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Centralised Security System and Insecurity in Nigeria: Re-interrogating the Need for a State Police System

NWAGBO, Samuel N.C.[12]; OFOKE, Ikechukwu Innocent[2]

[1] Institute of Peace Security and Development Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria
[2] Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author:
NWAGBO Samuel N.C.
snc.nwagbo@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Security is one of a state's fundamental obligations if it desires to attract respect for its legitimacy and sovereignty. Nigeria is confronted with a series of security challenges, ranging from herdsmen attacks, banditry, kidnapping, robbery and more recently, coordinated attacks by unknown gunmen. This has become so bad that the government finds it difficult to confront them under the current centralised security system. This system involves the federal government's deployment and operation of security agencies nationwide. Hence, using a qualitative approach, this paper interrogates the contemporary structure and the need to establish a state policing system to address rising insecurity in Nigeria. This study adopts the Routine Activity Theory as a framework of analysis to establish how insecurity has been on a daily increase in Nigeria as a result of inadequate and ineffective guard (policing); and how a decentralised policing structure can enhance guardianship (security), reduce criminal opportunities, and address insecurity more effectively. A qualitative research approach and content analysis were employed to collect and analyse relevant data for this study. The data were collected from a documentary source. The study concluded that, to ensure adequate security of lives and property through local intelligence, familiarity with terrain, quick response, direct command, accountability, and better funding, there is an urgent need for a decentralised security system that would enable the state governments or component units to manage the security of the states through effective community policing. The study recommends immediate approval and implementation of a state policing system under the control of the state governors, fully backed up by law and effectively supervised by both the Police Service Commission and the National Assembly to ensure effective operational standard.

Keywords: Centralised Security System, Community Police, Insecurity, Police, State Police System

Introduction

Insecurity is one of the greatest challenges of contemporary Nigeria. Since 2009, the security situation has changed in both its dimensions and sophistication. This is so multidimensional that it ranges from armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, herdsmen attacks, Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. According to the security incident tracker of Beacon Consulting, over 29,828 people were killed, while 15,404 others were kidnapped across the country between 2021 and 2023 (Ayantonye, 2024). Also, as

much as this figure appears, insecurity has been on a daily increase, with prevalent cases of kidnapping, ritual killings, herdsmen attacks on communities, and coordinated attacks by unknown gunmen. Both private individuals, politicians, businesses, and public places have been attacked across Nigeria. Insecurity has become so intense that it is difficult to have 24 hours without news of one form of premeditated killing or the other. Amnesty International reported that at least 1,100 people were abducted across northern Nigeria between January and April 2026 (Premium Times, 12th April 2026). The organisation warned that the rate and pattern of the attacks are a reflection of a deepening security crisis and a failure of government institutions and authorities to protect vulnerable communities. This worrisome situation has put everyone in fear of attack. Some incidents are not reported depending on where they happened, access to the press, and government interest.

It is the responsibility of the government to provide adequate security to the citizens. The primary duty of the Police is to ensure the protection of lives and property in society (NPF, 2020). Hence, for peace, stability, and human survival in any country, especially a large, multiethnic country like Nigeria, the police must be responsive, well-trained, and apolitical. The police are under the control of the executive arm of government.

Historically, during the pre-colonial era, the various ethnic groups, regions, and communities that formed Nigeria today had various forms of policing systems to maintain peace and security. For instance, in the Igbo pre-colonial system, policing was carried out by the age-grade and masquerade societies, which were made up mainly of adult males (Aniche in Eyo, 2019). Security during this era was also undertaken using spiritual means and approach in many Nigerian indigenous societies (Nwolise, 2013). Though some communities still make use of local vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch in policing the community in an informal way, the indigenous police system was formally eroded by the colonial regime. During the colonial era, what is known today as the Nigeria Police Force was established after the merger of Lagos Police Force and Royal Niger Constabulary in 1820 (Eyo, 2019). Upon independence, Nigeria inherited a centralised policing system which was modeled according to the British system. Since then, the Nigeria police have been operating under federal jurisdiction.

However, in an attempt to address issues within the force so as to ensure more effective law enforcement mechanisms and combat the rising insecurity in the country, the Nigerian police has gone through a series of reforms. Despite these reforms, Halimah (2024) regret that the Nigerian police is still being perceived by the public as ill-equipped, poorly trained and inefficient, which is evident in their inability to combat crime. These informed the persistent call for the establishment of a decentralised police system known as state police system. In propagating this demand, references are usually made to America and various European countries where police system and management are in the hands of the states and other component units. Therefore, effective crime control is evidently achieved.

According to Fagge (2024), state policing system entails the decentralisation of the law enforcement system which grants individual states within a federal system of government the power to establish and manage their own police forces. Under this security model, states or component units have the autonomy to manage security issues specific to their regions; thereby channeling all security strategies to the local security needs and priorities. The State Police System is an important inherent feature of federalism which is a decentralized system of government where there is devolution of powers to the component units of the state (Eke, 2019). Nigeria, despite being a federal state, section 214, Part III of the supplemental provision of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria places the police and other government security agencies in the exclusive legislative list (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 1999). This has exclusively vested policing functions on the federal government alone; which is an utter contradiction of the ideal principles of federalism. This implies that the state governors, despite being addressed as the Chief Security Officers of their states, have no power or control over the security operatives in their states.

According to Onuoha et al. (2024), the Nigerian police force has been facing criticism for the use of excessive force, unprofessional conduct, corruption and tribalism in responding to insecurity situations. This has ignited the call for state policing system. Despite various strategies engaged by the police and other security agencies in both high ways and street roads, insecurity has been on daily increase. Sometimes, incidents such as killings, armed robbery, kidnapping etc. happen very close to police check points; yet, they cannot avert it. This has made many to question the relevance of the police when they cannot secure lives and properties effectively and professionally. Others have accused the police of aiding crime or being accomplice to it due to their inability to swiftly respond to emergencies. This has deluded the image of the Nigerian police and made the public lose confidence in the Nigerian police, owing to the daily rising insecurity (Punchnews 14th March 2024).

In the face of this reality, it becomes pertinent to interrogate the need for a state policing system amid rising insecurity in Nigeria's current centralised security system.

Review of Related Literature

Insecurity amidst Centralised Security System in Nigeria

Generally speaking, insecurity is the absence of or breakdown in security. Security can be defined in various ways depending on its context of reference. Security can be defined as an act and as a process of providing safety, ensuring a sense of confidence devoid of fear and anxiety (Nwagbo & Ofoke, 2024). Security is a state of being safe from harm and attack. According to Jarvis and Holland (2014), security is the state of safety and the absence of threats. It is a promising situation of assurance and certainty of being free from harm. In other words, security is the provision of services for protection to people, and the protection of information and assets for individual and community safety and wellness (Craighead,

2003). Hence, security could be seen as the protection of the state and its structure against attacks or aggression.

On the other hand, insecurity constitutes all forms of violent activities in a country which disrupt the peace and stability of the society. Insecurity manifests in political, economic and social forms like violence, attacks, banditry, maiming, keeping, terrorism and killings, which make people feel unsafe; thereby altering people's normal way of living. According to Ayoola (2022), insecurity is the inability to take defensive action against potential harm or danger to both groups and individuals. In other words, insecurity is a condition susceptible to harm and prone to risk of misfortune. It is a state of being unsafe from harm. In Beland (2015) view, insecurity is a lack of protection from crime and harm. Hence, insecurity, according to Nwagbo, Ofoke and Ezeamu (2025), is the breach of peace and safety, which potentially leads to wanton destruction of lives and properties which can be driven by political, social or economic intension.

Insecurity in Nigeria is a recurring phenomenon that threatens the well-being of its citizens. The growing rate of insecurity in Nigeria is very alarming, and it calls for concern as it has continued to increase unabated. International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) (2023) study shows that the emergence of the restive activities of the Fulani Herdsmen and "unknown gunmen" has worsened insecurity in Nigeria. Apart from Boko Haram abductions and killings in Northeast Nigeria, banditry is on the increase in the Northwest states, especially in Katsina and Kaduna. While bandits and robbers attack Southwest communities. Herdsmen attacks and killings are going on in states like Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo state (Punch news, 15th June, 2025).

The root causes of insecurity according to Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) are the inefficiency of government institutions, inequalities and unfairness in managing the treasures of the state, pervasiveness, ethno-religious struggle, clash of interest between the government and the public, and youth unemployment, of which the resultant effects are mass poverty in the society. Hazen and Horner (2007) noted that insecurity in most cases is a byproduct of failed or inefficient government institutions. Adagba, Ugwu, and Eme (2022) argued that the recurring insecurity and the inability of the country's security institutions to guarantee the safety and security of citizens' lives and property are clear indications that the government's efforts have not yielded sufficient positive results. In other words, rising insecurity in Nigeria is traceable to lack of institutional capacity, resulting in government failure.

The current centralised policing system in Nigeria is a product of colonialism. Hence, the Nigerian Police Forcehas been a central agency responsible for maintaining law and order across the country. Over the years, the centralised police system in Nigeria has been criticised for its inability to effectively address the diverse security concerns of the multi-ethnic and multicultural Nigerian population (Muhammed, 2018). The call for state police informs the need for a more localised and grassroots security approach

that can better address the specific security needs of different regions in Nigeria. There has been continues debate over whether Nigeria should adopt state police system or not. This debate has been so intense that the bill has been sponsored on the floor of the national assembly and is still under review. Both the proponents and the opponents of the bill hold divergent views regarding the workability of the state policing system in Nigeria, owing to some inherent features of the Nigerian state.

Policing System from the Global Perspectives and Practices

In understanding global policing practices, it is important to note that the majority of federations worldwide operate state police systems (Eyo, 2019). For example, in India, general policing is handled by the 29 states and 7 Union territories, while the federal police provide support to the state police and deals with specific issues and offences that mainly border on national security. This implies that large-scale policing duties in India fall within the jurisdiction of state police, while the federal security agencies intervene only in matters related to national security (Jarvis & Holland, 2014). In Australia, policing is vested in the three tiers of government (federal, state, and local). The law provided that general policing is a shared responsibility of the states and municipalities, with the federal police primarily coordinating the State and Local Government police forces (Halimah, 2024).

In the USA, whose constitution and government system Nigeria adopted, there is a decentralised police model comprising about 18,000 police departments, structured into federal, state, municipal, county, village, college, campus, and corporate organizations (Eyo, 2019). The U.S State Police are also called State Troopers, State Highway Patrol and Highway Patrol. State police collaborate with local police, known as village and county police, to address insecurity at the grassroots level. This implies that the US policing system involves a decentralised system with an autonomous and independent police system with different operational jurisdiction at different levels of governance in the country. State and local police complement federal forces in maintaining security (Eme & Anyadike, 2015). This multi-layered system enables the central/federal government to focus its security attention on its own territorial integrity.

In Canada, law enforcement power is vested on the 10 provinces; though about 8 provinces have delegated their policing functions to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a police agency that is also in charge of the three territories covering border, financial, and national security issues (Eyo, 2019). Because of their French heritage, Quebec and Ontario retain control over their provincial police systems. Municipal and local police forces also exist alongside the state and federal police systems (Fagge, 2024). In Germany, the constitution vests the sole policing mandate on the states (federal units). Police affairs are managed by the Landeskriminalamt which operate at state level and also serve as central information intelligence office. Some cities also have a distinct and independent police system of their own (Madushire, 2019). This suggests that in Germany even as far back as 1871, states has been responsible for policing.

Other examples are the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers in the Netherlands, Police Community Support Officers in England and Wales and the Municipal Police in France (Nextier, 2025). Though sometimes, different nomenclature may be used to address these security officers other than police, but all these represent uniformed state security officers in a decentralized system. Furthermore, Community policing system which is effective in countries like Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone and South Africa emphasizes the importance of engaging local communities in maintaining law and security (Fagge, 2024).

However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of community policing system can vary based on the socio-political makeup of each country. The critical examination of policing in countries undergoing sociopolitical transitions, such as China, Russia, and Brazil, highlights the importance of understanding the sociopolitical factors that shape police structures across these countries. These factors could include population, landmass, colonial history, ethnicity, and history of civil war, among others. The above-mentioned federations have managed their internal security through a decentralised police system. Evidence has shown that the best global practice promotes a decentralised police system to ensure effectiveness, meet specific demands, build confidence, and achieve results.

State Police and Nigeria's Concerns

Nigeria as a federation, has not been able to fashion a decentralised state police system. Though factors such as ethnicity, civil war, and secessionist agitation have created the tension and view that the establishment of state police may be counterproductive. These scenarios are by-products of a centralised system of governance, including the police system, which promotes deprivation, marginalisation, domination, unhealthy competition and non-inclusiveness. A careful consideration of the large population, large landmass, peculiar terrains, multiple languages and multidimensional security challenges confronting the Nigerian state makes it inevitable to demand devolution of power and creation of a state police system.

Structurally, the Nigeria Police Force is headed by the Inspector General of Police, who is appointed by the President. The Inspector General and Assistant Inspector Generals have powers and control over the Commissioners of Police who are deployed to various states. In other words, the police commissioners take orders directly from the Inspector General (Adeoye, 2020). This implies that the governors, who are the chief security officers of their states, have no control over the commissioners of police in their states, as the directive of the governor over policing and security issues in their states can be overruled by the order from the Inspector General or other higher authorities at the centre (federal government). This structure is considered faulty and contradicts the principle of federalism. It invariably stalls effective security response in the various states and local governments.

This controversial structure is a product of the 1999 Constitution, where Section 214 (1) states thus: "There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other police force shall be established for the federation or any part thereof"(Nigeria, 1999, p.139).

This has made it difficult and stringent to easily establish the state police. The implication is that in other to have a state policing system, the constitution must undergo an amendment process by the National Assembly. Given that the Nigerian constitution is written and rigid, the amendment process has not been easy. During the 2014 National Confab, when Nigerian stakeholders gathered to discuss the way forward for Nigeria, they recommended establishing a state and community policing system (Eke, 2019). Despite the recommendation, the implementation of state policing remains a difficult task. In 2022, during the 9th Assembly, there was a concerted effort to amend the 1999 constitution to accommodate state police, when the bill passed its second reading. It was rejected thereafter by the Reps Committee on Constitution Amendment (Ayantonye, 2024). Political trajectory has shown that the central powers use security system to bend the other federating units to their interest. State governors and political entities in opposition parties have often been left to their own devices or given skeletal attention during security crises by the federal authorities. Political interest in this instance overrides public safety, the lives and the property of the citizens. Attacks and killings in states like Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, etc., are a testament to this. The most contemporary case of insecurity is the attack and kidnapping of school children and teachers in three schools in Oyo state in May 2026 (Al Jazeera, 19th May, 2026). It is worrisome how gunmen entered a community and were on rampage in community schools which supposed to be under the protection of community police. Recently, Anambra state, like other states in the South-east Nigeria, was under a serious security challenge of kidnapping, wanton assassination, closure of business days by entities with different identities like Unknown Gunmen, Autopilot, IPOB, etc. In 2025, the Anambra state government launched a security network called Udo-Ga-Achi, which restored sanity in most parts of the state without sophisticated weapons like those of the police and the army, but through local intelligence and collaboration.

Evident in the End-SARS protest in 2020, there has been a longstanding antagonistic perception of the citizens against the police personnel who have been accused of brutality and all forms of corruption, such as extortion and collaborating with corrupt politicians to serve their selfish interests. This has made the public lose the trust they have in police officers, especially when such a police officer is from another ethnic group. Hence, it is either that the police officer is victimised based on ethnic distrust or that the police officer victimises the region based on ethnic sentiment.

In an ideal situation, the police, which is the first line of defence for the citizens, ought to be very close to them at all times. But the centralised police system in Nigeria has detached the police authority from the people, especially those in rural areas. It is very rare in Nigeria for the police to arrive at a crime

scene while it is still happening. It is mostly after the incident has occurred and lives and property have been lost that the police receive information and begin an investigation (Ogu, 2016). Sometimes, even when the police authority is contacted when an attack is ongoing, they become unresponsive. This sometimes is a result of many factors such as poor communication network, poor security logistics, bad roads to the remote areas, etc. Worst still, even when a security authority orders an investigation into a crime already committed, it is very rare for such an investigation to be carried out thoroughly and for perpetrators to be brought to book (Onuoha et al., 2024).This is a public display of inefficiency. It has rendered the citizens very vulnerable and susceptible to attack, and suspicious of the police. Hence, the ineffectiveness of the police under the central policing structure has led to worsening insecurity in Nigeria.

According to Eke (2019), the current population strength of the Nigerian police is estimated at 400,000. This is considered too small for a population of over 200 million people, with over 200 different languages, and a very large landmass. The heterogeneous nature of Nigeria with its numerous ethnic groups, diverse cultural practices and languages poses unique challenges which the centralized police system has proven difficult to manage as insecurity continues to rise unabated. This has continued to renew the push for a state policing system.

In response to the ongoing call for the establishment of state police, a regional security outfit, in the form of a community police, was established. While the North has the Hisbah police, the Southwest established the Amotekun, and the Southeast established the Ebubeagu. Yet this was characterised by many inconsistencies. It was reported that they were not well-armed or well-equipped. According to Ayantonye (2024), the bill establishing Amotekun was passed by various state Houses of Assembly in some Southwest states in 2020. Despite this, the then Attorney-General, Abubakar Malami, declared Amotekun illegalon the groundsthat it is not backed by the constitution (Ayantonye, 2024). Similarly, the Nigerian Police threatened to arrest any Amotekun operative found in possession of illegal arms (Punch News, 27th January, 2024).Despite this, Punch News reported that Amotekun has recorded some success in maintaining adequate security in the region.

In the southeast apart from Ebubeagu, which became most functional in Ebonyi and Imo states, other states established a community police model of local vigilante security systems under various names. For instance, in Enugu, they call it Forest Guards/Neighbourhood Watch. Anambra State calls it Anambra Vigilante Services. Abia State has a Homeland Security outfit. However, irrespective of their operational nomenclature, the common features of these security outfits are a lack of original operational manuals, poor training, and poor funding. There was no clarity of purpose regarding funding, training, jurisdiction, mode of operations, logistics, and certain types of equipment required, such as arms, drones, and vehicles (Punch 13th November, 2022).The reason for these shortcomings can be traced to constitutional constraints that have deprived every other level of government of the power to establish a security outfit.

However, the people under various guises and nomenclature at various levels are fronting for a security system to secure them from the ravaging operations of criminals, which the central police system has failed to address. This means that for state policing to function effectively, there is a need for total overhauling and restructuring of the Nigeria security system to have a nationwide state police system fully backed by law.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) proposed by Cohen and Felson (1979). Routine Activity Theory posits that crime is more like to occurs when three elements; a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge. These three factors are explained thus: According to the theory, though man naturally have the capability and willingness to commit crime (motivated offender) but the possibility of the crime is often enabled or triggered by the convergence of other factors such as a suitable target and Absence of Capable Guardian. Suitable target entails when an object or someone is vulnerable or exposed to criminal victimisation such as when one work alone on the lonely road at night, or an unlocked car. Absence of capable guardian implies lack of effective security personnel or surveillance system which ordinarily could prevent crime from occurring. Hence, this theory argued that the combination of these three factors enhances crime. Rather than focusing on the characteristics of the offender, the main thrust of this theory centers on the influence of situational contexts and everyday activities (routine) on the chances and possibilities of crime. In the context of state policing in Nigeria which is the main variable of this study, Routine Activity Theory provides an insight on how decentralized policing structure can enhance guardianship (security), reduce criminal opportunities, and address insecurity more effectively.

Applying Routine Activity Theory to the present study, insecurity has been on daily increase in Nigeria as a result of inadequate capable guard (police). This has exposed Nigerians to risk of attack; hence, they become suitable target for criminals. Sometimes, it is very difficult to see policemen on guard especially in the rural areas where there is poor road and communication network. Even in the satellite towns, once it is nighttime or weekends, the policemen close full operation; one can only see policemen in few strategic places; thereby leaving the citizens very vulnerable to attack. With state police system, security can become a routine and consistent activity that would enhance the security of lives and properties even in the rural areas where the presence of federal security agents is lacking. State police with better understanding of local crime patterns, terrain and community policing initiatives, would bring security presence closer to the communities they serve, thereby, enhancing security (capable guardianship) through increased patrols, quicker responses to incidents, thereby bridging the opportunity gap for criminals. In the view of Eck and Weisburd (2015), state policing can minimize the opportunities for crime and thus, enhance overall public safety through the understanding and integration of the unique

routine activities of each community. From the foregoing, Routine Activity Theory entails the need fora decentralized policing system in creating a more adaptive and responsive security framework in Nigeria.

Discussion and Analysis

Need for State Police System as a Panacea for Rising Insecurity

State policing is a decentralized policing system where law enforcement agencies or the police operate at the component unit; particularly at the state level. This entails that a decentralized police system allows for individual states or regions to independently operate and manage their police forces, without federal control. This model is in sharp contrasts with centralized police system as being practiced in Nigeria currently, where a single national police body is responsible for maintaining law and security across the entire country (Onuoha, et al, 2024). State police system is practiced in most federations in the world such as USA, Canada, Australia, India etc. This is in line with core interest of democracy where power is decentralized to address local concerns by harnessing local capacity. Decentralization processes include government structural and institutional reform (Rachmat, 2017). In the US, whose constitution and system of government serve as a model for Nigeria, each of the 50 states has its own police force responsible for maintaining security, law, and order with limited federal interference. Evidence indicates that these state police have successfully handled their internal security issues (Halimah, 2024).

The prevalent attack and the abductions which is largely driven by ransom demands, have become more widespread across rural communities and camps for internally displaced persons. The attacks often go beyond abductions, with gunmen killing residents, looting property and burning homes. Families are frequently pressured to sell their belongings or rely on community fundraising to secure the release of their kidnapped members, while those unable to pay face the ransom are executed or suffer prolonged torture (Premium Times 12th April, 2026). As a result of the increasing insecurity in Nigeria, there have been persistent calls for the establishment of a State Police, similar to what exists in other federating states worldwide. Although some opponents argue that, within the Nigerian context, managing a State Police would be challenging and could lead to abuses. On the contrary, Halimah (2024) pointed out that there is no greater risk of misconduct or excesses under a State Police than what is obtainable under the current federal police system. Many scholars, analysts, and security experts widely agree that insecurity, particularly in rural areas, could be reduced if state governors who are by law, the chief security officers of their states had direct control over security operations. It is generally believed that this arrangement would allow governors to respond swiftly to security threats such as frequent armed robbery, banditry, insurgency, herdsmen killings, kidnapping, and other criminal activities without the delays (Eyo, 2019).

According to Onyekwere in Guardian News (1st February,2024), the former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Chief Wole Olanipekun (SAN) argued that the Nigeria's centralised security structure is one of the reasons for the worsening security situation in Nigeria. Olanipekun questions how governors who do not have any jurisdiction or control over the security systems in their state can secure

the people of the state. He lamented further that the state governors are merely addressed as the Chief Security Officer of their states. Yet, the governors do not appoint the Commissioner of Police in their state, nor do the governors have control over their deployment. Furthermore, it is a fundamental error to send police commissioners from another region in a state where they do not know the terrain or understand the dialect of the people.

According to Fagge (2024), proponents of state police opine that state police can enhance community engagement with the security operatives, foster responsiveness of both the state administration and the security operatives to security concerns at the local level, and improve the overall security situation of the country. According to Ogu (2016), the rationale behind state policing is based on the popular belief that regional or local authorities are in a better position to understand and address the unique security challenges peculiar to their regions. In order to maintain security in Nigeria, each state needs security operatives from such region, who are familiar with the attitude and language of the people in such state, so that when crime is being discussed, the security operatives can easily detect the game plan of the criminals. This can be obtained through the state policing system.

According to the recommendation of the National Confab (2014), though state police may present several challenges such as concerns about funding, potential of misuse by the state political gladiators and clarity of jurisdiction and coordination between state and federal agencies; state policing could potentially offer a more effective framework to address crime especially at local level (Onuoha, et al. 2024).According to Ayantonye (2024), the former Plateau State Governor, Jonah Jang, while reacting to the recent killings, expressed his worry over the lack of power of the state governors to deploy security personnel to combat terrorism. He reiterated the need to attend to the call for state police, which he believes would boost security through early response and head-on confrontation of insecurity.

In April 2022, former President Olusegun Obasanjo also lend his voice to the call for the creation of state police to tackle the growing insecurity in the country. According to him, the country has attained the level of a security system where the state police can be created, and from where community police can be created too. Also, the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwolu, while addressing the public on security challenges in Nigeria, stated that policing at the community level is not only desirable but important for the states in this age of democracy (Punch news 27th January, 2024).

Punch News of 27th January 2024 highlighted views and supports from other prominent Nigerians for state policing system as panacea to ending insecurity and carnage happening simultaneously in every part of Nigeria. Such personalities captured by Punch Newspapper are the retired Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Adedayo Adeoye, the former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, a lawmaker representing Niger East, Senator Sani Musa, former Chairman of Southern Governors Forum, Rotimi Akeredolu and the former Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki. These men have at some points in public address,

advocated for the adoption of state policing system in Nigeria which they believe, have the propensity to solve the multi-dimensional insecurity ravaging the country.

The effectiveness of devolution of security system in Nigeria is seen on how Amokotun in the Southwest and Udo-Ga-Achi in Anambra promptly respond to distress calls and confront daredevil criminals in dangerous terrains with lesser weapons and motivations. Enugu state governor has gone the extra mile even when not within his constitutional provisions to procure utility vehicles for the police, and digitalized the state so that every crime scenario is synthesized and follow arrest and prosecution made even after its occurrence. The Punchnews (27th (January, 2024) reported that last year, Adetunji Adeleye, the Ondo State Commander of the Amotekun disclosed that within the last three and half years of its creation, the outfit arrested about 7,000 criminals and prosecuted over 1,500 across the state. Aina and Ocheja (2020) while emphasizing on the relevance of state police system noted that the performance of the Vigilante Security group in crime prevention and control was impressive. Hence, with the help of state security outfit, insecurity is being curbed in Kogi state. In one of the instances cited by them, the state security outfit through a swift response to a distress call by 10pm on the 23rd of September 2020, was able to repel armed robbery attack and arrested one of the criminals who blocked a road between Mopa-muro and Yagba East LGA.

Agbese (2025) revealed that the Borno State Civilian JTF known as Yan Gora and Kano state CJTF known as Yan Farauta or Yan Tauri (local hunters) has been hailed for their success in tackling insurgency in the state. Despite not being well trained and fully armed, they were known to be resilient in gathering intelligence and engaging in community patrol; thereby supporting the Nigerian military in combating terrorism in the states. Furthermore, Agbese who made reference to the era of Bakassi boys during the governorship administration of Chinweoke Mbadinuju noted that Anambra state internal security outfits both past and present has recorded success in combating crime especially in the busy Onitsha commercial city. He noted further that the Operation Udo Ga-Achi team which was established in January 2025 in line with the Homeland Security law has succeeded in combating insecurity and reducing it drastically in the state. Agbase (2025) noted that the localized state security outfit in many regions in Nigeria has proven competent and effective in combating crime. Hence, from the foregoing recorded success and the dangers associated with untrained citizens, with undefined structures and chain of commands handling security issues, there is need for a formalized training and equipment under state police system so as to make them more fit in combating crime in the society.

Tthere is operational laxity in the police system across the country as a result of the centralized police structure (Fagge, 2024). Eyo argued that the 2020 End SARS protest which would have been averted escalated as a result of the centralized police system. He noted that when the agitation built up in Lagos, there was noticeable tendency of its escalation; but the police at various states could not swing into action to quell the protest because of the delay in establishing contact and order from the federal police unit.

Akinyetun (2016) in his study found that the Nigeria Police is ineffective due to its centralized structure which has led to a management, control and performance problem. The study described the call for state police as a justified necessity. The study also revealed that state police have ecological, socio-cultural and socioeconomic undertone edge over the conventional police system; hence, state police is not just a logical antidote to insecurity, but would also strengthen federalism in the country.

Samuel, Julius, and Abiodun (2024) and Njoku (23 November, 2025) reveal that adopting state police would be counter-productive if abused by a power drunk governor but would be beneficial on the long-run if properly managed. The study recommended a grassroots police framework that would facilitate easy detection of crime and speed response to crime prevention. Adedeji (2012) and Njoku (23 November, 2025)identified various challenges associated with centralized police system in Nigeria such as corruption, lack of accountability, inadequate personnel, poor budget, ethnic variation and tensions, and inefficiency. They noted that inefficiency arises from the bureaucratic nature of the centralized system, where decisions to be implemented even in the remote areas are made at the federal level; thereby, leading to slow in response and mismatch to the security needs of the local people.

Citing accountability as a feature of state police, Halimah (2024) opined that in a decentralized security system, the chain of command is localized and more transparent, as the state governors and state legislatures would be directly held responsible by the citizens for the actions or misconduct of the police forces under their administration. Unlike what is obtainable in the current centralized system, citizens can have greater confidence in the integrity of the police when they hold state authorities responsible, which ultimately strengthen democratic principles, a framework for a workable political system. This therefore supports the view that state police system has the potential to improve efficiency and accountability. Fagge (2024) highlighted that proximity enables state police to deploy officers within local communities lacking federal presence. This setup facilitates quicker emergency responses by reducing intervention times during critical situations. When officers are stationed nearby and part of the community, they can promptly handle emergencies, ensuring faster action without delays or inconvenience.

Emphasizing the heterogeneous nature and diversities of security needs of Nigerian society, Halimah (2024) noted that Nigeria is highly diverse, with each state facing different security threats. For instance, while Zamfara faces banditry and cattle rustling, which require different approaches, Rivers State and Bayelsa is confronted with militancy, while Lagos faces urban crime, and the southeast mostly encounters coordinated attacks by unknown gunmen. All these diverse security challenges require different strategies, which only indigenous police officers working alongside local authorities that understands the terrain of insecurity can effectively address. According to Agwanwo (2014), state police by being more attuned to local cultures and community dynamics, would enhance operational efficiency and improve

trust and cooperation, which are essential for effective policing. Hence, state police system would more effectively, address the peculiar needs and dynamics of local communities than a centralized system.

Therefore, establishing a state police would empower governors to develop security strategies tailored to their specific needs by tackling emerging threats and criminal tendencies. Security officers recruited from the community would be familiar with the local environment; this familiarity would facilitate cooperation and foster trust with residents, enabling them to gather crucial security intelligence more easily and swiftly.

Findings

In view of the literature and discussion so far, the study revealed that the current constitutional centralised policing system has proven inadequate in structure, architecture and command to address the multidimensional security challenges in Nigeria. The centrailsation makes workload of the force heavy that many security needs are not attended to. In some instances, they wait for clearance from the central command before they can attend to local needs. Sometimes, the police hardly respond to distress calls from these areas due to poor communication, logistics, personnel and inaccessible road network. Also, some times, the police find it difficult to detect crime in the area rising from unfamiliar terrain and the peculiar indigenous characteristics of the people. Also, under the current centralized police system, it is difficult for the police to establish interaction with the local community members which would enable them get more security information. This is as a result of difference in ethnic make-up and language barrier between the police officers and the community members. Thus, policing especially in the rural areas in Nigeria has been characterized by delay in response and other inconsistencies which has made the citizens to lose confidence on the police. Hence, the dire need for the establishment of state policing system so as to bring security closer to the people especially in the rural areas. It will enhance intelligence, development of peculiar approaches to adhere peculiar needs of the people will take up the ownership of their security system. There are fears of weaponisation of state police by politicians to fight their opponents, abuse of human rights, poor and budgeting, exacerbating existing ethnic tensions.

Conclusion

Over the years, Nigeria has been facing multidimensional security challenges which mostly occur in the rural area where the presence of federal security operatives is lacking. The primary duty of the police is security, crime detection and prevention. The rising insecurity in every part of Nigeria has made it imperative for the establishment of a state police system to curb the ugly situation that is imparting negatively to the socio-economic development of the country. The state of insecurity under the current centralized police system, where the state has no control over the security personnel and activities in their state, is not healthy for national security. The reawakened push for state police recently is necessitated by rising insecurity which the police and army controlled by the federal government have not been able

to proffer any enduring solution. Rather, they are often accused of compromising and aiding the crime perpetrators based on ethnic and religious affiliation and sentiments. The current centralized policing system in Nigeria has not been able to effectively address the diverse and multifaceted security challenges. This has led to increased insecurity in Nigeria over the years. In view of the persistent insecurity, there is no doubt that Nigeria needs a decentralized system of policing where states would have adequate control over the security system. This would not only enable the police to function more effectively, but it would also enable the governor to establish indigenous security outfit that understands the environment, the language and the attitude of the people within the locality; engage more man power and attain to welfare and logistics needs of the personnel. This would also enhance swift response of security operatives to security issues even in the rural areas.

Recommendations

From the findings, this study recommends the following: immediate approval and implementation of state policing system, fully backed up by law and effectively supervised by both the Police Service Commission and the National Assembly to ensure effective operational standard of the community police. There is need for devolution of power which is a core principle of federalism by amendment of the 1999 constitution and creation of state police. This will enable the state governors to coordinate the security system within their various states. It will also compel the state governors to channel their security votes and other resources to recruit, train and equip security outfits in their various states; therefore, promoting accountability. There should be a special unit combined of central government and state government representatives to monitor and regulate state policing system until it is stabilized with the best global practices. The management of state police should not be handled directly by the state governors rather a special committee should be established by the various states which should be comprised of experienced security experts, legal officers and other professionals. The government at all levels should also monitor, supervise and scrutinize the activities of the local security outfits to ensure that they remain committed to their duties and not resorting to political instrument of distortion, extortion and criminalities which has been the fear of the opponents of state policing.

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