collaboration, communication, and building trust with citizens.
   - Encourage community engagement initiatives like foot patrols, community forums, and youth outreach programmes.
   - Promote transparency and accountability within the police force to rebuild public trust.
3. **Address Resource Constraints and Police Reform**
   - Explore innovative strategies to address resource limitations, such as seeking public-private partnerships or international support.
   - Implement robust anti-corruption measures within the police force to ensure resources are used effectively and ethically.
   - Consider decentralization of police forces, empowering local officers to address community-specific needs with greater autonomy.

The book is *a- must- have* for all in the area of security as scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. There is no doubt, the author Zanna M. Ibrahim, has used his experience and passion to enrich knowledge.

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